



IMPETUS



MAGAZINE OF THE EU MILITARY STAFF, EEAS, BRUSSELS
SUMMER 2026, ISSUE #35



2001 ————— 2026

25 YEARS

CONTRIBUTING TO EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the thirty-fifth edition of IMPETUS. This special issue marks a significant milestone, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS).

To celebrate this occasion, the edition features congratulatory messages from our strategic partners, a pictorial retrospective of past EUMS Directors General, a look back at the establishment and evolution of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), an overview of the EUMS 25-Year Anniversary Photo Exhibition, an update on the NEO Branding Project, and insights into future trends from the CONCAP Directorate.

In addition, this edition provides an overview of our current military missions and operations, highlighting the breadth and impact of the EUMS's ongoing work.

We hope you enjoy this special 25th Anniversary Commemorative Edition of IMPETUS.

Thank You!
The Editor.

CONTENTS

- 04** Foreword by HRVP Kaja Kallas
- 06** Introduction by Director General EUMS
25 Year Anniversary messages from
- 10** NATO - IMS
- 12** EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY
- 14** CIV OPS HQ
- 15** ESDC
- 16** UN Liaison Office
- 18** EUROCORPS
- 20** DG EUMS Roll of Honour
- 21** EUMS 25 Year Anniversary Photo Exhibition
- 26** The Evolution, Role and Future of the MPCC
- 29** One Page Profile – DDG EUMS
- 30** The NEO Branding Project
- 34** Future Trends Workshop - CONCAP
- 38** EU CSDP MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS
OVERVIEW
- 44** EUMS STRUCTURE

OPERATIONS



MISSIONS



CIV/MIL



Editor:

