

Magnus-Haus Am Kupfergraben 7 D-10117 Berlin-Mitte

ATLANTIK-BRÜCKE E.V.

Speech by

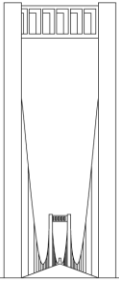
**Admiral Mark Ferguson,
Commander, Allied Joint Force Command Naples; U.S. Naval
Forces Europe; U.S. Naval Forces Africa**

On the Occasion of the Atlantik Ball 2015

Berlin, November 20, 2015

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Minister, dear Friedrich, Ambassadors, fellow flag officers and general officers, distinguished guests from defense, academia, business and government. On behalf of General Philip Breedlove, the European Commander, and all of our military leaders here in Europe and in Germany, I would like to thank Atlantik-Brücke for once again hosting the meeting with the U.S. European Command and this first gala event. I'm honored to participate in this event and more importantly, celebrate an evening and an organization, dedicated to the relationship between the United States and Germany. You know, I was driving over here this evening, and looked at my wife, and we were reflecting upon the significance of this organization, 60 years old, and this great event with so many distinguished guests and I said: "Honey, did you ever, in your wildest dreams, think that I would have a chance to address such a distinguished group of leaders?" She paused for a minute, and looked at me and said: "Dear, you're not in my wildest dreams." It's true!

Let me first say, thank you for the decades of support you have given the United States Military in Germany. We have enjoyed the opportunity to live, to work, and to train in Germany. Our militaries share a close professional relationship, but more importantly, our families have enjoyed the privilege of living in this great country, and have forged deep bonds of friendship with the German people. The security of our two nations is inextricably linked and is a cornerstone of European security. The theme of bridges caused me to reflect on the ways that our nations are tied together, that we as Americans sometimes take for granted, so I did a little research: Our languages and cultures have much in common. German-Americans established the first kindergarten in the United States and introduced the Christmas tree to America. And every American picnic was celebrated with the cuisine many historians say originated here – Hamburgers and Hot Dogs, and we celebrate our greatest Baseball player in our national pastime: Babe Ruth, who is also of German-American descent. America was shaped by many famous German-Americans in the sports and arts, civic and community life, our military leaders and our government leaders.



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My research on the cultural bridges between our nations provided me with the discovery and an inspiration for this evening. I came across an article from the Abendpost, written in Germany in 1901, in which a German researcher named Mr. L.P. Hennighausen discovered a document, a land warrant, with the signature of Abraham Lincoln's ancestors using the German name of Linkhorn. He concluded, based on that evidence, that Lincoln and his family were Quakers who had come from the Rhine or southern Germany. Now, many historians dispute this claim and I don't believe everything I see on the internet. But regardless of the historical accuracy there is no dispute that Lincoln certainly understood leadership during times of crisis in saving our nation during a civil war. And so my inspiration for this evening is a quote from Lincoln: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew." And with the challenges that surround us this evening, Russia in the east and the Ukraine, Syria, Daesh, Libya to the South, a migrant crisis, now is certainly the time to think anew and to act anew. Hence the important work of Atlantik-Brücke and the important time we spend today exploring ideas to meet the security challenges of our time.

But leadership in a crisis requires strength and durability besides new thinking. There is a bridge I know in Scotland that I have always admired. It spans the Firth of Forth near Edinburgh. Opened in 1890, the Forth Road Bridge stands as one of the world's longest single cantilever bridges. It's impressive for a number of reasons, but particularly for its durability if you consider the weather along the Scottish coast – the storms and the waves that crash from the North Sea. The sturdiness of the bridge reminds me of the steadfast relationship between our countries. Just as the Forth Road Bridge owes its longevity to the professionalism of its designers and builders over 100 years ago, the relationship between the United States and Germany owes a great debt to organizations like this one, which have fostered the relationships between our countries for over 60 years. Yet when you cross the old Forth Bridge you can look to one side and see a new bridge under construction, completely different design, but built to address the demands of a new time, a new age with modern technology. And I think tonight of Abraham Lincoln and of bridges and how they remind me of our shared mission. The bridges between our nations must change and adapt to carry the demands of the future, and at the same time, withstand the storms that will assault them over time. Our bridges will carry future generations of Germans and Americans as we go forward. Ultimately, we measure our success in the preservation of the values we share: freedom, democracy, the rule of law, a principled international order, and a secure and prosperous future. This evening we thank the Atlantik-Brücke for sustaining this ideal across the last three generations of our two countries since 1952. Thank you even more for the commitment to our future. We are the better, and our children will be better for your efforts. Thank you for this wonderful evening.