

ORDER OF THE DAY OF THE OUTGOING CHIEF OF HAGS
OF 25 JANUARY 2023

Officers, Army Academy Cadets, NCOs, Soldiers, Members of the National Guard, Civilian Staff of the Hellenic Army.

Pursuant to a Government Council for Foreign Affairs and Defence (KYSEA) decision, and following three years serving as Chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff, I retire today while handing over the duties of the Chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff to the esteemed Lieutenant General, Aggelos Choudeloudis.

I am deeply touched, but also proud of my career in the Hellenic Army, which is concluded right here where it started 43 years ago: at the Hellenic Army Academy – “the pool of Heroes... the pool of virtue”, as the late President of the Hellenic Republic, Konstantinos Tsatsos used to call it – which I had the honour to command.

Today, I hand over my duties, feeling complete and grateful for my experience, and satisfied with the commitment and devotion

I exhibited before the responsibilities of a highly critical period. I would like to thank the political leadership of the country and of the Ministry of National Defence, especially the Prime Minister, for entrusting me with this high office. For an Officer, the assignment of the duties of the Chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff constitutes the highest professional honour and recognition.

Please rest assured that I feel utterly satisfied, for over my tenure the work of my predecessors was on the one hand pursued, while on the other, new goals, which have been either achieved or are about to be implemented, have been identified. The progress attained led to the enhancement of the combat power of the Hellenic Army, the strengthening of its deterring capacity, the consolidation of its role within the international environment, but also to the improvement of the personnel's safety and living conditions.

Besides, this is the challenge emerging from the handover of the duties of the Chief of HAGS: each leader reverently accepts a work to believe in, to honour, and to subsequently promote. And

when the time is ripe to pass the baton, they will do it in a proud manner, knowing that they passionately fulfilled their duty.

For the above-mentioned reasons, it is my duty to thank my predecessors for their significant work, while following their own vision, depending on the conditions of their times. I would also like to thank my retired colleagues for being the mentors, who taught us the concept of duty and became bright examples for us young officers, as well as for everything they offered to the Hellenic Army and to our country.

Throughout my tenure, I would always turn my gaze towards the way forward, whereas my main concern was to contribute to the modernization and the shaping of the future of the Hellenic Army.

I am deeply satisfied, because we worked filled with pride and passion, and innovative thinking; with the conviction that together we can face the biggest challenges. We fulfilled a difficult, yet nationally important work, always promoting the shared effort over individualism. For this, I would like to extend

my sincere thanks. What we accomplished together, we did so not because it was easy, but rather because it was difficult; for in our minds and hearts, we placed our country above all else.

Greece, our very own Greece... “a stone cape in the Mediterranean, which has no other good than the struggle of its people, the sea, and the light of the sun”, as Giorgos Seferis said.

I am proud of having served as Chief of HAGS for three years and for having devoted myself to the implementation of my vision, with my first concern being the care for Hellenic Army personnel, which is always the highest value and the driving force behind every effort. For this reason, year 2023 has been characterized as a year of health, sports, and healthy nutrition for the personnel, thus tangibly proving that our people lie at the centre of our interest and care.

To this end, it would be an omission not to mention the great work already performed, which pertains to the enhancement of our personnel’s living conditions, via the improvement of camp installations and the construction of accommodation premises,

guesthouses, nursery stations, and the upgrade of clubs, retail stations, and Army Summer Resorts (KAAY).

More particularly, I would like to highlight the construction of the new outposts of Gavdos, Stroggyli, Othonoi, as well as the construction of Surveillance Outpost 5 at Vyssa, Northern Evros. I would also like to stress the installation of power supply units in certain outposts, the enhancement of the outposts' surveillance capabilities with the use of up-to-date technological equipment, as well as the modernization of the majority of the said outposts. I have always believed that those who serve at borderline areas should enjoy the best living conditions. This is the least we can do to thank those serving at the edges of our country.

In connection with the operational readiness, I have to mention the improvement of the command and control system, via the upgrade of spaces and communication capabilities of all Operations Centres, as well as the construction of a large number of obstacles and fortification works.

We improved the quality of life and the transportation safety conditions for our personnel, by providing our Units with a large number of modern buses and vehicles.

Furthermore, we significantly upgraded the operation, medical equipment, and infrastructure of Army Hospitals.

We enhanced the international partnerships concluded with other countries, by executing a large number of exercises – joint exercises with allies and partners for the first time, which were mutually beneficial and promoted the Hellenic Army's capabilities.

We concluded an important number of high-technology armament programmes, whereas the approval and financing of the remaining ones, which are already scheduled and critically enhance the operational capabilities and technological supremacy of the Hellenic Army, are underway.

Overall, we placed special emphasis on Logistics, and more specifically, on the maintenance and support of weapon systems, by improving the maintenance mechanisms and

prioritizing the Hellenic Army Factories. We proceeded to the realization of a big number of obsolete materials and modernized the financial – accounting system.

Of great value was also the upgrade of the infrastructure and academic and military training of the Hellenic Army Academies, with an international dimension, for the level of each Army depends on the quality of its education, training, and the abilities of its leaders.