Lt Col Dermot Earley
Public Relation & Information Officer,
EUMS, EEAS

E-mail: eums.info@eeas.europa.eu

Website: eeas.europa.eu/eums

Visitors and Postal address:
Rue d'Arlon 88,
B-1040 Brussels,
Belgium

Edition/Creation

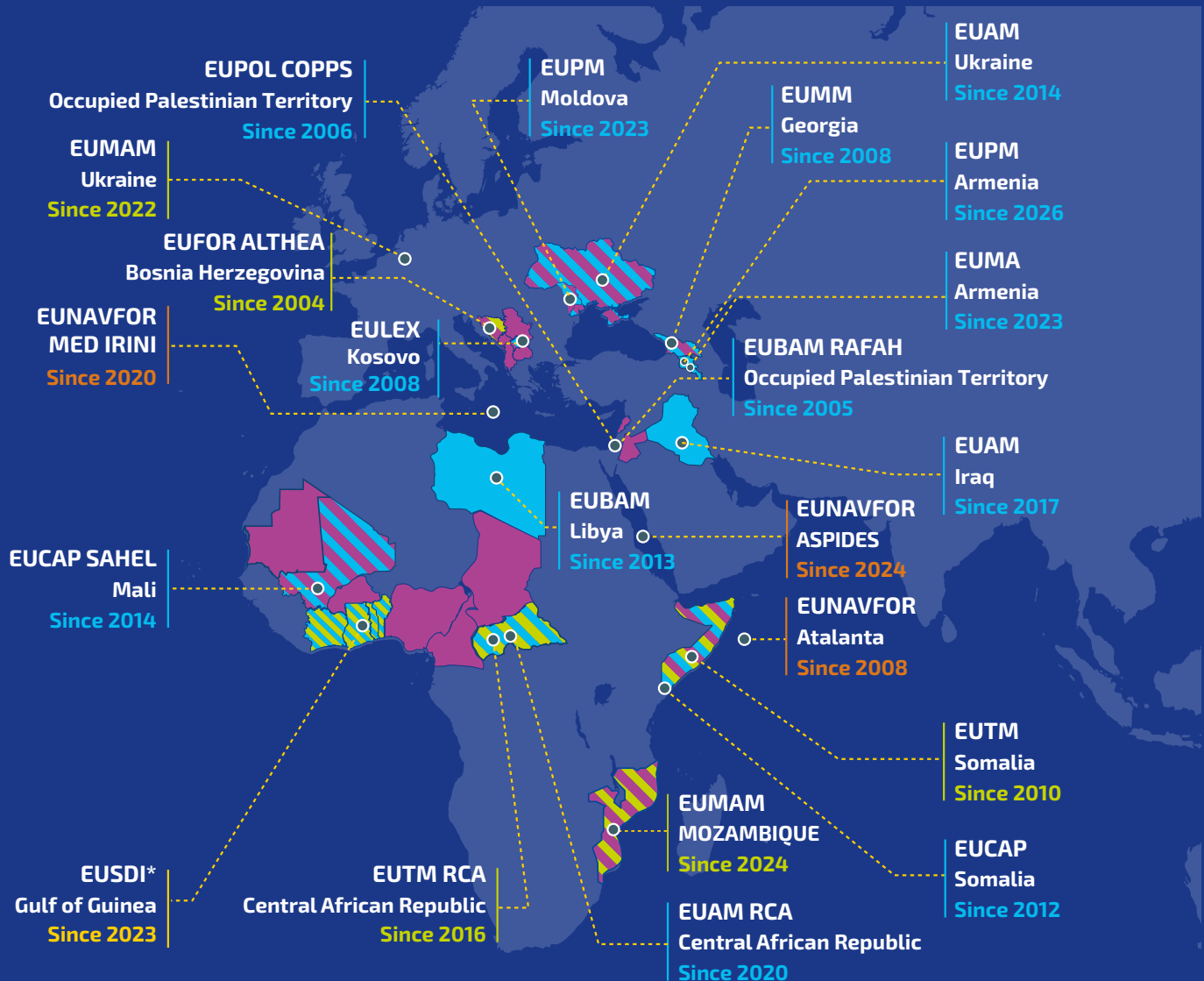
OIB European Commission
Graphic Design by Simon Roche
OIB LS1 003

Impetus is a Magazine published
by the EU Military Staff, EEAS

All rights reserved.



EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE ENGAGEMENT AROUND THE WORLD



*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

May 2026
© European Union

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

5

Ongoing military missions/operations

13

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 EU partners.

Foreword

By **Kaja Kallas**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission



The twenty-fifth anniversary of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) marks a remarkable journey of service, cooperation and transformation. Over the past quarter century, the EUMS has evolved into an indispensable source of military expertise, strategic planning and operational support. This milestone is not only a celebration but also a moment to look to the challenges that lie ahead.

Since it was established in 2001, the EUMS has helped translate political ambition into effective action by providing military advice, strategic assessment, early warning and operational planning. One example is the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) where the European Union's political commitment was translated into a concrete mission to train Ukrainian personnel and coordinate Member States' support. This has supported the Union's efforts to prevent conflict, manage crises and promote stability in an increasingly complex security environment.

These achievements are rooted in the professionalism and dedication of the military personnel and civilian staff of the EUMS. Drawn from across the Member States, they combine diverse experience and operational knowledge with a shared commitment to the values of the European Union. Their ability to work across national boundaries, cultures and military traditions remains one of the EUMS's greatest strengths. In EUFOR Althea, for instance, the multinational military and civilian staff of the EUMS contribute to strategic planning, intelligence assessment, force generation, coordination with EU institutions, and the integration of political and military decision-making.

Today, Europe faces the greatest security threat in a generation. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, growing geopolitical competition, instability in Europe's southern neighbourhood and rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific have fundamentally reshaped the strategic landscape. At the same time, cyber-attacks,

disinformation, hybrid threats, attacks on critical infrastructure, terrorism and the rapid development of emerging technologies blur the line between peace and conflict. In this environment, safeguarding our security requires unity, resilience and sustained cooperation with partners.

