

## Head Middle East and North Africa Section NATO



Nicola de Santis is the Head of the Middle East and North Africa Section in the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division of the NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

In this capacity he is responsible for developing and promoting NATO policy, political relations, individual practical cooperation programs and better public understanding with Middle Eastern and North African countries, especially those participating in NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). He also ensures coordination with all other Divisions of NATO's International Staff, International Military Staff and relevant NATO Military Authorities for all aspects of NATO's cooperation with countries in the Middle East and in North Africa.

Prior to that, he was the Head of the MD and ICI Countries Section in the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division. During his more than two decade career at the Brussels NATO Headquarters, following international competitions, Mr. de Santis served under seven NATO Secretary Generals, in different senior executive policy and communications positions. He has a deep knowledge of NATO and many years of extensive international experience, especially in establishing and managing high level cooperative relations and projects between NATO and its member countries, PFP, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern countries; advising NATO Secretary Generals and Deputy Secretary Generals on political relations with these countries and conducting high level negotiations for international agreements with 14 of them; organising and participating in the Secretary Generals' and Deputy Secretary Generals' official visits to NATO and partner countries for bilateral meetings with Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense. Nicola de Santis has as well a thorough experience of working in concert with other NATO Divisions and Military Authorities, including during the NATO crisis management arrangements of the military crises of Bosnia, Kosovo and particularly of Libya during which he was in charge of sensitive political and military aspects of this crisis managed by the Atlantic Alliance upon UN mandate.

Mr. de Santis, joined the Office of the Secretary General, Office of Information and Press, in November 1991, following international competition, as Head of the NATO Countries' Academic Affairs, in the External Relations Section, a position he was appointed to by then Secretary General Manfred Woerner in charge of establishing NATO's cooperative ties with strategic studies institutes and think tanks doing work in international and security affairs, in all of the NATO member countries.

Following another international competition, he was appointed in January 1994, by Manfred Woerner, as Briefing and Liaison Officer Italy, External Relations Section, in charge of managing NATO's External Relations with Italy, establishing and maintaining contacts with government authorities, political parties, parliamentary committees dealing with foreign and defense policies, opinion leaders and the media. He was then designated as Briefing and Liaison Officer for Spain a.i., and subsequently dual-hatted as Officer for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, External Relations Section, becoming the first NATO official in charge of outreach activities to the seven Middle Eastern and North African countries members of the Mediterranean Dialogue, since its establishment in December 1994.

In October 2001, following another international competition, the Secretary General of NATO Lord Robertson appointed Nicola de Santis to the post of Information Officer for Mediterranean Dialogue and Partner Countries, Outreach and Partner Relations Section, in charge of establishing and maintaining NATO's ties to governments, opinion leaders, political leaders, parliamentarians, academics and the media from the seven Mediterranean Dialogue countries. In September 2004 he became the NATO Public Diplomacy Division Coordinator for the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative countries.

In February 2006, NATO Secretary General Mr. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, following promotion, appointed Mr. de Santis to the position of Head Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Countries Section, in the NATO Public Diplomacy Division, reporting directly to the Secretary General of NATO and to the Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy.

In January 2011 he was appointed by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen as the Head of the same section in the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division, and subsequently as Head of the Middle East and North Africa Section in the same Division, working closely with the Secretary General, his Private Office and with the Deputy Secretary General of NATO.

For his distinguished service at NATO Headquarters, Nicola de Santis was awarded the Cross of Commander of the Order of the Merit of the Star by the President of the Republic of Italy and the Cross of Knight of the Order of the Civil Merit by the King of Spain. He is, among others, currently a member of the London based International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), the Rome based Institute of International Affairs (IAI) and the Center for International Policy Studies (CeSPI), as well as of the Mediterranean Strategy Group of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF). He lectures regularly at high level international conferences, workshops and symposia representing NATO.

His previous positions before joining NATO included: Special Programs Officer at the NATO Defense College in Rome, in charge of extending College contacts with institutions, organizations and foundations doing work in the foreign policy and security policy field; Research Fellow on Middle Eastern conflicts and terrorism at the Italian Society for International Organization (S.I.O.I.) in Rome; Secretary General of the Four Freedoms Club of Rome; Programs Director of the Italian Atlantic Council of Young Political Leaders (C.I.A.G.); Parliamentary Assistant to the Chairman of the Defense Committee and Secretary of the Intelligence Committee of the Italian House of Deputies; Research Assistant to the Secretary General of the Alcide De Gasperi Foundation in Rome. Political Science graduate studies at L.U.I.S.S. University in Rome; he holds as well a post graduate diploma from the 53<sup>rd</sup> 2-Year Course of the S.I.O.I. Advanced School for International Civil Servants in Rome; a NATO Defense College Diploma; and the Brussels based Management Center Europe 2-Year Executive Leadership Programme Certificate. Born on 11 February 1962, Italian national, fluent in English, French and with a very good knowledge of Spanish, Nicola de Santis is married and he has one son.