In fact, it is worth mentioning that in order to meet the great financial needs of the Hellenic Army, we did not solely rely on the options offered by functional budgeting. We instead relied on innovative thinking, leveraged modern financing tools (NSRF, PPP, PIP), and in cooperation with the Regions, we proceeded to the energy upgrade of buildings, the purchase of Engineers machinery, the provision of modern medical equipment to Hellenic Army Hospitals, and the reduction of our buildings' energy footprint.

Along with the awareness raised at a national beneficence level, benefactors responded in a heartwarming manner, thus greatly contributing to the meeting of different needs, as a rich-in-symbolism token of gratitude and tangible recognition of the Army's contribution to the defence and security of our country. For this reason, I thank them all, and wish for others to follow their example.

The challenges we successfully faced over those three years were in my opinion unique.

I am referring to the efficient facing of the hybrid threat of March 2020 when our country was being exerted the sudden, massive, organized pressure caused by big population movements occurring at our eastern land borders, in the area of Evros. The said success, which filled Greek society with optimism and self-confidence, was the outcome of the excellent understanding of the area, of correct assessment of the situation, of suitable utilization of assets and of perfect cooperation established among all stakeholders.

I would further highlight the coronavirus pandemic, which the Hellenic Army healthcare personnel faced with remarkable self-denial, going the extra mile and tirelessly and without complaint supporting the State in its difficult work. For those reasons, I must extend my thanks to all members of the healthcare personnel.

I will subsequently refer to the situation developed over the summer of 2020 at the NE Mediterranean, where the response was immediate and decisive, placing the Hellenic Army in a readiness state, which decisively contributed to the implementation of reliable deterrence.

I must refer to the grand parade of 2021, which took place to mark 200 years from the Greek Revolution of the joyous year 1821, and was imbued with high symbolism. The historic course of the Hellenic Army, which unfolded concurrently with the 1821 Revolution and is inextricably linked to the essence, hopes, and struggles of the nation, makes up the legacy and the guiding force of our work.

Nonetheless, apart from our main operational work, the contribution to civil protection in order to face natural disasters and offer healthcare support and evacuation operations has been decisive. I would specifically mention that from 2020 to the end of 2022, the Hellenic Army Aviation HELOs executed flight operations of 2.500-FH to evacuate 1.200 patients.

Over the past years in particular, extreme weather phenomena occurred due to the climate crisis, which proves the critical contribution of the Hellenic Army, as well as the great importance of organizing an international natural disaster response exercise for the very first time.

I would like to stress that what we all achieved over the past three years took place within a human-centric environment, filled with mutual respect, understanding, patience, inspired creativity, joy and optimism, which are the main elements of success.

In fact, the highest reward and recognition of the work and contribution of the Hellenic Army to the country's defence and

integrity was the honorary award of the Academy of Athens Gold Medal in December 2022.

Today, more than ever, we are called upon to face multiple challenges. The volatility of our region's international geopolitical scene, the long-standing and systematic undermining of our country's sovereign rights as well as the migration crisis, have set the Hellenic Army in a state of constant alertness.

The very last message I would like to address as Chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff to all Greek women and men, especially during this period, is to trust in the capabilities and decisiveness of the Hellenic Army and to enjoy the security and stability, which we are here to ensure.

The Hellenic Army has the honorary privilege of being mainly deployed across the borders during peacetime. On every island, islet or borderline; from Ormenio to Kastelorizo and from Gavdos to Othonoi; day or night; the Hellenic Army constitutes the sleepless guard of our country's borders and security. The

significance of the control of the land part of the territory is critical, since all maritime and air zones are delineated based on the terrain.

To face all these modern challenges, the Greek State has been making a serious effort to upgrade the Armed Forces, by reinforcing and hiring new Professional Conscripts and by increasing the number of the Hellenic Army staff, as well as by concluding big and significant armament programmes.

The Hellenic Army, more powerful than ever, constitutes the main pillar of national power and stability, and a powerful deterrence force, ready and able to ensure the territorial integrity, the national independence and the sovereignty of the country, as well as the dignity and honour of Greek people.

Greek citizens respectfully recognize the multifaceted work of the Hellenic Army, which is not only depicted in numbers and statistical data. In fact, for this reason, the Hellenic Army always ranks high in Greek citizens' appreciation, and constitutes a source of pride and certainty.

Men and women of the Hellenic Army,

You are the competitive advantage and the main difference of the Hellenic Army.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Officers, NCOs, soldiers, for day and night, serve their duty with devotion towards their country, sparing no effort and sacrifice, usually away from their families, and more often than not, under adverse conditions.

Recognizing your merit and your contribution to the country, and since today we want to be better than yesterday, much like tomorrow we will have to be better than today, I would like to express my last piece of advice to you.

I invite you to dedicate yourselves to your mission and pursue recognition via your own work, the quality of your effort, and the belief to your personal value. You must always remember that an esteemed professional is always a good partner, a good supervisor or subordinate, both in war and in peace.

Your only goal should always be winning a deterrence battle.

Dedicate yourselves to the main work of the Hellenic Army in a realistic manner, which is none other than the operational training and maintenance of material during peacetime.