Against this backdrop, the role of the EUMS has never been more important. The organisation has continually adapted to support the European Union's ambition to become a more capable security provider, most notably through the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) in 2017, which marked a significant step in strengthening the Union's capacity to plan and conduct military missions. Alongside advances in military mobility, capability development, resilience and strategic foresight, these developments reflect the European Union's determination to assume greater responsibility for its own security while remaining a credible and reliable partner within the wider Euro-Atlantic security architecture.

None of this is possible without close cooperation across the European Union and beyond. The EUMS works in





*HRVP Kaja Kallas (centre) arrives on Operation ATALANTA
flagship ESPS NUMANCIA 30, 16 July 2026.*

partnership with Member States, EU institutions and agencies, NATO, the United Nations and numerous international partners to strengthen collective understanding, enhance interoperability and reinforce an integrated and coordinated approach. A clear example is EU–NATO cooperation on military mobility, where the EUMS works closely with Member States, the European Commission, the European Defence Agency and NATO to remove barriers to the movement of military forces across Europe. In doing so, it enhances interoperability and contributes to a more coordinated approach to European security.

This anniversary is also an opportunity to recognise those who have served in EU military missions and operations around the world. Their work has advanced peace, stability and the rule of law in some of the most challenging environments. Their service reflects the values upon which the European Union is founded and represents the highest standards of public duty.

But we must also look to the future. Security must be strengthened by investing in people, capabilities,

innovation, resilience and partnerships. The EUMS will remain central to this effort.

This publication commemorates not only an institution, but also the people who have shaped its history and provide a strong foundation for the future. As the European Union Military Staff enters its next quarter century, it does so strengthened by experience, united in purpose and committed to serving the European Union and its Member States with professionalism, integrity and excellence.

In an era of increasing uncertainty, the enduring value of the EUMS lies in its ability to foster cooperation, build trust and strengthen Europe's collective security. May this anniversary serve both as a celebration and as a renewed commitment to ensuring that the European Union remains an effective contributor to international peace and security for generations to come. 🇪🇺

Building Europe's Strategic Military Instrument

By **Lieutenant General Michiel van der Laan**,
Director General of the European Union Military Staff



On 22 January 2026, the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) marked the 25th anniversary of its establishment under Council Decision 2001/80/CFSP. While such anniversaries naturally provide an opportunity to celebrate institutional milestones, they also offer a moment to reflect on how far we have come and how the European Union's military instrument has evolved in response to an increasingly complex and demanding security environment.

Over the past quarter-century, the EUMS has grown from a small team of military experts into the European Union's permanent source of military expertise at the strategic level. Throughout this journey, one defining characteristic has remained constant: our ability to adapt.

Whether responding to instability in the Western Balkans, safeguarding maritime security through EU naval operations, or coordinating military support to Ukraine in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion, the EUMS has consistently evolved in step with the European Union's ambitions as a security actor. As Europe enters a new strategic era, adaptation is no longer merely desirable; it is essential.

The origins of the EUMS lie in the lessons of the 1990s. The conflicts in the Western Balkans exposed the limitations of Europe's ability to respond collectively to crises unfolding on its own continent. While Member States contributed individually through NATO, the United Nations and coalition operations, there was growing political consensus that the European Union also required credible military structures capable of supporting its common foreign and security policy.

The Saint-Malo Declaration of December 1998 provided the decisive political impetus. It recognised that the European Union should possess "the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces". What followed was one of the most rapid periods of institutional development in European

security history. On 22 January 2001, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) and the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) were established, creating the military-strategic architecture that continues to underpin the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to this day.

When the EUMS formally began its work in April 2001, its entire staff comprised of just eight officers. Few could have predicted how rapidly both the organisation and its responsibilities would grow. Within three months, that number had increased to 80. Today, the EUMS comprises more than 200 military professionals drawn from all 27 Member States. Together, we bring expertise across strategic planning, intelligence, logistics, capability development, cyber, space, maritime security, exercises, partnerships and military operations.

