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VAN DER
LAAN**

**Director General EUMS
/Director MPCC**



**Maritime Operations Issue
(ASPIDES, ATALANTA, IRINI)
P15**



**EUMAM UA:
EU Military Assistance
to Ukraine
P05**

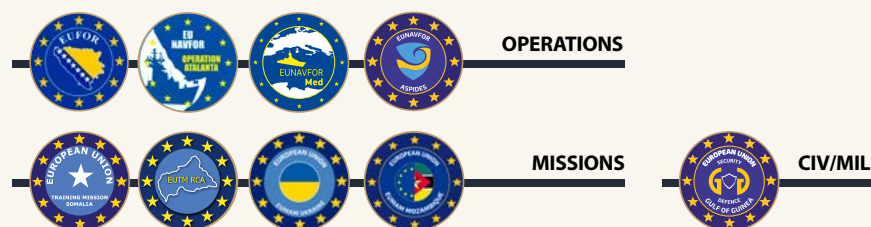
Dear Reader,

We hope you find this edition of IMPETUS useful in increasing your situational awareness of what the EU Military Staff are doing, including the EU CSDP Missions and Operations. In this edition I sit down with DGEUMS & DMPCC, Lt Gen Michiel van der Laan and discuss the experiences that led him to this appointment, what the current EU CSDP challenges are and what are his goals for the remainder of his term as DGEUMS & DMPCC. This edition also provides a focus on our Maritime Operations, EUMAM Ukraine and much more. Enjoy!

Thank you,
The Editor.

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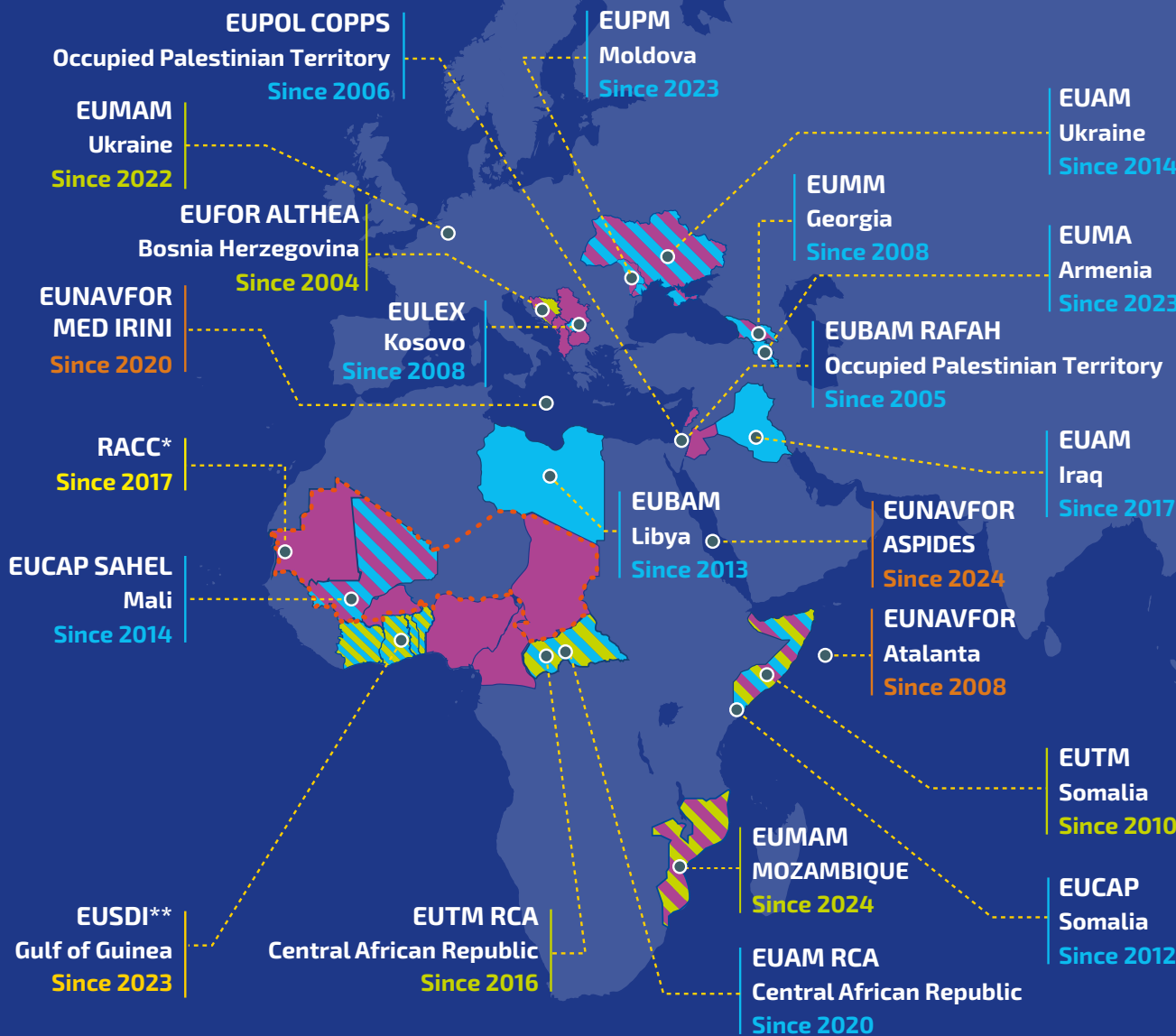
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EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE ENGAGEMENT AROUND THE WORLD

November 2024
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- Military missions/operations
- Civilian missions
- European Peace Facility assistance measures
- Military naval operations/EUNAVFOR

5

Ongoing military missions/operations

12

Ongoing civilian missions

3

Ongoing military naval operations/EUNAVFOR

1

Civilian & military initiative



Integrated Approach:

EU security and defence actions are deployed and implemented in concert with other EU tools and instruments to achieve strategic impact.



Objectives:

Peace-keeping, conflict prevention, strengthening international security, supporting the rule of law, prevention of human trafficking and piracy, contributing to maritime security, providing military equipment and security infrastructure to EU partners.

*RACC: EU Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell for the Sahel

**The EU Security and Defence Initiative/Gulf of Guinea aims to empower Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin to strengthen their security and defence capabilities

Sitting down with DGEUMS and DMPCC

In June 2023, Lt Gen Michiel van der Laan was appointed Director General of the European Union Military Staff (DGEUMS) and Director of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (DMPCC). Almost a year and a half on, this editor had the opportunity to sit down with him to discuss his experiences so far.

DMPCC, Lt Gen van der Laan visits EUTM Somalia in Nov '23



What career experiences have led you to the appointment as DGEUMS and DMPCC?

DG: I have an operational background at all levels in the Dutch Army. As a Battalion Commander, I deployed to Bosnia as the Commander of the 11th Mechanised Battalion Task Force (SFOR). As a Brigade Commander, I commanded an EU Battle Group (EUBG), and as Commander of (1)German/Netherlands Corps, I led both the NATO Response Forces Land Component and Joint Task Force. At the strategic level, I was the Director of Operations in the Netherlands Ministry of Defence, responsible for the deployment of all Dutch soldiers with the UN, NATO, and EU. I have also worked as the Head of the Future Concepts Branch of the Defence Staff. Looking back, it has been an operational road, an operational rite, with appointments in concept development and plans in between. Before I took up my appointment in the EUMS and MPCC, I was the Military Representative (MILREP) for the Netherlands to the EU and NATO for four years. When I started this job, I felt 90% ready, now I feel I am operating to full capacity.

Did you ever serve in the EUMS or MPCC prior to this appointment?

DG: No, this is my first time, although I do have some experience with the EU. In 2011, I was the Commander of the Dutch-led EUBG with the participation of, amongst others, Germany, Austria and Finland. During that time, I was in Brussels on several occasions for briefings at the EUMS, the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and the Political and Security Committee (PSC). That

was my first EU experience, and of course, as a MILREP, I was part of the EUMC, representing my Chief of Defence.

You commenced your appointment at the end of June 2023. How would you reflect on your period in office since then?

DG: It has been a busy period for all of us, for our staff members, in both the EUMS and the MPCC, and our colleagues from the European Union External Action Service (EEAS). We have the war in Ukraine, the conflict in Gaza and Lebanon, the situation in the Red Sea and challenges across the Sahel. Unfortunately, we have had to close our missions in Niger and Mali. At the same time, we see that there is a significant interest from Member States in other regions, including the Western Balkans. This, accompanied with our work on the implementation of the Strategic Compass, has made sure there haven't been any dull moments.

Developing the EU's ability to act is our main effort. We have significantly stepped up our support to Ukraine. A central instrument in this has been the EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine. To date we have trained over 64,000 Ukrainian soldiers on European soil. Additionally, we are supporting Ukraine through the Clearing House Cell and carefully monitor the development of Capability Coalitions.

Furthermore, we have seen the launch of Operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES in the Red Sea and I am proud of the extensive role the EUMS played in the establishment of this operation. We also launched the EU Security and Defence Initiative in the Gulf of Guinea (EU SDI GoG). Through this initiative, we have deployed the first Mobile Training Teams in Benin with training teams deploying to Ghana shortly. We were very successful with our training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique). This mission achieved its mandated tasks and has now evolved into a Military Assistance Mission for Mozambique. Our Training Mission in Somalia continues to provide significant support to the Somali National Armed Forces.

In short, I believe we are extremely active in supporting the interests of the European Union and our CSDP Missions and Operations are the most visible aspect of that. Our inputs form an integral part of the integrated approach as we contribute to the safety and security of the Union.

You reflected briefly on some of the challenges, can you



expand on what are the current challenges we face?

DG: I believe we are facing four threats. The first is a physical threat, clearly coming from the East with Russia attacking Ukraine; this also directly threatens our safety and security.

The second challenge is the security of sea lines of communication. The attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea are an example of how vulnerable sea lines of communication can be if the appropriate security measures are not in place. This has also provided a threat to our economic prosperity.

The third challenge is the changing dynamics in the Sahel and the evolving security situation in some African countries. We must do more to support those countries as they deal with emerging threats to their security and defence. Again, through an integrated approach, the EU should assist and support those countries through partnerships and collaboration.

The fourth challenge we face is in the Western Balkans. Despite our efforts, the situation remains vulnerable. We must continue to support our partners in the region and contribute to their security and defence.

To respond to these challenges, we must ensure that we, as a collective 27 Member State organisation, provide the appropriate support and resources to our missions and operations. As the Mission Commander for the EU's military missions, force generation remains a constant challenge. We require additional assets and personnel for each of our missions and operations and I call, and will continue to call, upon all Member States to do their part and provide what is necessary for success. If we want to be relevant and successful on the global stage as a security provider, our rhetoric must match our actions.

If we look back over everything that you highlighted, what did you learn from a personal perspective?

DG: It does not matter whether you are a young officer or an

old general, you will learn new things every day. One is never finished learning. What makes the EU special is the integrated approach to crisis response and management. My interactions so far have convinced me that the integrated approach is the only way forward and that the military instrument by itself is not enough. All instruments of power must be directed in a concerted way to achieve the EU's objectives.

What I have learned is that I have people working in my staffs that continually do more than I imagined possible, taking into account the understaffing of the EUMS and MPCC. The manning of the EUMS and MPCC is absolutely key. The message I regularly deliver to Ambassadors, the EUMC and Member States therefore is the following: if you want to change political wish into political will, this comes with a bill. This bill can be monetary, it can be a contribution of forces or it can be a contribution of personnel.

Is there any achievement that you are particularly proud of?

DG: If I was to mention one or two things that would be unfair to all the others who have been working hard before and since my arrival. However, some products are more visible than others. For example, when working on our contributions to the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) process, the outcome of that is important, but perhaps less visible. While working on Operation ASPIDES, the result is very visible. Therefore, I would be selling people short if I were to mention only a few achievements. Moreover, let it be clear that what the EUMS and MPCC have done are not my achievements but rather the achievements of the team. All results matter. We redeployed from Mali, and this might sound strange, but I deem it a success. The closing of EUTM Mali itself was not something to celebrate, but the execution of the redeployment was, as it was done in a very professional manner, significantly supported by Spain.

In the end, I think the biggest success has been the



Lt Gen Van der Laan receiving a briefing from Maj Gen Werner Albl, Chief of Staff of the MPCC, at the commencement of MILEX 23

collaboration and teamwork of the EUMS and MPCC. Furthermore, we continue to conduct outreach and interaction with our colleagues in the EEAS, the Commission and amongst Member States.

It is a four-year appointment, which leaves two and a half years left of your term. If you were to prioritise your goals for the next two and a half years, what would you say they are?

