

Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross assumes command of NATO Defense College

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Lieutenant-General Christine (Chris) Whitecross today assumed command of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Defense College in Rome, taking over from Major-General Janusz Bojarski of the Polish Air Force.

The appointment of Lieutenant-General Whitecross to this prominent NATO position is a significant accomplishment for her, for the Canadian Armed Forces and for Canada; she is the third Canadian and the first female to take on the command of the college in its 65-year history.

In this capacity, Lieutenant-General Whitecross can continue her life's passion of making the defence community a more respectful and inclusive environment. Since June 2015, she has been the commander of the Military Personnel Command, the Canadian Armed Forces organization responsible for personnel management, including training and education. As such, she has a significant appreciation of the value of professional development for leaders both in Canada, within the NATO Alliance and in the global community.

The NATO Defense College is renowned for training senior officers from the 28 Allied nations in strategic planning for multi-national operations such as those NATO undertakes. Officers learn valuable lessons and gain critical skills in multi-nation planning, consensus building, and strategic level problem-solving. In this context, Canadian officers are widely respected and sought-after and come to the learning environment with field experience acquired through NATO operations. Canada's willingness to contribute to NATO is evidence of our unwavering commitment to the Alliance.

Quotes

“Congratulations to Lieutenant-General Whitecross as she takes on the command of the NATO Defense College. She will have a direct, positive impact on senior officers and officials from the Alliance and partner nations in their pursuit to address the global security and defence issues of today and tomorrow. We are confident that the college will thrive under the professional, skilled leadership of its new Canadian commander.”

Harjit S. Sajjan, Defence Minister

“I offer my heartiest congratulations to Lieutenant-General Whitecross as she takes up her new post in Rome as the Commandant of the NATO Defense College. I wish her the best of luck, and know that with her exceptional abilities, she will do a tremendous job in this prestigious post. We are going to miss her here in Ottawa, but will carry on her valuable work!”

General Jonathan Vance, Chief of the Defence Staff

“The NATO Alliance will be stronger by the appointment of this outstanding Canadian. Lieutenant-General Whitecross has demonstrated throughout her career her exemplary leadership skills, and the NATO Defence College will be the next to benefit.”

Ambassador Kerry Buck, Canada's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to NATO

I am honoured to be assuming command of the NATO Defense College. As the third Canadian to lead the college since its foundation, I welcome this chance to represent Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces abroad and look forward to the challenges and opportunities that come with my new responsibilities.”

Lieutenant-General Christine (Chris) Whitecross, Commander, Military Personnel Command

Quick Facts

- Founded in 1951, the college fosters strategic-level thinking on military-political matters and prepares selected officers and officials for NATO-related appointments. In her new role, Lieutenant-General Whitecross will have a unique opportunity to represent Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces abroad. It is a reflection of Canada's strong and respected role in NATO.
- The commandant of the NATO Defense College is responsible for developing the college's role as a centre of education, study, and research on transatlantic issues. The commandant is responsible to the Military Committee, which is the primary source of military advice to NATO's civilian decision-making bodies.
- Previous Canadian commandants were Lieutenant-General Richard Evraire from 1993-96, and Vice-Admiral John O'Brien from 1970-73.
- Lieutenant-General Whitecross will continue to serve as commander of Military Personnel Command, until the Canadian Armed Forces chose an appropriate successor next year.
- Lieutenant-General Whitecross has been named one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women by the Women's Executive Network.