The organisation's growth reflects not simply an increase in numbers, but the European Union's expanding role as a security provider. From the earliest CSDP missions and operations in the Balkans and Africa to today's increasingly complex engagements, the EUMS has continuously adapted its structures, planning processes and expertise to meet evolving operational demands.

The establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) in 2017 marked another important milestone, providing the European Union with a permanent operational headquarters for its non-executive military training missions and significantly strengthening its military command-and-control architecture. Throughout this evolution, the EUMS has remained focused on one fundamental purpose: delivering timely, objective and professional military advice to support informed political decision-making.

The EUMS supports the High Representative/Vice-President and the European External Action Service (EEAS) by providing military expertise at both the

political-strategic and military-strategic levels. Working closely with the EUMC, it develops military strategic options, contributes to crisis response planning, and supports the planning and conduct of CSDP missions and operations.

The strategic environment confronting Europe today differs profoundly from that of 2001. Twenty-five years ago, crisis management, peace support operations and stabilisation dominated European security planning. Today, Europe faces the return of large-scale interstate conflict, increasingly sophisticated hybrid threats, cyber-attacks, foreign information manipulation and interference, disruptive technologies, and intensifying strategic competition across every domain.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally reshaped Europe's security landscape. It has reaffirmed that conventional military power remains central to European security while demonstrating the critical importance of preparedness, resilience and international cooperation.

The Strategic Compass, adopted in 2022, reflected this changing reality by providing a shared strategic direction for strengthening the European Union as a security and defence actor. For the EUMS, it reinforced existing responsibilities while creating new opportunities to enhance military readiness, operational planning, capability development and strategic foresight. The pace of change demands continuous adaptation. Military organisations must anticipate future challenges rather than simply respond to current crises.

A key deliverable of the Strategic Compass was the establishment of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC), representing a major milestone in strengthening the European Union's ability to respond rapidly and effectively to external crises. The RDC is built on three key pillars. First, building on the experience of the EU Battlegroups, it provides the European Union with a robust, flexible and scalable force of up to 5,000 personnel, supported by the strategic enablers required to deploy rapidly in response to crises beyond the Union's borders. Second, the Strategic Compass designated the MPCC as the preferred strategic command and control structure for the RDC, further reinforcing its central role within the EU's military command architecture. Third, it reaffirmed the importance of the EU Military Exercise (MILEX) programme, including Live Exercises (LIVEX), as a critical instrument for strengthening readiness, adaptability and interoperability.

These exercises, conducted under the command of the MPCC, play a vital role in validating the RDC concept, enhancing the preparedness of participating forces and demonstrating Member States' commitment to effective crisis management. Since the launch of the first EU LIVEX in Rota, Spain, in 2023, successive exercises have progressively increased in ambition and complexity. MILEX 24 in Bergen, Germany, validated the planning and deployment procedures of the RDC

under the operational command of the MPCC, while MILEX 25 in Hungary tested the strategic deployment of multinational forces from across Europe under realistic operational conditions. Most recently, MILEX 26 in Zaragoza, Spain, represented the most advanced iteration to date, bringing together the EU Battlegroup 2026 and the full spectrum of RDC capabilities in a large-scale live exercise. Together, these exercises have transformed the RDC from a conceptual ambition into a credible and increasingly operational military capability.

“Twenty-five years after its establishment, the European Union Military Staff stands as a mature, trusted and indispensable component of Europe's security architecture.”

Another significant milestone in the evolution of the EUMS has been the establishment of the EU Cyber Defence Coordination Centre (EU CDCC), reflecting the organisation's continued ability to adapt to an increasingly complex and contested security environment. As cyber threats have become a defining feature of modern conflict, the EU CDCC provides the military cyber coordination, situational awareness and information-sharing mechanisms required to support the planning and conduct of EU CSDP missions and operations, while strengthening cooperation with Member States and like-minded partners. Building on the experience and lessons identified through the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) Cyber Information Domain Coordination Centre (CIDCC), the EUMS, together with the EEAS, is leading the transition towards a permanent EU military cyber capability. Although implementation will be phased, the long-term objective is to establish a fully operational military cyber coordination hub that strengthens the European Union's resilience, enhances military decision-making and fully integrates cyber defence into future EU military planning and operations.

Military force remains one component of the European Union's integrated approach to crisis management, complementing diplomacy, development assistance, humanitarian action and civilian crisis management. The military contribution spans the full spectrum, from humanitarian assistance and evacuation operations to stabilisation, peace support operations and security sector reform. Where security conditions prevent civilian actors from operating, military forces create the conditions necessary for broader European engagement. This integrated approach remains one of the European Union's distinctive strengths.

The EUMS also plays a central role in supporting the MPCC in directing the European Union's non-executive

COUNCIL DECISION
of 22 January 2001
on the establishment of the Military Staff of the European Union
(2001/80/CFSP)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Article 28(1) thereof,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, in particular Article 207(2) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In the framework of the strengthening of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and in particular of the common European policy on security and defence provided for in Article 17 of the Treaty on European Union, the European Council meeting in Nice on 7-11 December 2000 reached agreement on the establishment of the Military Staff of the European Union, setting out its mission and functions.
- (2) Following the guidelines of the European Council the Military Staff should be made ready to start its work,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

1. Military personnel will be seconded from Member States to the General Secretariat of the Council in order to form the Military Staff of the European Union (EUMS).
2. The Military Staff will be part of the General Secretariat of the Council.

Article 2

The mission and functions of the Military Staff are defined in Annex V of the Presidency's report approved by the Nice European Council, which is reproduced in the Annex to this Decision.

Article 3

All members of the Military Staff shall be nationals of Member States of the European Union.

Article 4

1. Members of the Military Staff shall be subject to rules which will be established in a Council Decision.
2. Until the entry into force of the Decision mentioned in paragraph 1, Council Decision 2000/178/CFSP of 28 February 2000 on the rules applicable to national experts in the military field on secondment to the General Secretariat of the Council during the interim period ⁽¹⁾ shall remain in force.

Article 5

This Decision shall take effect from the date of its adoption. It shall apply as from a date established by the SG/HR upon consultation of the PSC and of the iMB/Military Committee and in principle before the end of June 2001.

Until the date of application of this Decision, the Director General of the Military Staff (DGEUMS), who will take up its functions as from 1 March 2001 ⁽²⁾, shall act as head of the military experts seconded from Member States to the Council Secretariat ⁽³⁾.

Article 6

This Decision shall be published in the Official Journal.

Done at Brussels, 22 January 2001.

For the Council
The President
A. LINDH

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 57, 2.3.2000, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Council Decision of 22 December 2000.

⁽³⁾ Council Decision 2000/145/CFSP of 14 February 2000 on the secondment of national experts in the military field to the General Secretariat of the Council during an interim period (OJ L 49, 22.2.2000, p. 3).

military training and assistance missions. Current missions in the Central African Republic, Somalia, Mozambique and Ukraine demonstrate the long-term value of investing in partner nations' security institutions through training, mentoring and strategic advice. The European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) stands as perhaps the clearest demonstration of what collective European action can achieve. Since October 2022, more than 95,000 personnel from the Armed Forces of Ukraine have been trained under EUMAM Ukraine, supported by unprecedented military, financial, humanitarian and political assistance from the European Union and its Member States. The mission demonstrates our ability to organise and deliver military support rapidly, efficiently and at scale, while maintaining close coordination with international partners.

Over the past 25 years, one of the defining strengths of the EUMS has been its ability to build and sustain trusted partnerships across the international security community, recognising that no organisation can address today's security challenges in isolation. Our increasingly close relationship with the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) exemplifies this approach, with practical staff-to-staff cooperation founded on the principles of complementarity, transparency and full respect for each organisation's decision-making autonomy.

Within the European Union, the EUMS works closely with the European Defence Agency (EDA) to ensure that operational experience informs capability development, interoperability and innovation. Our partnership with the Civilian Operations Headquarters (CivOpsHQ) reflects the EU's integrated approach to crisis management, bringing civilian and military expertise together from the earliest stages of planning to deliver coherent strategic effects. A good example is the European Union Security and Defence Initiative in support of the West African countries of the Gulf of Guinea (EU SDI GoG), a civilian-military initiative developed in partnership with Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin. It delivers tailored support by combining civilian and military expertise in response to priorities identified by the partner countries themselves.

Beyond the European Union, enduring cooperation with the United Nations remains essential, recognising its central role in maintaining international peace and security and the importance of close coordination wherever CSDP missions and operations operate alongside, or in support of, wider UN efforts. The EUMS has a close partnership with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), contributing to strategic education, professional military development and the cultivation of a common European security culture. Operational partnerships with multinational headquarters such as EUROCORPS and the Multinational Joint Headquarters Ulm further strengthen collective readiness, operational planning, exercises and military interoperability. Together, these partnerships significantly strengthen the European Union's capacity

to act, demonstrating that European security is best advanced not through institutional competition, but through trusted cooperation, complementary roles and a shared strategic purpose.

Since 2003, the European Union has launched more than 40 CSDP missions and operations. Today, 21 civilian and military CSDP missions and operations, together with one civilian-military initiative, remain deployed across three continents, with more than 4,500 personnel serving under the European Union flag. Such achievements would have been difficult to imagine when the EUMS first opened its doors in 2001.

Yet the next 25 years are unlikely to be any less demanding. Emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, cyber capabilities and the space domain will increasingly shape the character of military operations. Climate change, resource competition and demographic pressures will continue to influence global stability, while strategic competition is likely to remain a defining feature of the international security environment. Against this backdrop, the EUMS must continue to evolve—remaining agile, innovative and ready to provide the military expertise that enables informed political decision-making.

None of what the EUMS has achieved over the past 25 years would have been possible without the vision, leadership and dedication of the Directors General who have guided the organisation since its inception, or without the professionalism and commitment of the generations of multinational military and civilian personnel who have served within it. Each has made a lasting contribution, strengthening the EUMS through expertise, innovation and an unwavering commitment to the European Union's security objectives. The EUMS of today stands on the foundations they built, and its continued success is a testament to their collective legacy.

Equal recognition is due to the women and men serving in CSDP missions and operations around the world. Often deployed far from home in demanding and sometimes dangerous environments, they represent the European Union at its very best, translating strategic intent into practical action and embodying our enduring commitment to peace, security and international partnership.

Twenty-five years after its establishment, the European Union Military Staff stands as a mature, trusted and indispensable component of Europe's security architecture. Under the authority of the High Representative, and with the continued support of the Member States, it will continue to adapt, innovate and deliver the military expertise that enables the European Union to act with credibility, unity and purpose in an increasingly uncertain world. The challenges will evolve, but the EUMS will remain constant in its mission: providing the military expertise that helps safeguard Europe's security and advance its strategic interests. ■

Happy 25th Anniversary EUMS

By **Lieutenant General Remigijus Baltrėnas**, Director General NATO International Military Staff



On behalf of the NATO International Military Staff, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Director General of the EU Military Staff, to all serving members of the EUMS, and to everyone who has contributed to its work over the past quarter of a century.

Twenty-five years is an important milestone. It is a moment to look back with pride, but also to look ahead with purpose. Since its establishment, the EU Military Staff has played a central role in shaping the military dimension of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy. It has supported EU decision-making, contributed to military planning, enabled missions and operations, and helped translate political ambition into practical military advice.

For NATO, this anniversary is also an opportunity to recognise a valued military partner. The relationship between the NATO International Military Staff and the EU Military Staff is built on professionalism, trust and a shared commitment to the security of our citizens. Our two staffs serve different organisations, with different mandates and decision-making structures, but we operate in the same strategic environment, often face the same threats, and draw on many of the same nations, forces and capabilities.

This reality makes our cooperation not only useful, but essential.

Today, Euro-Atlantic security is more contested and more complex than at any time in a generation. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally altered the security environment. At the same time, we face persistent terrorist threats, instability in our neighbourhood, cyber-attacks, disinformation, strategic competition, threats to critical infrastructure, and challenges in the maritime, space and cyber domains.

No single organisation can address all of these challenges alone. NATO and the European Union each bring distinct strengths. NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for Allies and the essential forum for transatlantic security. The European Union brings a broad range of instruments — political, economic, regulatory, civilian and military — which are vital for resilience, crisis management, capability development and support to partners.

This is where complementarity matters.

At the military staff level, complementarity is not an abstract concept. It is practical. It is daily work. It is planners speaking to planners, experts comparing assessments, staffs aligning efforts, and both organisations ensuring that their activities reinforce rather than duplicate each other.

Just recently at the 25th EUMS-IMS Directors' General Conference we reviewed the progress on the joint work plan. Regular engagement between the two military staffs remains essential to address common security challenges, strengthen complementarity, and support effective cooperation across agreed areas of work.

Our cooperation is particularly important in areas such as military mobility. The ability to move forces, equipment and supplies quickly across Europe is indispensable for deterrence and defence. NATO sets military requirements; the European Union has powerful tools to help improve infrastructure, regulations and cross-border procedures. Together, this work makes Europe more secure and more usable for military reinforcement.

The same is true for capability development. European Allies and partners need more forces at higher readiness, more ammunition, stronger air and missile defence, more secure communications, greater cyber resilience,



Members of the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) at the 25th EUMS/NATO IMS Directors General Conference, 22 June 2026.

and robust command and control. EU initiatives can help develop the capabilities that nations also make available to NATO. When these efforts are coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing, they strengthen both organisations.

In the cyber and hybrid domains, NATO and the EU also have much to gain from close cooperation. Our adversaries do not respect institutional boundaries. They use cyber-attacks, coercion, sabotage, manipulation of information, and pressure on critical infrastructure as part of a broader strategic campaign. The military staffs of NATO and the EU have an important role in improving situational awareness, supporting resilience, and ensuring that our responses are coordinated.

Maritime security is another area where cooperation has real operational value. Our sea lines of communication, ports, seabed infrastructure and maritime approaches are vital to our security and prosperity. NATO and EU efforts in the maritime domain can be complementary, helping to build awareness, support stability, and protect shared interests.

But perhaps the most important foundation of NATO-EU cooperation is the fact that our nations largely depend on the same set of forces. Whether a capability is used in a NATO context, an EU context, a United Nations framework, or a national operation, it must be generated, trained, equipped and sustained by nations. This means that coherence between NATO and EU military requirements is not a bureaucratic preference — it is a military necessity.

The International Military Staff and the EU Military Staff therefore have a special responsibility. We must help our organisations understand each other's priorities. We must identify where cooperation adds value. We must reduce friction for nations. And we must ensure that our military advice is clear, realistic and focused on outcomes.

The past 25 years have shown that the EU Military Staff is a serious and capable military actor. It has supported EU missions and operations, contributed to crisis management, and helped strengthen the EU's role in security and defence. Just as importantly, it has built a culture of cooperation with NATO based on mutual respect and professional dialogue.

Looking ahead, that cooperation will become even more important. The security environment will remain demanding. Our nations will need to spend more, produce more, train more, and cooperate more. NATO and the EU will need to continue working together in support of Ukraine, in strengthening defence industrial capacity, in improving resilience, and in ensuring that European defence efforts contribute effectively to our shared security.

As military staffs, our task is to turn political direction into military coherence. We are not here to compete. We are here to deliver. We are here to ensure that NATO and the EU use their respective strengths in a way that is complementary, efficient and strategically effective.

