

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 programmes and public diplomacy activities, 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.

During his more than two-decade career at the Brussels NATO Headquarters, which he joined in November 1991, following international competition, 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 high level political relations with these countries and conducting high level negotiations for international agreements with them.

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 order to establish NATO's cooperative ties with strategic studies institutes, international affairs institutes and think tanks doing work in international and security affairs, in all of the then 16 NATO member countries.

Following another international competition, he was appointed in January 1994 as Briefing and Liaison Officer Italy, External Relations Section, Office of the Secretary General, OIP, 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, trade unions, opinion leaders and the media.

In November 1994, he was dual-hatted as Officer for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, Office of the Secretary General, OIP, 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, in the Office of the Secretary General, Outreach and Partner Relations Section, OIP, 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 February 2006, then 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 Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy and to the Secretary General of NATO.

In January 2011 he was appointed by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen as the Head of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Countries Section in the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division and in July 2012 as Head of the Middle East and North Africa Section in the same Division.

For his distinguished service at NATO Headquarters, he was awarded the Cross of Grand Officer of the Order of the Merit of the Star, 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), and the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (Ce.S.P.I.). He lectures regularly at high level international conferences, workshops and symposia representing NATO. His previous positions before joining NATO included: Director of the Transatlantic Program of the Alcide De Gasperi Foundation in Rome; Research Fellow on Middle Eastern conflicts and terrorism at the Italian Society for International Organisation (S.I.O.I.); Parliamentary Assistant to the Chairman of the Defense Committee and Secretary of the Intelligence Committee of the Italian House of Deputies; Special Programs Officer to the Commandant of the NATO Defense College, in charge of extending contacts to research institutions, strategic studies centers, foundations and organisations doing work in the foreign and security policy field. He undertook his political science graduate studies at L.U.I.S.S. international university in Rome; he holds as well a post graduate diploma from the S.I.O.I. Advanced School for International Civil Servants in Rome and a NATO Defense College diploma. Born on 11 February 1962, Italian national, fluent in English, French and Spanish, he is married and he has one son.