Your military values, ethos, pride, humbleness, and love for your country must always permeate all of your efforts.

Bear in mind that what is of value in life always comes with difficulty and that only the poised ones are capable of facing any adversity.

Your duty is not just to do what you can do, but rather to do what the country needs.

Support the work of the new Chief of HAGS with the same consistency and zeal you showed while supporting mine. Support his choices. These choices stem from the institutionalized decision-making processes in which you also participate, depending on your position and rank.

Officers, Army Academies Cadets, NCOs, Soldiers, Members of the National Guard, Civilian Staff of the Hellenic Army.

Now that this unique journey of 43 years came to an end, what I hold dear inside of me is the immense love and appreciation I was offered, which will be accompanying me for the rest of my life. To all the places I was assigned I left a piece of my heart, I met great people, who welcomed me and embraced me from day one. In fact, the highest recognition I received was my being declared honorary Citizen of Mathiati-Cyprus, Didymoteicho, and Samos.

However, as they say, each end is a new beginning. No matter what one's final destination is the point is to look back in satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment.

I would like to conclude with a final thought. I will not forget where I started from and I have always put my ego aside to make room for collective effort; I did everything in my power to contribute to our country, to serve my duty, and to proudly meet your expectations. Believe in and take care of yourselves. Nourish your body, spirit and soul, because they are the ones to guide you through your dreams. One must be brave to be

themselves, but trust me: if we achieve this, we can achieve everything.

Retiring from the Hellenic Army today, I would like to extend my warm thanks to the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos, to the Deputy Minister of National Defence, Mr. Nikolaos Hardalias, to the former Deputy Minister and honorary Chief of HAGS, Mr. Alkiviadis Stefanis, as well as to the Secretary General of our Ministry, Mr. Antonios Oikonomou, for the excellent cooperation, the understanding, and the support they provided me with over my tenure.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my warm thanks to the Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, General Konstantinos Floros, for his trust, our constructive cooperation, the support, and the reinforcing of the work performed by HAGS. A warm thanks to the Chiefs of the Hellenic Navy General Staff and the Hellenic Air Force General Staff for the understanding, the cooperation and the mutual respect.

I would like to thank the Chiefs of the Hellenic Police, the Fire Service and the Coast Guard for our excellent cooperation while successfully facing common challenges.

My heartfelt thanks to the Inspector General, the Deputy Chief, my Chief of Staff and the entirety of my Staff, who worked tirelessly to support my efforts in a seamless manner, as well as to all Formation Commanders for their important work.

I would like to thank the Hellenic Parliament Speaker, Mr. Tasoulas, for the financial support and recognition of the contribution of the Hellenic Army to the country; the Chairmen of two Hellenic Parliament Committees on Armament Programmes and Contracts and National Defence and Foreign Affairs, Messrs. Davakis and Gkioulekas respectively, and the members of the Committees for their support.

I would like to thank the Most Reverend Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Ieronymos II, as well as all Metropolitans for their spiritual support and guidance.

I would like to thank the first and second-level local self-administration officials across Greece for the excellent and constructive cooperation in matters of joint interest, and especially the regional governors and the Secretary General for Public Investments for approving NSRF programmes to the benefit of the Hellenic Army.

I would like to thank all Greek men and women for their trust, recognition, and support to the work performed by the Hellenic Army.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the members of all military families, who support them so that they are able to tangibly prove on a daily basis that overcoming one's limits to fulfill one's mission is neither romantic nor outdated.

A big thanks to my classmates of Class 1984; to the people I once shared our youthful dreams and unique experiences with, and in the course of my life proved to be genuine companions. I am grateful to them for the support and assistance they kept providing me with to this day when my mission is concluded.

Unfortunately, some of them are not here with us; however, I hold them dear in my heart, because I am blessed to call them my forever classmates.

Finally, I would like to thank God for giving me the strength to live in decency and consistency, while at the same time, made me worthy of this journey, filled with adventure, knowledge, and experiences. I am grateful to my parents for the values and principles they instilled into me. I am grateful to my teachers and professors, as well as to all those who – over my military career – taught me and inspired me while being a young Cadet, such as my Army Academy first-class mentor, my first platoon leader and Company Commander in the Hellenic Army Academy, as well as all of my Commanders.

With the incoming Chief of HAGS, Lieutenant General Aggelos Choudeloudis, I had the pleasure of cooperating in a seamless manner while serving in different posts. His professional capabilities and leadership skills constitute the best guarantor of his successful course. I wish him health, good luck, and all

success to his new duties, which – I am certain – he will serve with self-denial and efficiency.

As a last token of honour and respect to the grandeur of the Hellenic Army, I respectfully bow to the immortal fallen heroes of our Nation's struggles, as well as to peacetime heroes who fell or were injured while serving their duty, exhibiting courage and selflessness.

I humbly salute the War Flags and hope that All-merciful God and the Blessed Virgin Mary protect you and endow with health and courage to accomplish your difficult, but highly honouring mission, in a persistent and patient manner. With these thoughts, I invite you to hail,

Long live the Nation

Long live the Hellenic Army

General Charalampos Lalousis

Chief