So today, as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the EU Military Staff, let me pay tribute to the professionalism and dedication of all those who serve in it. Your work matters. It matters to the European Union. It matters to NATO. And it matters to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area.

On behalf of the NATO International Military Staff, congratulations on this important anniversary. We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with you in the years ahead — as partners, as colleagues, and as military professionals committed to the same goal: a safer, stronger and more secure Europe. 🇪🇺



EUMS and EDA: Two Partners, One Aim

By Lieutenant General André Denk, Chief Executive of the European Defence Agency (EDA)

Together, the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA) are central to the EU's efforts to strengthen defence readiness. They operate as closely connected but distinct institutions: the EUMS provides military operational expertise and insight within the EU Military Staff framework, while EDA focuses on capability development, collaborative procurement and defence R&T and innovation. Under the political leadership of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission Kaja Kallas, their work converges on a shared objective: improving European defence, coherence, and capability delivery.

The strategic environment has shifted decisively in recent years, driven by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, rising instability in Europe's wider neighbourhood and the growing complexity of hybrid and technological threats. These developments have accelerated the need for closer alignment between operational needs and shortfalls, and capability planning and development within the EU framework, and in coordination with NATO.

At the centre of our EU capability development planning system is the Capability Development Plan (CDP), coordinated by EDA in close cooperation with Member States, the EUMS, and the EU Military Committee. The CDP defines the priorities related to military capabilities which must be developed collaboratively at an EU level across all areas, addressing full-spectrum capabilities. It integrates operational lessons, national defence planning, and emerging technological trends to ensure capabilities are ready to respond to evolving threats now and into the future. EUMS' recent work on National and International Capability Objectives (NICO), in particular, is very much welcomed and will significantly augment future revisions.

The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) is the backbone of the EU Capability Development Planning System as it provides a

unique EU structure for engagement with Member States on defence spending, planning, and cooperation. Led by EDA together with the EUMS and the European External Action Service, CARD functions as the EU's main instrument for capturing and evaluating relevant developments and progress in defence. It highlights progress in national and collaborative programmes and supports Member States in identifying opportunities for collaborative development and procurement.

"Our combined contribution, linking operational assessment with capability delivery, will remain essential to identifying requirements, addressing shortfalls, and strengthening EU defence."



*Lt Gen Denk and Lt Gen van der Laan at the launch of the
EUMS 25 Year Anniversary Photo Exhibition,
29 January 2026*

Increasingly, CARD outcomes feed directly into prioritisation decisions and cooperative capability planning.

Within this framework, EDA plays a key role in translating agreed political and military requirements into practical programmes and cooperative projects. This includes supporting Member States in developing joint capability initiatives, strengthening the European defence technological and industrial base, and accelerating the delivery of deployable solutions. These efforts are informed by operational perspectives provided through the EUMS, ensuring that planning remains grounded in real-world military problems to solve.

This evolving context places greater emphasis on identifying capability gaps early and improving the readiness of European forces. It also requires agile processes, so that capability development can keep pace with rapidly changing operational demands and technological change.

In response to the European Council's tasking, work is under way to further strengthen EDA so that it can better support Member States in delivering the capabilities Europe needs, for instance in support of the nine Priority Capability Areas (PCAs). This strengthening includes enhancing EDA's role in coordinating collaborative

projects, supporting innovation, and facilitating more effective joint procurement for off-the-shelf equipment or contracted services such as satellite communication or medical evacuation. The objective is a more responsive and impactful Agency, working in close partnership with the EUMS.

The shift in Europe's security environment has reinforced a clear policy direction. Readiness and defence capability development are now central to EU defence efforts. While Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations remain an important element of EU action, there is an increasing focus on preparing for high-intensity conflict scenarios and ensuring that European forces are properly equipped, supported, and interoperable.

As the EU advances towards Defence Readiness 2030, cooperation between the EUMS and EDA will continue with determination. