



Dr Vlasta ZEKULIĆ
Head, Strategic Issues and Engagements
HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation
NATO

Dr Zekulic was commissioned as an Infantry officer to the Croatian Armed Forces in 2002, after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science and Management of Information Systems from The Citadel, Military College of South Carolina. Given an additional bachelor degree in Criminalistics from Police College of Zagreb, she held numerous command and staff positions within the Croatian Military Police community, and deployed several times to NATO's operational theatres. After completing the Croatian Command and Staff College in 2008, graduating first in her class, she was appointed an executive officer to the Croatian Deputy Chief of Staff. From 2010 until 2014, she commanded a battalion at the Croatian Defence Academy.

From late 2014 she served at the Allied Command Transformation, Strategic Plans and Policy Division, where she led the interoperation of high level political guidance and developed policy papers, strategies and inputs to NATO Military Authorities on issues relating to challenges of a changing security environment, hybrid warfare, resilience and Readiness Action Plan. This work led to a posting as a deputy head of the Strategic Assessment Element in the Emergency Security Challenges division at NATO HQ, where she wrote strategic assessments of emerging crisis, enhancing situational awareness and providing early warning for use by the Secretary General and the Chairman of Military Committee. Of special consideration are her assessments of the conventional and hybrid security challenges in Western Balkans and Africa.

In September 2017, LTC Zekulic ended her military career and transitioned to the NATO International Staff, Operations Division, developing assessments, policies and strategies relating to NATO's operational preparedness and planning, particularly in relation to posture management and deterrence messaging, countering hybrid threats, and crisis management. As of July 2021, Dr Zekulic leads Strategic Issues and Engagements Branch in the Allied Command Transformation. She develops strategic issues identified by SACT, such as on out-partnering, and designs, plans and coordinates strategic level political-military engagement of HQ SACT with NATO's senior leadership, industry and academia on all Command priority areas.

Parallel to her military career, she also continued with her academic education, gaining a Master of Science degree (2007) and PhD (2012) in international relations and national security. She is also a graduate of NATO Executive Development Program, and Executive Masters in Strategic Leadership and Digital Transformation (2021). Having published more than thirty expert and scientific articles, she is also a Scientific Associate at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Zagreb, and a regular lecturer at the NATO School Oberammergau.

Dr Zekulic is a member of numerous associations, including the Atlantic Council of Croatia, the Board of Directors for the Centre for International Relations, the Scientific Council of International Military Academic Forum, World's Council Affairs, and Women Green Leaders Association. She is the recipient of numerous personal awards and decorations from Croatian and NATO officials including the Order of the Croatian Interlace. In 2024 she was awarded a NATO Meritorious Service Medal by a Secretary General of NATO.