

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY

EU OPERATIONS CENTRE Horn of Africa & Sahel (EU OPCEN)



Updated: June 2015

EU OPCEN Background

On 23 March 2012 the Foreign Affairs Council activated the EU Operations Centre with a view to improve coordination and strengthen civil-military synergies between the three CSDP actions in the Horn of Africa: the military operation EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA; the EU Training Mission Somalia (EUTM Somalia) and the planned civilian mission (with military expertise) on EU CAPACITY NESTOR (EUCAP NESTOR, formerly Regional Maritime Capacity Building - RMCB). This is the first activation of the EU Operations Centre.

The Council also appointed Captain (Royal Netherlands Navy) Ad van der Linde as the first Head of the activated EU Operations Centre. Capt van der Linde will have a dedicated staff to run the Centre. The Operations Centre will be active for an initial duration of two years, which may be prolonged if the Council decides.

On 27 February 2014 the Political and Security Committee appointed Captain (Spanish Navy) Francisco Cornago Diufaín as the new Head of the EU Operations Centre, entered in force on 24 March 2014.

On 1 December 2014 the Foreign Affairs Council extended the EU OPCEN's Mandate until the end of 2016 and expanded the geographical and functional scope to the Sahel region, with a view to increase efficiency, coherence and synergies for CSDP within both regions (HoA and Sahel). The three CSDP missions supported by the EU OPCEN in the Sahel regions are EUTM Mali, EUCAP SAHEL MALI and EUCAP SAHEL NIGER.

This factsheet provides general information on the three command options of the EU for its crisis management operations, including the EU Operations Centre.

Context

Planning and commanding multinational crisis management operations is a challenging task. As the EU was becoming a more active global player, including in the field of foreign, security and defence policy, it has constantly developed its crisis management capabilities. It started in 2003 to conduct a series of military operations and civilian missions in the Balkans, contributing to international peace and security in Africa, the Middle East and in South-East Asia. The Nice European Council (2000), and subsequent meetings of the EU Heads of State and Government, confirmed the EU's ambitions. The EU decided that the military side the EU should be able to conduct crisis management HQ is "multinationalised" to plan and command the EU-led military Operation. To date, five EU Member States - France, Germany, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom - have declared their national OHQs as being available for an autonomous EU operation. These 'parent HQs' are respectively located in Paris, Ulm, Larissa, Rome and Northwood, and can provide the EU with the necessary premises and technical infrastructure to run a military operation with a fully multinational staff. The EU's ongoing military operation EUNAVFOR ATALANTA is been managed through such a multinationalised parent-HQ in Northwood (UK), while the EU's ongoing military operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), is conducted with recourse to NATO's command structure (Berlin plus arrangements). EUTM Somalia and EUTM Mali do not have a parent HQ, but a Mission Headquarters are located in Mogadishu (Somalia) and Bamako (Mali), respectively.

An EU Operations Centre

In addition to these arrangements, the European Council decided in December 2004 to establish a further OHQ option: the EU Military Staff in Brussels was tasked to set up an Operations Centre able to plan and to run a particular operation, in particular where a joint civil/military response is required, and where no national HQ is identified.

Since 1 January 2007, the EU Operation Centre was ready for activation by the Council for the conduct of autonomous operations. The EU Operations Centre, located in the close neighbourhood of the main EU institutions in Brussels, is not a standing, fully manned Headquarters. The permanent facilities - premises and the necessary equipment, staffed by a small core team of four officers - enable the Council to establish, on very short notice, the full-fledged Operations Centre for a particular operation. In the case of a predominantly military operation, a total of 103 officers and civilians would be able to start planning after five days following Ministers' decision. The EU Operations Centre would reach its full capability to command the operation after twenty days, at the latest. The staff of the EU Operations Centre will be composed of the permanent core team, double-hatted personnel from the EU Military Staff and other parts of the European External Action Service, including the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD); the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC); and the geographical desks, as well as further reinforcements from Member States.

The Activated EU Operations Centre

On the 23 March 2012 the Foreign Affairs Council decided to activate, for the first time, the EU Operations Centre to coordinate and increase synergies between the three CSDP missions in the Horn of Africa. On 1 December 2014 the Foreign Affairs Council decided to amend and extend the Mandate and tasks of the EU OPCEN, in order to expand its civil/military coordination and planning support role, and assume enhanced geographical responsibility for the Sahel region.

According to the new Council Decision, the Mandate and tasks of the EU OPCEN are:

"The EU Operations Centre shall provide support in the field of operational planning and conduct of the CSDP missions and operation in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel region with a view to increasing efficiency and synergies for CSDP within both regions. In this framework the EU Operations Centre shall facilitate information exchange, improve coordination and strengthen civil-military synergies."

- To provide, using its military and specialised planning expertise, **direct support to the Civilian Operations Commander** for the operational planning and conduct of the civilian missions in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel region.
- To provide **support to the military Missions and Operation Commanders** in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel region.
- To provide **support to the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD)**, at its request, in its strategic planning for CSDP missions and operation in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel region.
- To **facilitate interaction** between the respective CSDP missions and operation and the **Brussels based structures**. In relation to the "train and equip" pilot cases in Mali and Somalia, the EU OPCEN may usefully provide support to a functional coordination mechanism, in view of its implementation plan.
- To **facilitate coordination and improve synergies** amongst the CSDP missions and operation **in the Horn of Africa**, in the context of the Horn of Africa strategy and in liaison with the European Union Special Representative for the Horn of Africa and the European Union Special Envoy for Somalia.
- To **facilitate coordination and improve synergies** amongst the CSDP missions **in the Sahel region**, in the context of the Sahel Strategy in liaison with the European Union Special Representative for the Sahel.

The EU Operations Centre will not have command responsibility, but fully respect the existing chains of command. This 'tailored' activation of the EU Operations Centre will include a dedicated staff of sixteen personnel Seconded by Member States, as well as the Brussels-based Support Cells for the EUTM Somalia, EUTM Mali and the Liaison Team of EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA in Brussels.