DG: What I have not mentioned until now is the development of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC). We are working hard on this and the aim is to reach Full Operational Capability by the beginning of 2025. I am convinced that we will make it, albeit with some initial limitations. I want to stress that the achievement of FOC is not the end, but just the beginning. Its sustainment in the months and years ahead must be a priority.

In addition, I think we can do more work concerning concept development in certain areas. It is not only important that we contribute our military expertise; it also needs to be clear how we contribute this expertise. Currently, we are working on the EU Military Framework for Security and Defence, in short the MF-10. This will be a guiding document for our staff

work, outlining military efforts based on political guidance. This framework seeks to create a logical narrative as to what is the military contribution to the EU Political Level of Ambition through the EU Integrated Approach.

Furthermore, we see that there is a renewed focus on supporting structures for security and defence. The EUMS Logistics Directorate will continue to play its role concerning Military Mobility and the sustainability of military efforts. Additionally, we are further developing our Intelligence Directorate as a highly specialised asset. The MPCC, as the preferred OHQ, is on its way to Full Operational Capability, but like the RDC, the ability to sustain the capability of the MPCC will be a key objective over time.

Finally, the sustainment of our current missions and operations will continue to be a significant challenge. We have to ensure that we are able to adapt, otherwise we risk becoming irrelevant. Sometimes I compare our missions and operations to Nokia. Once the invincible market leader in mobile phones, it failed to further develop its strategy and was marginalised. I want to prevent that happening to us, so I believe we must continue to adapt our approach to missions and operations following the ever changing circumstances we operate in.

Is there anything you would like to add?

DG: My first priority lies with the people working in EUMS and MPCC. I am proud to work alongside these dedicated professionals. It is through their efforts that we achieve success. This has been the highlight of the first period of my tenure. And of course I'm equally proud of the personnel in the missions and operations of the EU. Deployed in challenging operational environments, away from their families and homes for extended periods, I recognise their sacrifice and thank them for their excellent work.

To conclude, let me use a metaphor: the last seven kilometres of a marathon are the toughest, I know from experience. You need to stay focused, dig deeper and keep going. This goes for us, too; we cannot stop, we must adapt, embrace change, innovate and respond to the challenges we face in a positive and constructive manner. In doing this, and with the continued support of the Member States, we will meet the EU's military level of ambition and reach the finish line. 🏆



Lt Gen van der Laan with staff from the EUMS and MPCC at the inaugural EUMS/MPCC DGs Sports Event, October 24



The European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine

BY LT COL CONOR KINGSTON AND LT COL VOJKO CUCEK

The European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA) was established on 15 November 2022 with the decision of the Council of the European Union. EUMAM UA is a non-executive Training Mission, which was custom designed and built to support training delivery to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) after the Russian invasion of their territories in February of the same year. The initial 24-month mandate for the mission facilitated the delivery of training by willing Member State Armed Forces through a EU reimbursement process. The mission delivers training exclusively on EU Member State territories across the Land, Air and Maritime domains. On 8 November 2024, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision extending the mandate of EUMAM Ukraine for a further two years.

The EUMAM mission is led by Lt Gen Michel Van Der Laan (NL) and his Deputy, Major General Werner Albl (DE), in addition to their roles at the helm of the EUMS and the MPCC.

The Coordination Synchronisation and Liaison Cell

The Coordination Synchronisation and Liaison Cell (CSLC) is co-located with the MPCC in Brussels. The cell is tasked with the daily coherence and coordination of training in support of the AFU and the communication, synchronisation and analysis of training to the training delivery Member States and to partner and adjacent HQs such as Security Assistance Group Ukraine (SAG-U) and Operation INTERFLEX in the UK. The cell contains a leadership element, augmentees to the MPCC Combined Joint Branches, Action Officers, Liaison Officers and supporting staff. In the early days of the mission, systems and procedures were somewhat experimental, and subtle changes were made as experience was gained and today the relationship between the Commands and Member States is functional and productive. In addition to the opportunity to work collectively under the EU flag, the involved militaries are entitled to reimbursements of AFU facing costs (eg. transport, training materiel and medical cover). This financial buffer has allowed Member States to offer a more sustainable training

support program. The CSLC works with the AFU to identify the high priority training demands and liaises with training providers to keep supply and demand as closely matched as is possible. This task, considering the speed of change on the front lines for the AFU and the time required to secure training space, resources and instructors by the training delivery nations, can lead to a reasonably short planning cycle. As a training mission, EUMAM UA partners directly with a EUMS organisation called the Clearing House Cell who deal specifically with EU MS military equipment donations to the AFU. The CSLC also acts as the primary interface and junction box for all communication and coordination with adjacent HQs such as SAG-U, now becoming *NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU)* and Operation INTERFLEX (UK).

EUMAM UA Training Commands

EUMAM UA is based on two large multinational training commands. The Combined Arms Training Command (CAT-C) in Poland and the Specialised Training Command (ST-C) in

Germany. The CAT-C is focused on the delivery of unit collective training, allowing formed units to exercise staff elements up to Brigade level and manoeuvre elements from Squad to Battalion level. The expansive training areas that CAT-C has made available enable tank manoeuvre training up to Battalion level and the proximity to the Ukrainian borders makes it an ideal location to exercise larger numbers. The ST-C prioritises the delivery of training in military skills, ranging from artillery, sniping and staff/leadership training to the full spectrum of military medicine. ST-C has made a wide variety of specialist schools, simulators and training areas available to the mission and they deliver training in collaboration with many multinational Mobile Training Teams. Both headquarters are commanded by two-star Generals.



The Member States

EUMAM UA is delivering training in 12 EU Member States and that effort is supported by 24 EU countries and Norway, in the form of Mobile Training Teams (MTT). EUMAM UA has broken the mould of traditional EU Training Missions or non-executive missions in some ways regarding scale, cost, Member State involvement and the training delivery footprint to name but a few, however the mission remains fully aligned with the EU strategic framework. EUMAM UA is also the only Training Mission that delivers all of its training on EU soil.

EUMAM UA offers all Member States the opportunity to contribute in a number of different ways. Some opt to host training on their sovereign territory, others prefer to deploy Mobile Training Teams to partner nation training sites and some prefer to just support politically and financially. The training effort is the largest since World War II and it is fair to say that if on 15 November 2022 you explained the extent to which the mission has scaled, it would seem almost impossible to believe. Political will, Member State steadfastness and a collective responses to RuAF actions and behaviours in Ukraine have galvanised the EU reactions across the areas of military support, humanitarian aid and crisis response.

Many Member States have delivered training on their home soil, often in addition to supplying Mobile Training Teams to either CAT-C or ST-C. In Spain, a dedicated Brigade level HQ structure is dedicated to the Spanish efforts in support of EUMAM UA training delivery through what has been named the Toledo Training Coordination Centre (TTCC). TTCC turns out an impressive number of Basic Training courses but is not

limited to that Line of Effort. Military engineering, air defence and leadership training are also included in their training output. Through a shared Basic Training focus, TTCC and Operation INTERFLEX in the UK have developed a close relationship, sharing lessons and enabling instructor exchanges between the UK and Spain.

Training has been categorised into four primary Lines of Effort as follows:

- Individual Training (basic/recruit training)
- Specialised Training (individual and platform)
- Collective Training
- Leadership and staff training

As the mission responded to AFU needs in line with the trajectory of the war, the focus has shifted from one Line of Effort to another. Basic training requests surge in tandem with mobilisations in UA. This is followed by training the newly qualified soldiers across numerous specialities and eventually exercising them as collective units and investing in unit leadership from squad to Company level leaders. In recent months, EUMAM UA has agreed to deliver training to members of the UA Internal Security Forces (ISF), which includes the National Guard, the State Police, the Border Guards and units of the Intelligence Services, under the proviso that they are under the Operational Control of the AFU General Staff.

The Numbers Trained since 15 November 2022

EUMAM UA has been in existence just over two years. Within that period, it has designed a framework to support the AFU with training, constantly adapting and adjusting while collaborating with the other organisations who share a similar mission. Thousands of EU trainers have engaged with the AFU during the mission, over 64,000 (15.11.2024) AFU and ISF trainees have qualified in dozens of specialisations and disciplines. The effort to close the training gap is one that is actually led by the AFU, they are fighting a defensive war against one of the largest militaries in the world and training hundreds of thousands of their citizens to defend their borders under arms, and they are forced to do these things concurrently.

The rapidity at which the AFU had to expand in response to the RuAF invasion generated a huge training lag with regard to the multiple thousands of new entrants every month. International military donations, particularly through the CHC and the International Donation Coordination Centre are huge in scale, but as an unavoidable consequence, have delivered dozens of variants off every imaginable piece of military hardware, which, while very welcome, effectively accentuates the complexity of training troops to use, plan and maintain on such a broad base of specialist platforms. As the war continues, the shift will pivot from one speciality to another and issues like 155mm ammunition, air superiority and UAV developments will demand the continuation of a responsive and adaptive training approach from EUMAM UA.

The outputs of the EUMAM UA mission in support of the AFU are far in excess of what was initially envisaged and are a true reflection of what European unity can achieve. Security in the Union and on its borders has now become a red flag that the Member States have responded to with action and conviction and there is a message in this for those who seek to destabilise or contravene EU principles. 🇪🇺



The EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) 2025

Strengthening the EU's Crisis Response Capabilities

BY LTCOL (GS) KAI SCHLEGEL

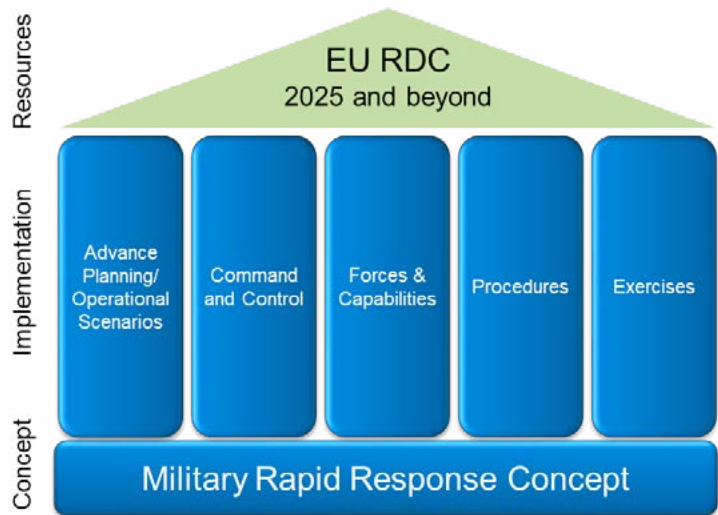
The EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) is going to be a crucial tool for protecting Europe's interests militarily in case of an urgency from 2025 onwards. The RDC allows Europe to respond swiftly to crises beyond its borders, safeguarding shared values and strengthening global security. It works alongside existing tools to create a more robust crisis response toolbox, reinforcing public trust and the EU's credibility. By contributing to the RDC, Member States show their steady commitment to European security, projecting a united front and strengthening collective influence. Hence, the RDC represents a stronger Europe on the global geopolitical stage.

For years, scepticism surrounded the European Union's (EU) ability to effectively use its Rapid Response Forces (RRF). These doubts have been especially evident for instance during the hasty evacuation operations from Afghanistan (2021) and Sudan (2023). However, the EU is now taking significant steps to enhance its crisis response capabilities with the RDC that should become operational by 2025.

The RDC is an architecture designed to enable the EU to militarily respond swiftly to crises, including conflicts, natural disasters, or humanitarian emergencies. It is a key component of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and is intended to enhance the EU's ability to act independently, maintaining peace and stability in areas of interest. The target is to have this capability operational by 2025.

Strategic Compass: A New Direction for Crisis Response

Recent global events, such as the hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, have compelled EU Member States to adopt the Strategic Compass. This plan is crucial for enhancing the EU's ability to act independently in times of crises, particularly as security threats become more complex. Despite having the ability to deploy RRF since 2007, issues like funding, political disagreements, and alternative solutions have hindered their use. However, the growing complexity of global security threats is



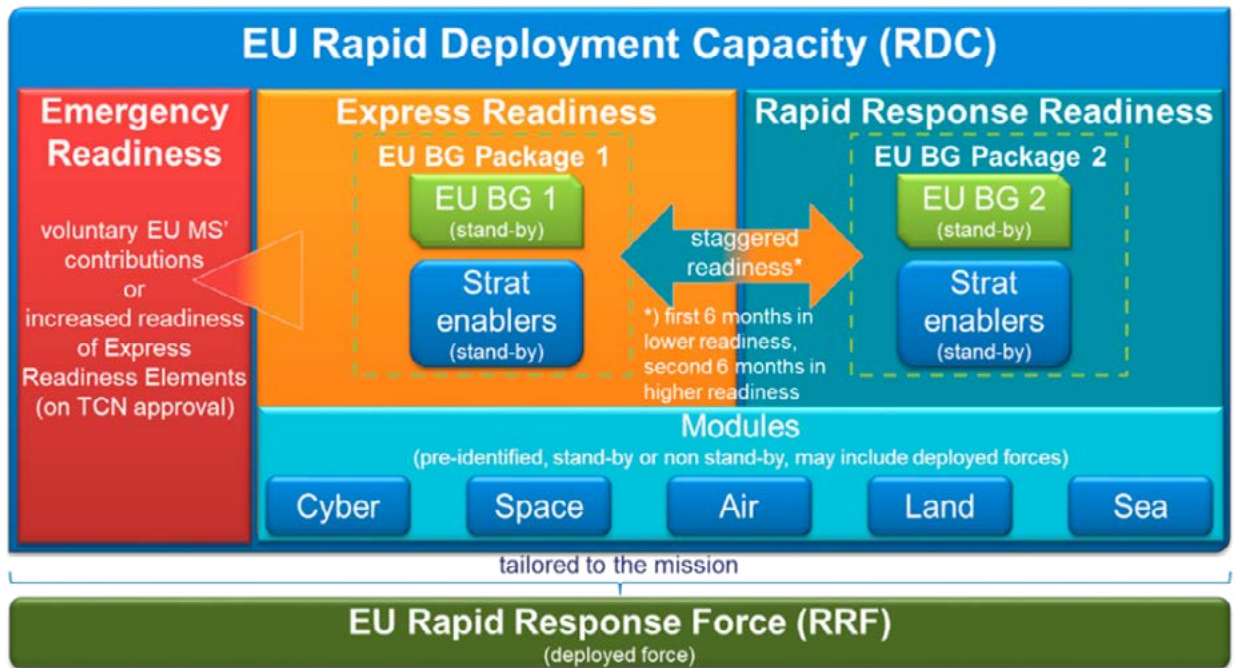
driving a newfound willingness to deploy these forces when necessary.

A possible concern regarding the RDC might be the potential for increased militarization of the EU. Critics worry that a rapid deployment force could lead to a more aggressive stance in international affairs, undermining the EU's commitment to diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution. Thus, it is important to highlight that the EU consistently employs its tools as part of the Integrated Approach, never relying solely on military means, but always as part of a combination of diplomatic efforts, economic sanctions, and humanitarian assistance.

To safeguard transparency, the EU has committed to ensuring that the RDC operates in accordance with the values of the Union and adheres to international law. As with any decision on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the deployment decision-making process of the RDC involves consultations with Member States, ensuring accountability and transparency.



LtCol (GS) Kai Schlegel has been working at EU Military Staff (Operations Directorate) as a force planner since 2022. During his career, he held several positions from tactical to strategic level in Germany and in deployments to Kosovo and Iraq. His background is air assault infantry.



Understanding the Difference between the EU and NATO

A common question is why the EU needs a Rapid Deployment Capacity when NATO exists. NATO's primary focus is defending the Alliance through military deterrence, while the EU is primarily a political, economic, and cultural union. While NATO concentrates on defending the territories of its members, the EU's approach to security involves projecting military power to support and promote peace and stability beyond its borders, particularly through its CSDP.

The EU's integrated approach combines military, political, and economic tools to address crises comprehensively. As global security conditions evolve, the EU recognizes the need to project military power independently to protect its interests.

Combined Efforts for Greater Flexibility

Some argue that rescue and evacuation operations should be the responsibility of individual nations. While this is true, recent operations in Sudan and Gaza in 2023 demonstrated that national crisis response forces often face limitations. These operations, though successful, frequently require collaboration with other countries due to limited resources and

time constraints. Working together under the EU's umbrella can make these operations more sustainable and efficient.

National RRF can act quickly because they do not require extensive coordination. However, their capacity for sustained, long-term operations is limited. By synchronizing resources under the EU, Member States can extend the duration and effectiveness of their operations.

The EU's RRF, which include Battlegroups and additional joint capabilities, is essential for the EU's ability to manage crises. By providing a shared picture of available forces, the RDC helps Member States coordinate their commitments to both the EU and NATO. This synchronisation has already led to an increase in the number of forces available for deployment, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach.

Concerns exist that forces cannot be committed to multiple tasks simultaneously. However, this overlooks the dynamic nature of force planning. We need to clearly define what the single set of forces means for the RDC. Forces can still be reported to the EU, even if they are committed to another organization like NATO, as long as their readiness levels do not conflict between the different organizations. The ultimate decision on their contributions stays with the Member States, hence, allowing greater flexibility without duplicating efforts.

The Role of the MPCC

A critical component of the RDC's effectiveness is the EU's Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), which will assume strategic command and control for military rapid response starting in 2025. One challenge the EU faces is the lack of a permanent command and control structure. Historically, the Member States avoided creating such a structure to prevent potential duplication of NATO's efforts. However, this approach has hindered quick and effective responses due to restrictions of different information domains. In order to be capable to react quickly in both organizations, if the situation dictates, it has been vital to change minds. The MPCC will provide the necessary leadership and coordination for

Col Ray Murphy (now BG), CJ7 Head Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) briefs at the Force Generation Conference in April 2024.





Exercise troops conduct an Amphibious Assault during the first EU Live Military Exercise (LIVEX 23), Rota, Spain, Oct 2023.

RRF operations and missions, ensuring that EU forces can be deployed rapidly and effectively.

Readiness: A Continuous Process

To respond effectively to crises, the EU must understand the environments in which it might operate. Advance planning is crucial for this purpose. Since 2023, EU Member States have been working on contingency plans, essential for saving time during a crisis. By 2025, these efforts are expected to result in a comprehensive set of plans guiding the EU's rapid response efforts.

Limited planning capacity at both the national and EU levels can be overcome by working together. Joint and combined planning efforts have already begun to streamline the process of setting up rapid response formations. This standardization will continue, making the EU's rapid response capabilities more effective and easier to deploy when necessary.

Ensuring that the RDC is ready by 2025 requires continuous effort and commitment from both the EU and its Member States. Readiness involves several factors, including having operational forces, making quick and effective decisions, ensuring proper command and control, and fostering a mind-set geared toward action.

Hence, one of the key initiatives supporting the RDC's readiness is the Live Exercise (LIVEX) program, which

is designed to test and enhance the RDC's capabilities. LIVEX are based on real-world scenarios, helping EU forces prepare for the challenges they are likely to face in actual deployments. These exercises are crucial for ensuring that the EU is ready to respond to crises by 2025, providing valuable insights into the operational effectiveness of EU RRF.

Evolution into a New Era for EU Crisis Response

By the end of 2024, Lt. Gen. van der Laan, Director General of the EU Military Staff, will present his assessment of the RDC's readiness to the EU Military Committee. The indication is that the EU's Rapid Response Forces will be operational capable to handle expected tasks by 2025, and provide a strategic capability to quickly act in crises. However, readiness is an ongoing process that requires continuous effort and commitment.

The progress made so far shows that the EU is taking its RDC seriously, with an unprecedented focus on achieving operational readiness by 2025. While challenges remain, the EU's commitment to improving its RDC represents a significant step toward greater autonomy and preparedness in crisis management.

The EU's efforts to enhance its RDC mark a significant shift in its approach to crisis management. This capability will allow the EU to act more independently and effectively in response to crises, reflecting its growing role as a global player in maintaining peace and stability. 🇪🇺

TOWARDS AN EU RAPID DEPLOYMENT CAPACITY: KEY MILESTONES

Roadmap

MARCH 2022
Agreement to develop EU RDC by 2025

2023
First two EU RDC Coordination Conferences

2024
Second EU live military exercise

OCTOBER 2023
First EU live military exercise

FIRST HALF 2024
Finalisation of the whole set of operational scenarios

2025
Full operational capability



The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC); a vital link for European Strategic Autonomy

BY LTC IRVING FROKLAGE, PAO MPCC



As part of the initiative to strengthen the EU's security and defense which stemmed from the EU Global Strategy of 2016, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) was established by Council Decision in June 2017. Since then the MPCC has been the EU's strategic military headquarters in Brussels, enabling the EU to react in a faster, more efficient and effective manner as a security provider outside its borders.

The Director General of the EU Military Staff (DG EUMS), Lt Gen van der Laan, also serves as the Director of the MPCC (DMPCC) and, in that capacity, acts as Mission Commander for all non-executive military missions. DMPCC reports to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) in which all Member States are represented at the level of Ambassador. It is the main political decision making body in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy. The PSC monitors the state of play of all military missions and operations and prepares major decisions, such as the initiation of new missions, or the termination or extension of older missions. At the same time, DMPCC keeps the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) informed on all matters related to military missions. Formally, the EUMC consists of the Chiefs of Defence of all Member States, but its weekly

meetings are normally attended by their permanent Military Representatives based here in Brussels.

EU CSDP Planning

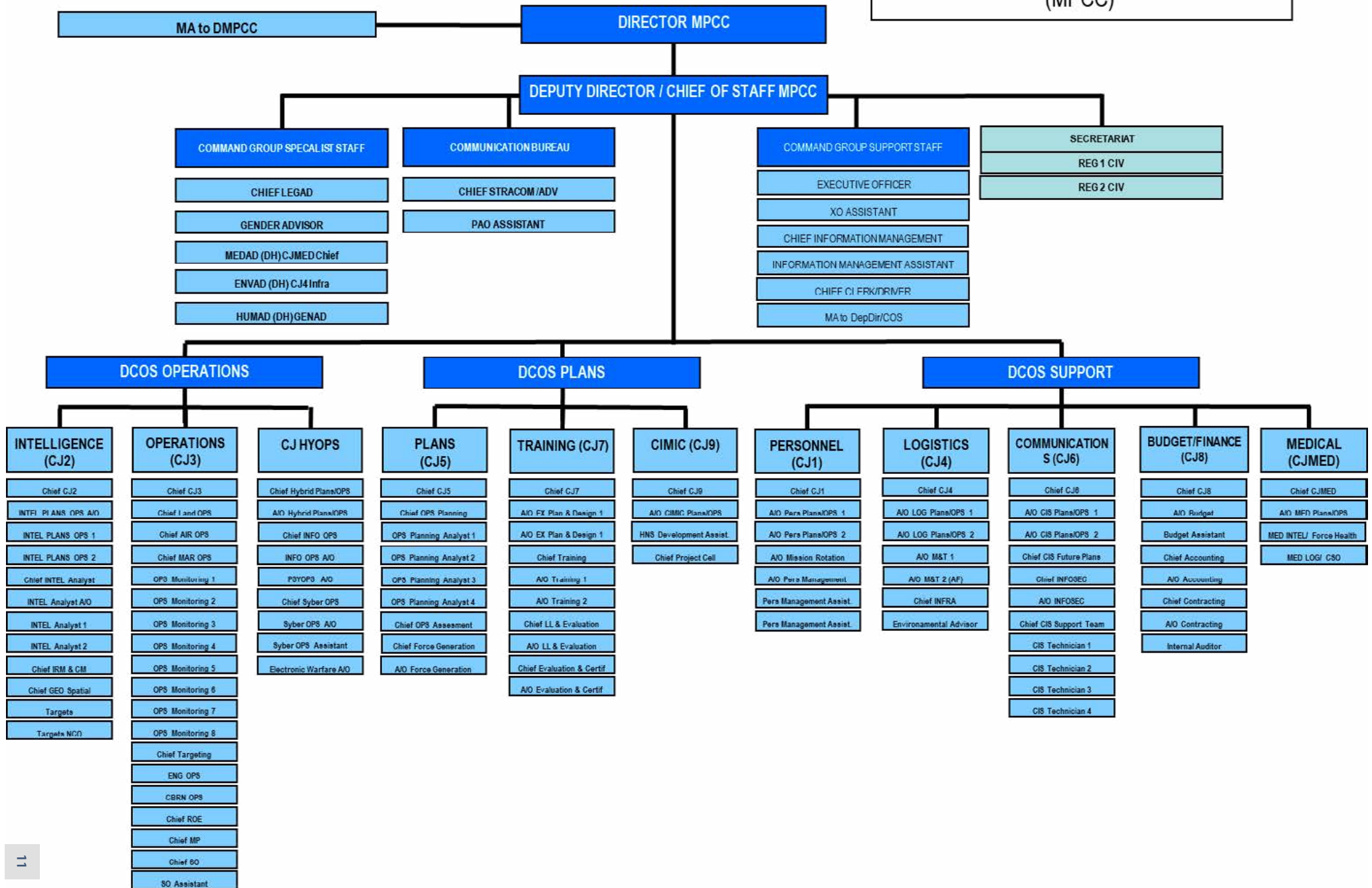
For the purpose of planning military missions, the MPCC makes use of the EU Concept for Military Planning at the Political Strategic Level, the main features of which are depicted below. The first military input are the Military Strategic Options, provided by the EUMS (shown in green). Co-located and having the same commander, cooperation between the EUMS and MPCC is easily facilitated. Initial planning elements from the MPCC are usually part of the EUMS planning teams. Later on in the planning process, the responsibility for providing military input lies with the MPCC (shown in orange). Practice shows parallel planning, executed at the same time, is the norm. The planning phase of a new training mission

may take up to six months. If time is of the essence, which it usually is, the planning process can be fast-tracked. For example, the planning of the EU's most recent military CSDP endeavour, Operation ASPIDES in the Red Sea, was conducted in just a few weeks.

The task organisation of the MPCC

The MPCC is a relatively small headquarters compared to the existing national Operations Headquarters (OHQ), but is developing further at a rapid pace. In this new organisational chart, there are now three Deputy Chiefs of Staff, all OF-5, to guarantee the integrity of the staff output. Another innovative feature is the creation of a Hybrid Operations Cell within the Operations Branch. This Hybrid Operations Cell combines psychological operations, information operations, cyber operations and electronic warfare activities.

Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)



This branch is dedicated to the hybrid nature of current conflicts and ties in with other hybrid structures within the EU.

EU CSDP Missions and Operations: MISSIONS

Currently, the MPCC is responsible for the operational planning and conduct of the EU's non-executive military missions. At present, there are EU Training Missions (EUTMs) in Somalia and the Central African Republic. As of 1 September 2024, the EUTM Mozambique was reformed to an EU Military Assistance Mission or EUMAM MOZAMBIQUE, with a different mandate. The MPCC also serves as the headquarters of the EU Military Assistance Mission for Ukraine (EUMAM UA). When the Member States decided not to extend the mandate of EUTM Mali this year, the MPCC redeployed all its personnel and assets back to Europe. After the most recent coup in Niger, Member States also terminated the EU Military Partnership Mission in Niger. The MPCC works closely with its civilian counterpart, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) to ensure maximum synergy. In close cooperation with the CPCC, the Security and Defence Initiative in the Gulf of Guinea (EU SDI GoG) is directed.

FUTURE

In order to address the current and future security challenges and demands, and based on the ambitions of the Strategic Compass of 2022, the MPCC will further evolve into a



headquarters that is able to plan and conduct all non-executive and two small-scale operations or one medium-scale executive operation, as well as live exercises in 2025.

A series of exercises in 2024 are the stepping-stones to reach this status. Up to and including 2022, these military exercises (MILEX) were command post exercises without actual troops exercising on the ground. The first EU Live Exercise (LIVEX) with troops in the field took place in Rota Spain, from the 16 to 22 October 2023. With 2,800 military personnel, including equipment and strategic enablers, this exercise represented an important measuring point for the MPCC. The MILEX series of exercises will continue to be an annual part of the MPCC's battle rhythm. In parallel and by using the same stepping-stones, the EU will develop its Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) as an asset to deploy in case of crisis. The MPCC will be the preferred strategic headquarters to direct the RDC.

Any comparison with other OHQs is skewed. The MPCC is limited in size and no other military headquarters is so intertwined with the civilian side as the MPCC is here in Brussels. The EU is currently making use of national OHQs for its naval operations, while SHAPE functions as the OHQ for land operation EUFOR ALTHEA BiH – and will continue to do so in the future.

As the core staff of the MPCC remain limited in numbers, the MPCC started to experiment with cooperating with a family of other OHQs as a reach-back capacity. Amongst others, the OHQs in Ulm in Germany and Larissa in Greece are part of this family and proved during MILEX 23 and MILEX 24 that this concept can work. During these same exercises, the MPCC was temporarily reinforced with augmentees from the Member States, who provided their expertise to the MPCC.

CONCLUSION

The aim of further developing the MPCC is to enable the EU to act militarily. However, the ambitions of the Strategic Compass come at a price and challenges remain. The MILEX series of exercises and continued Member States' support are instrumental in resolving these challenges.

Compared to other strategic headquarters, the MPCC is small. However, this is understandable due to its specific purpose within the EU's integrated approach. The experienced staff officers needed to operate the MPCC are a scarce resource in all Member States, but if every Member State does its part, the MPCC will blossom.

With the further development of the MPCC, the European Union will also increasingly develop its capabilities to play a role of geopolitical importance. 🍷



DMPCC Lt Gen van der Laan addresses the staff of the MPCC during the Initiating Military Directive (IMD) at MILEX 24.



MILEX 24 - On route to the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity

BY **CDR(N) RAPHAËL FACHINETTI** ACTION OFFICER IN EXERCISE, TRAINING, ANALYSIS BRANCH, CONCEPTS AND CAPABILITIES DIRECTORATE



The Staff of the MPCC brief EU Partners during the MILEX 24 Observation Day which took place in April this year.

Exercise Background

MILEX 24 is a Common Security and Defence Policy exercise involving an Operations HQ (OHQ) at the military strategic level and a Force HQ (FHQ) at the operational level and it focuses on the Crisis Response Planning at the military strategic and operational levels. The aim of MILEX 24 is to strengthen the European Union's military capabilities, preparedness, and ability to respond promptly, within the context of the Integrated Approach to external crises in a hybrid threat environment. In accordance with the Strategic Compass objective, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) acting as the OHQ ensured the leadership of the military operation.

Exercise Scenario

MILEX 24 commenced when the HR/VP received a letter from the President of the fictitious country called Seglia requesting the support of the European Union. Seglia has long been one of the most stable democracies in this area, but there is a considerable and growing risk that the violent conflict experienced in recent times could worsen and destabilise the whole of the region. The European Union has a strong interest in durable peace and stability in this region, with Seglia as a critical partner to ensure democratization in the region. The interests and strategies of several local and global actors are conflicting and aggravating the crisis beyond the limits of the region. The European Union has to act to support Seglia and to ensure stability and peace within the country and in its surrounding neighbourhood.

Soon after the letter was received from the President of Seglia, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) set up a cross directorate Crisis Planning Team (CPT), and proposed the strategic option of an "Initial Phase of Stabilization" operation in Seglia. They then commenced the process of drafting the Initiating Military Directive (IMD). The objective was to deploy, in accordance with the Strategic Compass, a force of up to 5000 troops, with enablers, in Seglia in order to restore a safe and secure environment. On April 11 2024, the EUMS CPT was able to handover the responsibility of the operation to the MPCC. From that moment on, the MPCC acted as the strategic headquarter for the operation.

The Product

The MPCC was already contributing to the draft of the IMD but immediately after this handover/take over an intense planning phase began for the MPCC, supported by Euro-corps acting as the Force HQ (FHQ) the in-theatre command and control organisation. The latter, stationed in Strasbourg, sent a liaison team to Brussels to facilitate collaborative work. Member States were engaged to reinforce the MPCC and to participate in the exercise's conduct team. Four weeks later, the MPCC was able to deliver an Operation Plan for a scripted approval by the EU Council.

When

MILEX 24 took place, as a crisis planning process, from 08 April to 03 May 2024. Approximately one hundred personnel, made

General Robert Brieger, Chairman of the EU Military Committee being briefed by DMPCC Lt Gen van der Lann and COS MPCC MG Albl during a visit to MILEX 24 in April 2024.



up of permanent MPCC staff and augmentees from Member States, plus Eurocorps personals, participated as the training audience in this exercise. Over 50 subject matter experts were involved in the Exercise Control Team (EXCON). As an illustration of its future operational capacity and the work done since its inception, the MPCC used, for the last time, the historic building of 150 Kortenberg (KO) before moving to the NEO complex on Rue d'Arlon in May. In an almost empty KO building, the MPCC was able to use all the space to lay out all staff cells and modules.

These four weeks were not an easy path for the planners. They had to develop mutual understanding between the MPCC and Eurocorps, form a common operational picture based on a lot of data and to develop skills in utilising the updated Command Information System. Thanks to a lot of side contributors, the EXCON was able to challenge the MPCC and force the staff to its limits. Among the partner organisations who contributed to MILEX 24 were the Political & Security Committee assistant office; the EEAS Legal Advisor team; some EU DG as DG ECHO; the United Nation Office of Military Affairs; the International Committee of Red Cross; the European Security Defense College; the Hybrid Center of Excellence and the Cyber and Information Domain Coordination Centre (PESCO project).

For the first time the MPCC could use the Advance Planning Product and the Rapid Deployment Capacity comprehensive database, both developed by the Operations Directorate of the EUMS. These are five operational scenarios and related contingency plans developed in accordance with the Strategic Compass and with the approval of the Member States. This document is the foundation of the Operation Plan drafted by the strategic headquarters. The aim of this advance planning process is to spare time for planners and, for the European Union, to be able to react swiftly to an emerging crisis.

For the first time in an EU exercise, MILEX 24 included the integration of an Advisory Team within the EXCON structure. This team, provided by EU EL HQ in Larisa, had a mentoring role for the MPCC staff which proved to be very beneficial, both on an individual and staff basis. Due to the experience of the team in planning real world operations, it provided the independence when it came to viewing the MPCC processes and procedures and the products issued by the MPCC during the exercise. The role was to quality assure what the MPCC was doing and provide written and oral feedback in order to improve the lesson learned process.

Visits and Observer Day

In addition to the many interactions with international, EU or non-governmental entities mentioned above and related to the scenario, the Director General of the EUMS Lt Gen Michiel van der Laan hosted a number of high profile visits to MILEX 24 such as Madam Delphin Pronk, Chair of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and General Robert Brieger, Chairman of the EU Military Committee (CEUMC). On Tuesday 30 April, the Deputy Director and Chief of Staff of the MPCC, Major General Werner Albl, hosted the 'MILEX 24 Observer Day' which was attended by military and civilian personnel from EU Partner Nations and Partner Organisations such as NATO, UN, AU and other international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the European Centre for Disaster Medicine (CEMEC).

On May 02, the MPCC was able to deliver the OPLAN with the support of Eurocorps as the FHQ. During the four weeks of MILEX 24 both headquarters worked closely in a collaborative approach. Lots of lessons were observed during this time and these will enhance the EU's ability in the perspective of the objectives of the Strategic Compass. The availability of a functioning OHQ in BRUSSELS, now has the capacity to strengthen and improve Crisis Management Procedures and enhance the EU's integrated approach.

EU RDC LIVEX

May 02 was not the end of the story! We now look forward to the EU RDC Live Exercise (EU RDC LIVEX 24), which will be linked with the German led exercise EUROPEAN CHALLENGES 24 (EUCH 24). Both will be conducted in Bergen, Germany, between 26 November and 10 December 2024. EU RDC LIVEX 24 will focus on the execution of the Operations Plan (OPLAN) developed during this Crisis Response Planning phase. EUROPEAN CHALLENGE 24 will demonstrate the execution of operational effects based on EU RDC LIVEX 24 received tasking, by conducting tactical activities with a Core BG and available enablers. To these objectives, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Lithuania, Nederland and Croatia will engage troops on the ground which will be supported by multiple enablers provided by additional Member States. EU RDC LIVEX 24 will improve coordination, synchronisation and effectiveness among EU HQs, collecting lessons for the operationalisation of the EU RDC.

No one doubts that this exercise will be a great step forward for the ability of the European Union to act quickly and effectively in response to external crisis and conflicts. ♥



Lt Gen van der Laan addresses the MILEX 24 Augmentees at the conclusion of MILEX 24 Part 1 in May 2024.



Overview: The EU's latest CSDP Naval Operation in the Red Sea

BY REAR ADMIRAL VASILEIOS GRYPARIS HN,
OPERATION COMMANDER EUNAVFOR ASPIDES

INTRODUCTION

Over 2500 years ago, the Battle of Salamis marked a decisive moment in history. Under the leadership of Themistocles, the Greek city-states united to defeat the mighty Navy of the Achaemenid Empire and King Xerxes. This victory was pivotal in preserving Greek civilization, laying the foundations for modern European society, characterized by democracy, the rule of law, and international cooperation.

To protect those principles and in response to a surge of direct attacks by the Houthis against international shipping, the EU decided to take action as soon as January 24th 2024 by launching a new CSDP Operation. Its name, Aspides, derives from the Greek word 'shield'.

Only a few weeks later, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the EU Commission, underlined that "beyond crisis response, it's a step towards a stronger European presence at sea to protect our European interests," highlighting the urgent need for enhanced maritime protection and situational awareness in regions fraught with instability.

These attacks violate international law, jeopardizing maritime security, disrupting international trade, and threatening regional peace and security.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE HOUTHIS ATTACKS ON MERCHANT VESSELS

On a broader global level, the committed attacks compromise the freedom of the high seas and the right of transit passage in straits as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Consequently, many ship operators are avoiding the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, opting to navigate around the Cape of Good Hope instead. This alternative route incurs higher costs in insurance and

fuel, causing significant delays that disrupt global supply chains. There is also a negative effect on the ability of international organizations such as the World Food Program to deliver much-needed humanitarian assistance to such countries as Sudan, where a looming famine is threatening the lives of thousands.

The trade of manufactured goods between Asia and Europe, as well as oil and gas from the Gulf to Asia and Africa, is a crucial driver for economic growth and stability. Traffic in the Suez Canal has dropped to 63 percent of the number of ships passing through at the same time last year. At the same time, attacks by the Houthis continue, and they have illustrated their ability to



Rear Admiral Vasileios Gryparis was appointed EU Operation Commander of EUNAVFOR ASPIDES on 8 February 2024. He is a graduate of the Hellenic Supreme Joint War College, and the Hellenic National Defense College. He has also completed the UK Defence Academy's Strategic Leadership Programme and the United States Navy's Flag Level Combined Force Maritime Component Commander Course. His operational service includes more than 18 years deployment at sea, on board Frigates and Fast Patrol Boats, as Communication, Weapons, Operations, Executive Officer and Commanding Officer. He is married and has two children.

come up with new and innovative ways to pose a direct threat to the ships and their crews.

ESTABLISHING THE OPERATION

Operation EUNAVFOR ASPIDES commenced operations on February 19th. This mission is purely defensive, based on international law, aimed at countering illegal Houthi attacks against merchant ships in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea. This rapid deployment marks the first time the EU has reacted so swiftly to a high-risk, deploying an unprecedented maritime operation to protect international shipping and ensure the unimpeded flow of goods through this vital maritime artery.



LEGAL BASIS

The strategic objective of ASPIDES is to ensure a Union naval presence in the Area of Operation, ensuring freedom of navigation for vessels, in close cooperation with like-minded maritime security providers. The legal basis of the Operation is self-defence as stipulated in Article 51 of UN Charter. UNCLOS is applicable, and Member States have the right to defend their vessels from attacks that undermine navigational rights and freedoms, as reiterated in the latest UN resolution 2722/24, which also demanded that the Houthis cease their attacks.

MANDATE AND MISSION

According to the Council Decision, ASPIDES, within its means and capabilities, is executing the following tasks:

- Accompaniment of vessels in the Area of Operation.
- Protection of vessels against multi-domain attacks. A multi-domain attack could be executed with one or a combination of missiles, Unmanned Surface and/or Aerial Vehicles, and/or attacks from ships

or helicopters.

- Eventually, build up Maritime Situation Awareness in the Area of Operation, which is the effective understanding of anything associated with the maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, economy, or the environment.

ASSETS

21 Member States contribute to the Operation either with personnel or assets. ASPIDES currently consists of the Operations Headquarters (OHQ) in Larissa city (Greece) and one Force Headquarters (FHQ) afloat, offered by Italy in the area of operations. Almost 800 EU officers and sailors are participating in the operation. Currently, the mission is supported by 3 ships, from France, Greece and Italy.

ACHIEVEMENTS

As of September 2024, ASPIDES successfully conducted several defensive military operations and has responded to over 340 merchant vessel support requests. In total, ASPIDES ships logged over 12400 hours of activity and covered over 27000 nautical miles in protecting ships, also conducting over 600 hours of helicopter flights. In terms of defensive actions, 17 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), two Unmanned Sea Vehicles, and four ballistic missiles that posed a threat to freedom of navigation were destroyed. Realizing that defensive means alone cannot provide a solution to the current crisis, civilian instruments of power also constitute part of ASPIDES' planning. In this regard, nearly 100 Key Leader Engagements with stakeholders and partners were conducted as part of its diplomatic outreach.

OPPORTUNITIES

Operation ASPIDES is crucial in ensuring maritime security across three of the world's eight maritime choke points. Our objective is to guarantee the free and safe transit of merchant vessels, benefiting the region and beyond. ASPIDES aligns with the European Union's ambition to be a maritime security provider, as outlined in the 2022 Strategic Compass and the 2023 Maritime Security Strategy. The Operation's defensive and kinetic nature has wide-ranging effects – from tactical to geopolitical and should as such be seen as part of a holistic approach by the EU towards the region.

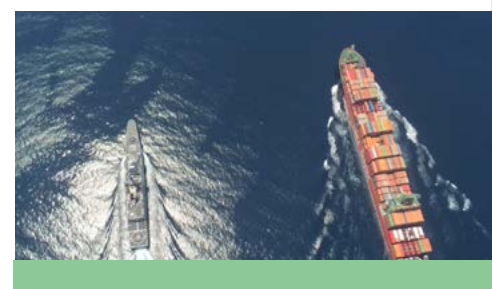
The crews of the different ships are ASPIDES' most significant asset. Under intense and continuous pressure, they have shown their ability to successfully perform under stress and face new and evolving threats. In a world that is becoming increasingly volatile, the experiences the crews and their ships get during this operation will be invaluable not only for them, but also for their countries, the EU and other cooperation frameworks such as NATO.

ENGAGEMENTS WITH PARTNERS

Collaboration with regional partners is vital. We have informed and engaged with the states directly affected and will continue to do so. To optimize ASPIDES' efficiency, we rely on the support of relevant EU Institutions and Missions as part of an integrated and holistic EU approach. We also share common values and objectives with allies, partners, and like-minded nations: Freedom of Navigation, free flow of international and regional trade, including humanitarian assistance, and rules-based order. Cooperation with other partners and missions in the region, including Operation EUNAVFOR ATALANTA and coordination with the Operation Prosperity Guardian, is significant for the success of the operation. EUNAVFOR operations share the Maritime Security Center (MSCHoA) capability in Brest, through which merchant vessels submit requests for protection or accompaniment. Maintaining coherent communication with the industry remains a priority.

CONCLUSION

Operation ASPIDES enhances the EU's power, visibility, and influence in the region, reinforcing its already ongoing diplomatic and economic efforts contributing to stability. Charles De Gaulle wrote that "behind Alexander's victories, we always find Aristotle". And Aristotle, 100 years after the battle of Salamis, considered Salamis the beacon of Greece, when the Greeks decided to uphold what they valued. And they succeeded. ■





Operation ATALANTA: A review of the EU's Counter-piracy Military Operation

BY MAJOR (OF-3) VÍCTOR GALLARDO, SPOKESPERSON – CJ9 STRATCOM
EUROPEAN UNION NAVAL FORCE, OPERATION ATALANTA

November 2023 saw the first piracy attack in 5 years in the Area of Operation of the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Operation ATALANTA. Since then, there have been more than 35 pirate related events. Piracy was suppressed, but not eradicated, and these acts are evidence that this threat is still latent and waiting for any opportunity. For this reason, ATALANTA has remained fully committed to maritime security by deterring, preventing and suppressing piracy for the past 15 years.

The first European Union Naval Operation

Launched in 2008 and originally located in Northwood, United Kingdom, the Operation Headquarters moved to Rota, Spain, in 2019. From there, the Operation is commanded by Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva Serrano, who took command on 23 November 2023 from Vice Admiral José María Núñez Torrente.

Under his guidance, the Force Headquarters, with the Force Commander at the forefront, fulfils the operation's mandate at sea exercising command and control of all military forces. There are 20 nations participating in Operation ATALANTA, all represented in the different Headquarters. These men and

women contribute to the security and safety of the extensive Area of Operation, which covers the Gulf of Aden and neighbouring countries.

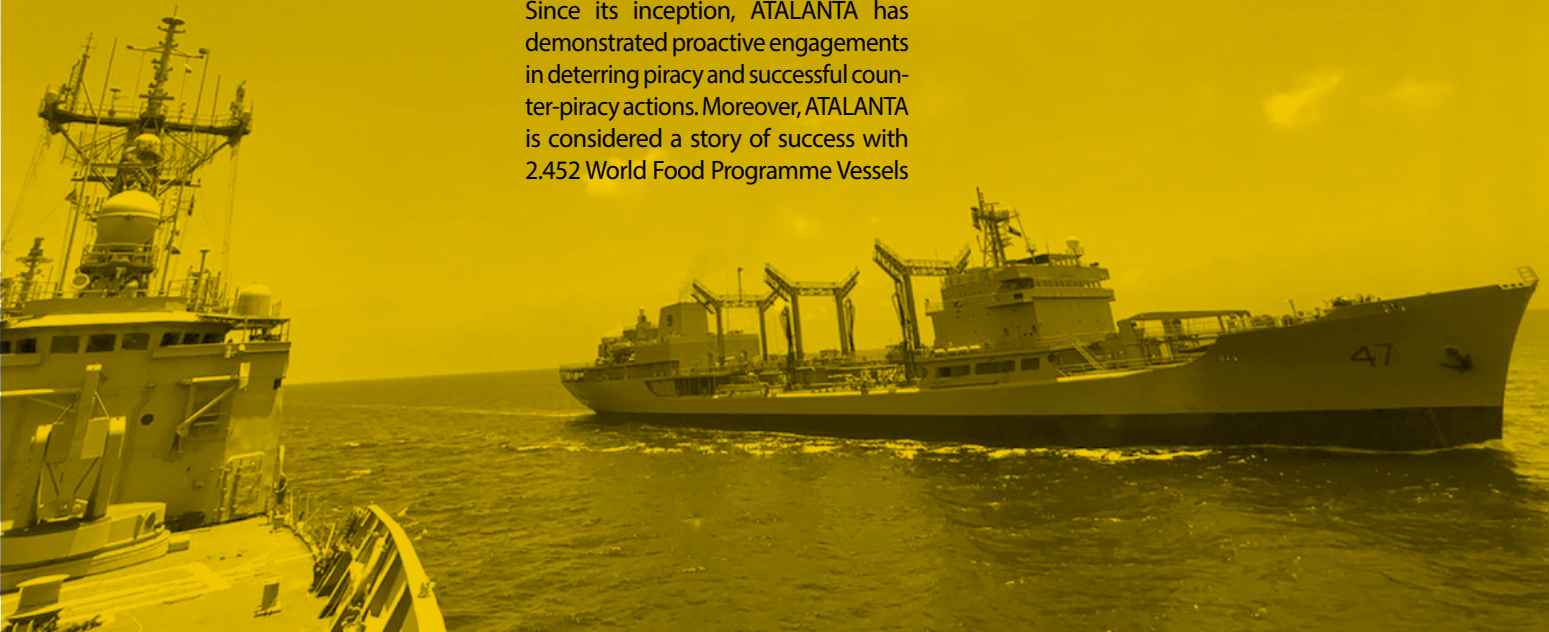
The composition of ATALANTA forces changes due to the frequent rotation of units and varies according to the monsoon seasons in the Indian Ocean. However, it normally consists of one to two Surface Combat Vessels and one Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft (MPRA), together with the personnel located in the Headquarters, contributing 24/7 to maritime security in the Indian Ocean.

From counter-piracy Operation to Maritime Security Provider

Since its inception, ATALANTA has demonstrated proactive engagements in deterring piracy and successful counter-piracy actions. Moreover, ATALANTA is considered a story of success with 2.452 World Food Programme Vessels

Protected, 3.292.790 tonnes of food/aid delivered, 15.953 kilos of narcotics impounded, and 177 pirates transferred to competent authorities. These actions were accomplished within the framework of the mandate of the Operation that provides for executive and non-executive tasks to be achieved.

On 4 April 2024, EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/1059 amended ATALANTA's tasks to the following:



Executive tasks:

- **PROTECT** World Food Programme and other Vulnerable Shipping;
- **DETER, PREVENT** and **REPRESS** piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Area of Operation;

Secondary Executive Task:

- **CONTRIBUTE** to the **DISRUPTION** of drug trafficking and weapons trafficking.

ATALANTA 2.0

The operation has continued to evolve with the situation in the Area of Operation, creating a more complex, robust, and dynamic Operation ATALANTA. Several factors have called for this evolution.

Firstly, the deterioration of maritime security in the area of operation together with the instability in the region and the unpredictable and volatile geopolitical situation.

Secondly, the relationship with Somalia due to the country's relevant steps forward in maritime security and the evolution of the Somali Police Forces Coast Guard and the Maritime Police Department as a good example of their commitment. The recent visit of the Prime Minister of Somalia Hamza Abdi Barre's to ATALANTA flagship, the frigate ITS MARTINENGO near Mogadishu was an excellent example of how ATALANTA is supporting to improve the Somali Forces capabilities. These efforts are further complemented by the close coordination with other Somali Regional Forces, such as Puntland Police Forces, where direct communication channels are maintained.

Thirdly, the coexistence of two EU Maritime Military Operations in a similar area but with different mandates and tasks, and a strong presence of the Indian Navy in the Northwest Indian Ocean, as highlighted in India's National Maritime Strategy, are two further examples that have prompted an adaptation of the operation.

However, the main reason has been the resurgence of piracy, which is still the core tasks of Operation ATALANTA. Apart from the increased number of piracy cases, there are notable differences from previous cases. They are now better organized, work in

bigger numbers, are well armed and coordinated and use different approach methods.

Recent piracy examples in the past few months include; the Iranian flagged fishing boat "AL-MERAJ1", the Bulgarian Merchant Vessel (MV) "RUEN", the Bangladesh-flagged MV "ABDULLAH", the Marshall Islands-flagged MV "CHRYSTAL ARTIC", and the Liberian-flagged MV "BASILISK" together with several other incidents and suspicious approaches detected.

Relationship with Regional States and Legal Finish

In order to tackle the problems in the Area of Operation and achieve the operational end state, supporting the regional security architecture is paramount, so that regional states can take care of their own security,

This is reflected in the close cooperation and permanent information sharing with regional Maritime Security Centers from Oman, Kenya, Seychelles and Madagascar, together with the Information Fusion Center from India. A good example of this is the excellent cooperation with Oman which has resulted in a Protocol of Coordination and Cooperation, signed between the Maritime Security Centre in Muscat and Operation ATALANTA.

Additionally, Operation ATALANTA has strengthened its ties with the Djibouti Regional Training Center thanks to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, as a robust framework to develop deeper cooperation between the Djiboutian Forces and EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA.

Exercises also play a key role in the strategic impact in the region. In the last year, two high level exercises were conducted with similar structures; complex multiservice enhanced capability building exercises that showcased the work that ATALANTA forces conduct with regional states forces. The first exercise took place in Seychelles while the second one took place in Kenya. Both exercises were endorsed by ATALANTA and chaired by the Djibouti Code of Conduct and the Kenyan Coast Guard and Navy.

These exercises offer a 360° opportunity to discuss other matters of relevancy

for the operation, such as the legal framework in counternarcotic and arms embargo. The "ATALANTA Legal Finish" is one of ATALANTA's distinguishing features, which is embedded in the DNA of the operation. It outlines the entire process of piracy events including deterrence, arrest, detention, and prosecution, all in accordance with international law.

Operation ATALANTA also maintains legal agreements with different nations in the Area of Operations, one of them being the Seychelles, which allows for the trial of suspected pirates who were arrested by warships joining the operation. During one of the recent cases of piracy attacks involving the Marshall Islands-flagged Merchant Vessel CHRYSTAL ARCTIC, ATALANTA arrested seven alleged pirates and delivered them to the Seychellois authorities.

Cooperation with regional countries is also crucial for the accomplishment of the ATALANTA Legal Finish and ATALANTA remains committed to supporting each country in the prosecution of cases up to trial. The close coordination with national authorities is further demonstrated by sharing Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance information, a practice that has led to the arrest of more than 20 pirates as a direct result of information provided by ATALANTA.

Working with the shipping industry

Finally, ATALANTA has reinforced its cooperation and commitment to the maritime industry. An example of this reinforcement was the celebration of the Maritime Security Dialogue in Madrid that saw over 100 maritime experts participate to enhance the coordination between the Maritime Industry and the international Naval Forces operating in the region. This relationship aims to find common places of understanding and increase the security of seafarers with the adequate security measures that will allow for a swift response from the naval forces in the area, if needed.

Operation ATALANTA continues to adapt to the challenges in the region, always ready to contribute as a powerful instrument of the EU and as a global maritime security provider. ■

OPERATION IRINI



Four Years of EUNAVFOR MED OPERATION IRINI: A Successful Mission

BY LT (ITAN RESERVIST) MAURIZIO GERI
POLAD-MEDIA ADVISOR, IRINI OHQ

BACKGROUND

In support of the international community efforts for the stabilization of Libya, the EU decided to establish in 2020 EUNAVFOR MED Operation IRINI in the Mediterranean Sea, aimed at implementing the UN arms embargo on Libya by using aerial, satellite and maritime assets. In parallel with the launch of Operation IRINI in March 2020, the existing EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA permanently ceased its activities after 5 years. Since then, Operation IRINI's mandate has been extended multiple times, most recently through Council Decision (CFSP) 2023/653 until 31 March 2025.

OPERATION MANDATE

The primary objective of IRINI is to support the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya. In accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2292 (2016) and subsequent resolutions, the operation is authorized to inspect vessels, that are suspected of transporting arms or related materials to and from Libya, on the high seas off the coast of Libya. Additionally, it monitors violations occurring through aerial and land routes. This mandate is closely overseen by the Member States, which exercise political control and strategic direction through the European Union (EU) Political and Security Committee (PSC).

In addition to its core task, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI has several secondary tasks, including monitoring and collecting information on the illicit export of crude oil, and refined petroleum products from Libya; contributing to the disruption of human smuggling and trafficking networks through information gathering and aerial patrols; and supporting the capacity building and training of the Libyan institutions responsible for Search and Rescue and law enforcement activities at sea. However, the implementation of the support to the Libyan institutions has not yet started due to the ongoing political

fragmentation in Libya.

THE PAST: 4 YEARS OF RESULTS

Over the past four years, IRINI has monitored suspected flights, airports, and ports, conducted boarding and friendly approaches, and diverted ships carrying arms related material intended for Libya. Since the operation began, IRINI have submitted multiple special reports to the UN panel of experts on Libya. The results achieved so far underline the relevance of maintaining a means for the implementation of the UN arms embargo and the added value of a EU presence in the Mediterranean.

Specifically, since the inception of the operation, 30 ships have been boarded, inspected and on three occasions diverted. More than 16,700 merchant ships have been investigated through hailings – questioning a ship – and more than 680 friendly approaches have been carried out on merchant vessels. Finally, the operation has provided 65 special reports to the UN, most referring to arms trafficking and oil smuggling. Through this comprehensive set of measure, Operation IRINI has enhanced the situational awareness and maritime picture linked to its mandated tasks and established a deterrence posture regarding illicit activities in the area.

A key discovery by Operation IRINI of military material on its way to Libya in violation of the arms embargo took place in October 2022. On that occasion, 41 armored vehicles were found on board of a vessel and seized. The ship was diverted and escorted to a European port, where the vehicles are now stored, pending the decision on their disposal. Other 105 armored vehicles, modified for military use, were discovered and seized on a vessel in July 2022 and in October 2023 handed over to Ghana by the EU, in the presence of High Representative Josep Borrell.



THE PRESENT: CURRENT SITUATION AND ACTIVITIES

The IRINI Operational **Headquarters (OHQ)** is located in **Rome, Italy** and the operation is led by Italian **Rear Admiral Valentino Rinaldi Operation Commander** since July 2024, while the current Force Commander is Italian Rear Admiral Simi (the Force Command rotates every six months between Italy and Greece).

Currently, the operation has two ships under operational control, one Hellenic Frigate and one Italian Frigate. Additionally, various manned and unmanned Maritime Patrol Aircrafts from Italy, Poland, Luxembourg, Germany, France, and Greece are assigned to the operation.

IRINI relies on intelligence provided either directly by Member States or through the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre in Brussels, as well as valuable imagery products from the Satellite Centre in Torrejon, Spain. At present, 23 Member States contribute and the operation has a total of about 620 personnel, with about 120 stationed at the OHQ.

Every day, thousands of merchant vessels navigate the Mediterranean Sea, transporting goods and people. A wealth of data is available online from open sources, while classified information is gathered directly by the operational units as well as national and international institutions. IRINI analysts work around the clock to narrow down the number of vessels of interest to just a few dozen, specifically focusing on those operating within our Area of Operation. They identify elements that may provide reasonable grounds for further investigation, using indicators that suggest relevance related to a particular ship, company, or owner. IRINI always operates in a balanced and impartial manner. Moreover it is the only regional actor implementing the UN arms embargo on Libya – which has become even more important again with increased Russian military engagement in Libya.

IRINI also organizes every year, in collaboration with NATO MARCOM, an international conference in Rome, **“SHARED AWARENESS AND DE-CONFLICTION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN” (SHADE MED)** to share information and experiences between representatives from different nations and organizations involved in maritime security of the Mediterranean area.

THE FUTURE: THE IMPORTANCE OF OPERATION IRINI FOR MARITIME SECURITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Libya remains in a state of political stagnation and polarization with signs of increasing division across the country, which hampers the roads towards, among other things, parliamentary and presidential elections. The ongoing political stalemate and linked instability of the security situation has emboldened various domestic and external actors to exploit the situation, further hindering progress towards stabilization. Armed groups and militias are financed through oil smuggling and continue to purchase weapons. Additionally, foreign actors support the respective sides in the East and West through the delivery of arms, all contributing to military buildup and the potential for future escalation. Furthermore, the movement of migrants and refugees into Libya is likely to increase due to the instability in the Sahel region and neighboring countries, as well as well-established human smuggling networks.

Consequently, the role of Operation IRINI and the EU presence in the Mediterranean, which is ensured through the presence of the operation, remains vital. It not only supports the enforcement of the UN arms embargo on Libya but also plays a critical role in enhancing maritime security in the Southern border of the EU. Besides the enforcement of the arms embargo the operation actually monitors illicit activities at sea but also on land and air, including oil smuggling and human trafficking. IRINI collects and analyzes vast amounts of data from open sources and classified intelligence, which additionally contributes to a clearer understanding of maritime threats and support international collaboration in addressing them for the stabilization of the wider region. The Mediterranean Sea is also a vital route for commercial shipping. Operation IRINI is therefore a direct EU contribution to peace and stability in the Mediterranean region and can be considered a successful operation until now, also because of its impartiality and respect of human rights in carrying out its activities.

In conclusion, the operation will continue in the future to serve as an essential tool for protecting European interests at sea, strengthening the EU's commitment to contributing to the international community's efforts in stabilizing Libya, as well as in guaranteeing maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea. 🇪🇺

Promoting The European Union Women, Peace and Security Agenda

The European Union Military Committee adopted the Military Concept on Integrating a Gender Perspective in Military CSDP.

BY **TERHI LEHTINEN** FORMER EUMS SENIOR GENDER ADVISOR

The European Union (EU) is operating in an extremely challenging security environment. The EU's Common and Security Policy (CSDP) Missions and Operations play an important role in the overall European security. The threats are becoming more complex, and require a multifaceted and flexible approach. Conflicts affect men, women, boys and girls in different ways, and therefore, adopting a gender perspective is an essential component to the effectiveness of the EU CSDP Missions and Operations. Increased women's participation in the CSDP provides a greater pool of experiences, skills and competencies and a Gender Responsive Leadership promotes a more inclusive and safe working environment for all.

The EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III (2020-27) requires a systematic integration of a gender perspective in all EU policies and external actions including the CSDP. Similarly, the European Union Strategic Compass (2022) also calls for integrating a gender and human rights perspective in the CSDP. Implementing the EU Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda is also an integral part of the EU's foreign policy priorities.

In recent years, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) has been making systematic efforts to implement the Strategic Compass priorities, including promoting the WPS Agenda and integrating a gender perspective in the Military CSDP. These are the main highlights:

- In 2022, the EUMS started by adopting a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Gender Expertise and Networking, which set up a tasking for a Senior Adviser on Gender and for a nomination of Gender Focal Points in each EUMS Directorate.
- The EUMS also set up two military gender networks – the Military Gender Network for the EUMS Focal Points and the Missions and Operations Gender Monitoring Team (MOGMT), which provides a monthly platform for sharing of experiences among the Military Gender Advisers from the Military CSDP Missions and Operations – both Operational Headquarters and Force Headquarters.



Leading by example: internal training to OHQ IRINI personnel on how to integrate a Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law perspective into the Military CSDP Missions and Operations.

- The EUMS also adopted its own Military Gender Action Plan and the Code of Conduct to promote a safe and inclusive working environment in 2022.
- The Military CSDP Missions and Operations have also been implementing the Operational Guidance on Gender Mainstreaming in the Military CSDP since 2022.
- Finally, the EU Military Committee adopted the Military Concept on Integrating a Gender Perspective in the Military CSDP in June 2024.

Adopting the Military Concept on Integrating a Gender Perspective in the Military CSDP is a major milestone as it provides a clear framework, recognised by all EU Member States, for making further progress.

The Concept aims to provide guidance on how to integrate a gender perspective in the Military CSDP Missions and Operations. It covers all phases of the Military CSDP Missions and



Participants of the 14th Annual Meeting of CSDP Human Rights and Gender Advisers and Focal Points, Brussels, 19-21 June.

Operations cycle (including analysis, planning, execution of operations, reporting, Strategic Reviews), training and exercises as well as the internal functioning of the Military CSDP Missions and Operations (including Gender Responsive Leadership, Codes of Conduct).

Integration of a Gender Perspective includes the following:

- The action is based on a gender analysis (systematic gathering of information on gender differences and social relations).
- It ensures that policies and activities take into account the different needs of men, women, boys and girls.
- It aims to increase the operational effectiveness of Military CSDP mandate delivery based on the realistic understanding of social relations (including the situational awareness).
- Its long-term objectives is to contribute to gender equality, which is one of the EU core values and foreign policy priorities.

The Military Concept proposes three levels of intervention where a gender perspective is relevant:

- Strategic level – CSDP Mandates, Military concepts and capabilities, political-strategic objectives;
- Operational level – CSDP related military tasks, gender specific analysis in the operational environment;
- Tactical level – everyday activities in Military CSDP Missions and Operations (including gender expertise).

Integrating a gender perspective includes both external integration (all steps in the CSDP Missions and Operations cycle) and internal integration (the functioning of CSDP Missions and Operations).

The Military CSDP Missions and Operations cycle should integrate a gender perspective in the different steps in the following way:

- Analysis and planning – include a gender analysis, collection of sex-disaggregated data, CSDP planning documents and a Gender Action Plan.

- Execution of operations - integration of a gender perspective in CSDP activities, targeted actions, dialogue.
- Reporting and Strategic Reviews.
- Lessons Identified and Lessons Learnt.

A gender perspective is also relevant for the Military Training and Exercises. It includes the following:

- Integrating a gender perspective in advice, mentoring, training activities may include specific approaches adapted to Non-Executive Missions and Executive Operations.
- Integrating a gender perspective in Military Exercises include the exercise specifications, training objectives, scenarios, and gender expertise in the training audience.

Integrating a gender perspective in the Military CSDP Missions and Operations internal functioning includes the following:

- Gender Responsive Leadership – Senior leadership responsibility for integrating a gender perspective.
- Codes of Conduct, zero tolerance for harassment.
- Gender expertise including the Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points.
- All staff training.

Finally, the Military Concept recognises the importance of the EU Integrated Approach as well as the partnership with International Organisations, international non-governmental organisations, academia, think tanks, national administration and security sector in partner countries and civil society.

The next step will be the effective implementation of the Military Concept in the Military CSDP Missions and Operations. This will require continued leadership commitment, adequate expertise and resources, constant networking and sharing of experiences as well as strong partnerships. 🇪🇺

New Digs Welcome to New Espace Urban (NEO) Complex

The New Home of the EUMS/MPCC/CPCC/INTCEN.



After seven years in the making, 2024 saw the staff of the EUMS, MPCC, CPCC and INTCEN move to a new home located in the NEO complex. The NEO complex is located between Rue d'Arlon and Rue de la Science and consists of three buildings, Arlon 88, Science 27 and Science 29 (AN88/SC27/SC29). Moritz Rusch and Oliver Herman from EEAS Real Estate, Safety and Greening (EEAS.RM.SC.6) have provided an overview of the renovation process. The Real Estate, Safety and Greening Division is responsible for the definition and implementation of the Real Estate policy, Health and Safety as well as the Environmental policies of the EEAS for Headquarters and the EU Delegations.

What is the history of the NEO complex?

The three buildings of the NEO complex were used by the European Commission up until the 2010s, hosting several DGs over the years, such as DG HR's Visa services and DG ECHO (in AN88) as well as providing training rooms and protocol and restaurant spaces in SC29, with the adjacent kitchen on the first floor of SC27. After the expiry of the respective leases, the three buildings – now branded as “NEO,” – were selected in early 2017 by the EEAS as the follow-up to Cortenbergh (C150/C158).

Why did we move from Avenue de Cortenbergh?

The three main reasons behind the move of the EUMS/MPCC/CPCC/INTCEN from C150/C158 to the NEO complex were:

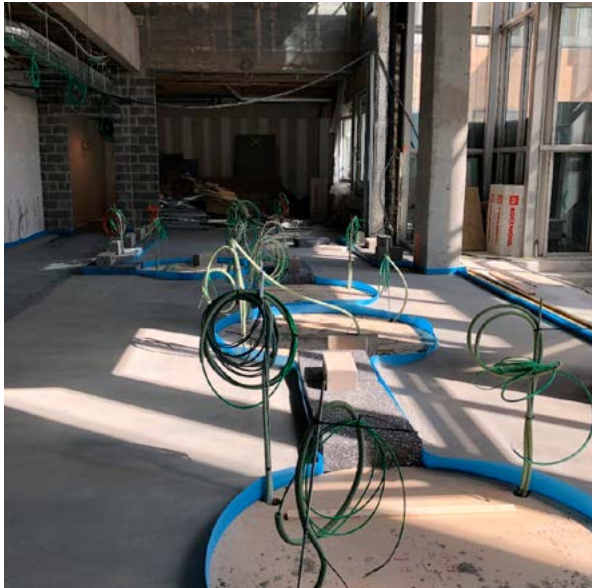
1. The lack of suitable, modern and secure office spaces in C150/C158.
2. The fact that the building was poorly organized, obsolete and hadn't been modernized since approximately 2000/2001. It was originally conceived to house the Council's intelligence services, the predecessor for the EEAS' Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).
3. The wish of the owners of C150/158 to completely redevelop the building into a modern, energy-efficient office complex.

How long did the renovation works take?

The renovation works were quite a lengthy process, lasting more than seven years. The First Phase started in January 2017 with demolition works and terminated with the provisional reception of works on 15 June 2022. These works included five distinct families of works:

1. Structural work to AN88 and SC27.
2. Finishing work to AN88 and SC27.
3. Residual special fit-out works AN88 and SC27.
4. Deferred special fit-out works for SC29.
5. Security works (by FICHET).

During the Second Phase, OIB and several security contractors carried out additional client-specific adaption works between September 2023 and summer 2024.



Who was involved in the planning team and who were the Architects?

The planning team of the First Phase (2017 to 2022) included the following:

1. The building owner, Aberdeen (AXA since 2022);
2. The delegated project owner: AXXIO;
3. The architect: Architectsassoc+;
4. The engineer: ARCADIS;
5. The general contractor: CIT Blaton;
6. The client representative and project coordinator: IBS.4 (predecessor of RM.SCS.6).

The planning team for the *Second Phase (2023 to 2024)* included owner AXA, the technical divisions of RM.SCS and the main contractors from OIB.

Who's in the NEO complex now?

Since the end of June 2024, the NEO building complex hosts some 600 staff from the EUMS, MPCC (excluding the EUMAM Ukraine mission), CPCC (with the exception of the Gulf of Guinea mission and part of Division CPCC.4) as well as INTCCEN. The remaining CSDP services are situated in the Belmont building.

What are the new facilities that are now available?

The NEO building features state-of-the-art Security equipment such as a full-fledged Security accreditation on the

ground floor of AN88, modern access control, secure meeting rooms as well as modern secure communication tools. In addition, there is a new cafeteria, offering warm and hot snacks as well as selected coffees, with the addition of hot meals to the occupants since November 2024. The representative maison de maître spaces on the first floor of building SC29 were tastefully renovated and equipped to a very high standard and serve as additional Protocol Rooms for the HR/VP. The lower ground floor contains extensive changing rooms and shower facilities.

What is the way ahead for the NEO and what is left to do?

Finalising the necessary repairs to doors and locks, and upgrading the heating and cooling system. Additional necessary security elements will be installed by the end of 2024 in order to carry out a first evacuation exercise of the complex during spring 2025.

In addition, a Third Phase of the NEO project is being planned. This phase aims at making the complex a true home for its occupants. Works during this phase will see the branding of the building, an upgrade of the exterior spaces, including a study for a partially covered passage between AN88 to SC27, and additional garden furniture. Commencing in 2025, the underground car parking facility will be adapted to meet new legal requirements calling for more bicycles spaces and electrical car charging stations. 🍷



The EU's Integrated Approach in support of West African countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

BY OLIVER HALL ALLEN, CPCC AND
LT COL IRVING FROKLAGE, MPCC



Paying close attention, - EUSDI GoG training in Benin, September 2024

On 11 December 2023, the Council adopted a decision launching the EU Security and Defence Initiative in support of West African countries of the Gulf of Guinea, for an initial duration of two years. It is the first combined EU civilian and military security mission deployed under the Common Security and Defence Policy.

This initiative is part of the EU's integrated approach to the region. It contributes to support Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin in tackling instability and insecurity challenges. It does so by reinforcing the capabilities of the security and defence forces of the four West African countries to contain and respond to the pressure exerted by terrorist armed groups in their northern regions.

Furthermore, it will promote the rule of law and good governance in security sectors and trust-building between civil society and security and defence forces.

This partnership will also complement the ongoing EU maritime security support in the Gulf of Guinea [through](#)

[the Coordinated Maritime Presence \(CMP\) operation, which started in 2021.](#) This area is key for shipping oil extracted in the Niger delta, as well as for transporting of goods to and from central and southern Africa. The Gulf of Guinea is, therefore, an important gateway for organised crime and piracy. The powerful action of the CMP has led to a massive reduction in piracy on this vital supply route for Europe.

Following an innovative, flexible and modular set up, the EUSDI GoG combines military and civilian security and defence expertise providing short-term training teams or visiting experts in complementarity with European Peace Facility assistance measures, such as the recently adopted measures to support the Beninese Armed Forces (€11.75 million) and the Ghana Armed Forces (€8.25 million).



Students of the 3D Cooperation Course, October 2024, Benin.

The first step was to deploy civilian and military advisors to the respective countries to make an assessment of their specific needs. The first training teams were sent to Benin and Ghana in spring of 2024.

In **Benin**, EUSDI GoG trained 90 officers of five units of the Republican Police to deal with Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (**C-IED**). The training took place in Kandi, Parakou, Dassa, and in Cotonou as part of the initiative and enhanced the Republican Police's awareness of terrorist threats and methods and strengthened nationwide C-IED core capabilities. In October of 2024 specialists were trained in air to ground coordination as a prime enabler for operations. In November 2024, the mission also trained members of the Beninese Armed Forces (FAB) in Logistics courses such as a Ammunition Depot Managers Course enabling the FAB to be able to sustain their operations.

In Cotonou, Dassa et Parakou, 22 members of the operational command of Mobile Intervention Companies (**CMI**) took part in a scenario based training exercise organised by the GoG SDI training teams. EUSDI GoG also provided first-aid training for five units of the Republican Police based on the Tactical Combat Casualty Care (**TCCC or TC3**) standard.

Sixty-five police officers practiced their skills through scenario based exercises, learning how to provide medical assistance and treat injuries in combat scenarios and how to extract casualties from the combat zone. A further 33 police executives followed a two-week seminar on the reinforcement of the logistics chain of the Republican Police. The seminar also helped EUSDI GoG to identify a catalogue of equipment needs which will later be integrated in an equipment plan for Benin.

In **Ghana**, an EUSDI GoG team of three experts visited Ghanaian border posts close to Burkina Faso to develop support measures for the Ghana Immigration Service, the Ghana Police Service and the Ministry of National Security. They prepared initial proposals for forensic training for the Immigration Service. Forensic medical evaluation provides crucial evidence of persecution or harm in individuals seeking immigration relief.

More Mobile training teams will follow in 2025. 

Instructors and students of the Ammunition Depot Manager Course that took place November 2024 in Benin.



Brigadier General Katrien D’Hert

Director of Logistics in the EUMS



My name is Katrien D’Hert, I am 53 years old and I joined the Belgian Defense Forces in 1989. After graduating as an officer from the Royal Military Academy in Brussels in 1994, I started my career in the 20th Logistics Battalion in Spich (Germany), where I had the privilege of taking part in the UNTAES-BELBAT XVI mission in FYR as commander of the Supply & Transport Platoon. In summer 2000, I joined the Department of Military History at the Royal Military Academy.

After attending the Senior Officers Course (Candidate Major Course), I became Company Commander of the 4th Maintenance Company of the 51st Logistics Battalion in Sijsele in 2005. During this period, I served as a Joint Support Detachment Commander for the ISAF XIV mission in Kabul, AFG in 2007. After the Advanced Staff Course, I joined the Evaluation and Lessons Learned Cell at Joint Staff level in 2010. In summer of 2012, I was appointed instructor at the Belgian Defense College, where I taught operational logistics. It is fair to say I always loved having the opportunity to pass on my knowledge and experience to our future military leaders.

As Lt Col, I had the honor in 2015 to take command of the 18th Logistics Battalion in Leopoldsborg as the first female commander of a Logistics Battalion. In 2016, in the context of the Enhanced Forward Presence Mission, my unit had the honor to deploy a Tpt Coy as spearhead of the DE led MN BG. From October 2017, I was appointed Head J4 at Joint Staff level where I was responsible for the planning and execution of all logistic support in operations and joint exercises. I could further develop my expertise during numerous collective Joint International Training Events, Mission Reviews and Fact Finding Missions in a EU, NATO and UN context (especially in Eastern Europe and Africa). During that time, as a national subject matter expert, I also participated in a multitude of specialized Logistics and Military Mobility Committees and Working Groups at NATO, EU as well as US AFRICOM. During the COVID-19 crisis, I led the Joint Task Force responsible for the organization of the entire logistic support on the national territory and afterwards was involved in the elaboration in the national vaccination strategy as member of the Task Force Vaccination. In the same vein, I led the logistics pillar as well

as the Evacuation and Control Center managing the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation Red Kite AFG in summer 2021. Similarly, I was responsible for all logistic support managing the severe flooding in the summer of 2021.

In 2021 as Head G4 within the Land Component Staff, I was the technical and operational authority of the Logistics Battalions, the Movement Control Group and the Military Police Group. The main challenge of course was the planning, preparation and deployment of the Man Coy in the context of the UKR crisis. During that time and in accordance with the new 2022 Belgian Defense Strategic Plan I was also involved, and still am, in the elaboration of the future Logistics Units and Military Mobility Units.

I attended the Higher Studies Security and Defense at the Belgian Royal Higher Institute for Defense in 2022/23 and the EU Senior Strategic Course in 2023. As Henry Ford once said: “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”

I was national delegate to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives as of 2013, elected Chair-elect in 2015 and Chair of the NCGP from 2017 until 2019.

Since February 2023, I have the huge honor to be the Director Logistics in the European Union Military Staff here in Brussels where some interesting challenges already crossed our path.

Throughout my career I have always lived by the motto “Say what you mean and mean what you say” as loyalty and staying true to oneself is important, still always with respect to one’s leadership and colleagues. I suppose the best way to describe my personality is by revealing the nicknames my leadership and colleagues gave me through the years: Duracel, Twister & Hurricane Katrina ...

I am blessed with two sons (Garin & Jari) and a granddaughter (Olivia) and live with my partner Rally in Waardamme near Bruges. Besides enjoying family life, I love a good book, skiing, hiking and caring for my alpacas, goats and all the other animals that wander around my farm. 🍀

2024 EU MILITARY MISSIONS OVERVIEW

Please see page 5 for EUMAM Ukraine update and page 25 for EDSI GoG update.



EUTM Mali

The European Union Member States made the decision not to extend the mandate of European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali. On 17 May 2024, EUTM Mali ended its 11-year presence in Mali and marked the occasion with an official ceremony that was attended by the Malian Chief of Defence Major General Oumar Diarra, and the Mission Commander, Lieutenant General Michiel van der Laan. Their presence highlighted the strong links formed between the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) and the EU military mission over the previous 11 years. On 18 May 2024, all EUTM Mali personnel redeployed back to the EU.

military junta that ousted President Bazoum called for the departure of both the civilian and military CSDP missions, with immediate effect. The European Union regrets the military junta's decision to denounce the agreement establishing the legal basis for EUMPM military cooperation mission. All elements of the mission left the country on 17 December 2023. The suspension of CSDP measures to Niger does not mean the EU is abandoning its commitment to the region. As a dedicated advocate for democracy and the rule of law, the EU firmly opposes any illegitimate claims to power through force. In the current context, the political conditions for the implementation of the EUMPM mission are not feasible and the mission was closed on 30 June 2024.



EUTM RCA

EUTM RCA, as a full-fledged part of the EU integrated approach, assists the Central African Republic Government to achieve security in their country. EUTM RCA works towards the goal of a modernised, effective and democratically accountable Central African Armed Forces (FACA).

The mission already has an impressive record of achievements. In its seven years of existence, EUTM RCA has provided training to some 9,500 Armed Forces (FACA). Quick impact and qualifying courses have been delivered in different domains for more than 2900 Officers, NCOs and specialists/enlisted personnel. These courses lasted from one week to several months, and focused on radio operations, leadership, tactics, international humanitarian law, human rights, sexual violence prevention, HIV/AIDS, leadership, gender, logistics intelligence, administration and first aid. Moreover, strategic advice, support and education courses for the FACA, contributing to tackling terrorist threats, have also been provided.

The focus for the coming period will be on leadership development and strategic advice. In addition, EUTM RCA will continue to provide education to the FACA in non-operational domains, including human rights, international humanitarian law, gender issues, the protection of civilians, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda. EUTM RCA will stay as a central group of the EU partnership with the Central African Republic in the Defence Sector Reform domain.



EUMPM Niger

The EU has been supporting Niger on security and defence capabilities via the EU CSDP instrument for the last 12 years. European Union Military Partner Mission (EUMPM) Niger was launched in February 2023 at the invitation of and in partnership with the Nigerien authorities.

The mission was intended to enhance the military capacity of the Nigerien Armed Forces in order to support Niger in its fight against armed terrorist groups. As opposed to the EUTMs in Mali and the Central African Republic, EUMPM Niger had a limited footprint, working mostly with mobile training teams. This innovation was a result of the new military approach described in the EU CSDP design 2021. The military CSDP mission was part of a wider EU contribution to Niger's security and defence forces, which included training, equipment, infrastructure and communications.

As a result of the military coup on 26 July 2023, the mission scarcely had a chance to achieve any of its ambitions and the



EUTM-S conducts training in planning and execution of Fighting In Built-Up Areas (FIBUA) to support the Somali National Army (SNA) November 2024.



EUTM Mozambique becomes EUMAM Mozambique

From 15 October 2021 to 1 September 2024, EUTM Mozambique trained the Quick Reaction Forces (QRF) of the Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (FADM) and their leadership on operational preparation, counter-terrorism, compliance with human rights law and international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians, and on respect for the rule of law. The recent Strategic Review of the EUTM mandate acknowledged its completion and the successful role the mission has played over the last two years. All of the 11 FADM QRFs have been trained and approximately 100 FADM instructors have been certified. Another key factor to the mission's success is the fact that the training was accompanied by a number of Assistance Measures under the European Peace Facility, such as equipping the trained units. FADM is now leading their own training cycles. Moreover, Belgian, Austrian, Luxembourgian and Finnish Quick Impact Projects, to improve training facilities have also been completed at a cost of 465,000 euro.

The EU and Mozambique have a longstanding partnership covering a wide range of fields, including the security and defence sector. The excellent cooperation and close partnership between the Republic of Mozambique and the European Union continues. On 1 September 2024 a new mandate commenced and the mission has been given a new name: the EU Military Assistance Mission Mozambique (EUMAM Moz), which reflects the current activities of the mission. EUMAM Moz is a logical continuation of long-lasting EU military partnership with Mozambique as part of the wider EU integrated approach. The aim of EUMAM Moz is to support the FADM in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in the Cabo Delgado Province. EUMAM Moz advises and mentors FADM Navy and Army Special Forces, thus contributing to the stability and development of the

province. EUMAM Moz focuses on the operational training cycle and maintenance, but also conducts specialized training in order for the FADM Special Forces to be self-sufficient. All EUMAM Moz activities are conducted in close coordination with the Mozambican authorities and in full compliance with their requests.

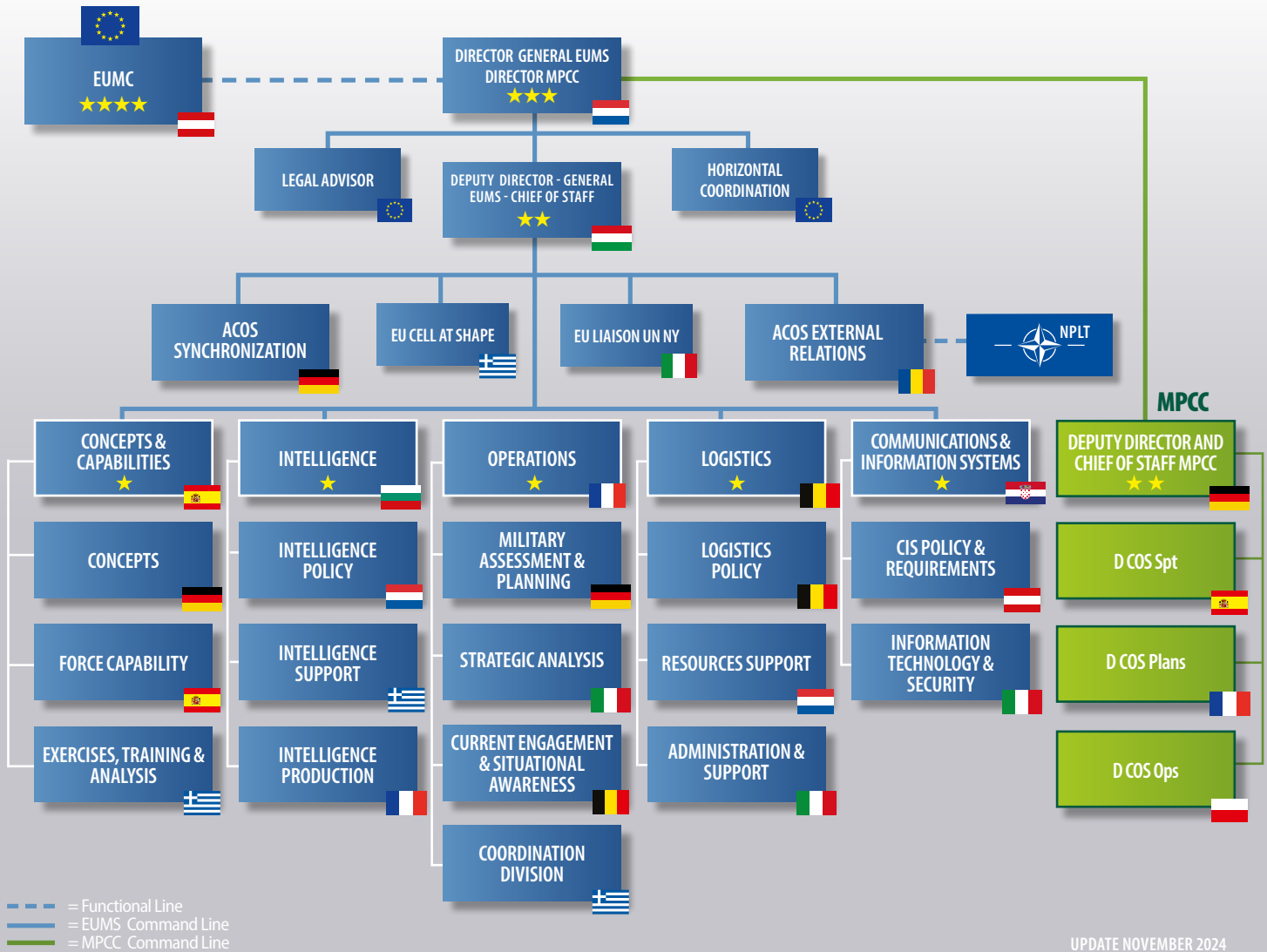


EUTM Somalia

The stability of the Horn of Africa remains a priority for the EU. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity is at the centre of the EU's engagement.

EUTM Somalia supports the build-up of the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF) to improve the stability and resilience of their country. EUTM Somalia is not involved in any military operation involving the Somali National Army or is it responsible for their funding. The current mandate, (its eight) runs until 31 December 2024 and has a three-pillar approach of Advice, Mentoring and Training, all within the EU integrated approach. EUTM Somalia's activities remain tailored to the best interests of the Somali Defence Institutions and are coordinated with the entire EU family and other international partners. In particular, the cooperation with the civilian mission, EUCAP Somalia, is close. EUTM Somalia works to enable Somali Security Forces to take over security responsibilities following the drawdown of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The Somalia Transition Plan remains the guiding principle for EUTM Somalia's action in the country. EUTM Somalia focuses on monitoring and supporting the establishment of a student tracking system (the Somali Knowledge Management Mechanism), especially for personnel trained by EUTM Somalia. Furthermore, the mission monitors the European Peace Facility (EPF) financed contributions to the Somali Security Forces as well as advising EUDEL on military issues. 🍷

EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY STAFF - EUMS STRUCTURE



EU MILITARY OPERATIONS AND MISSIONS

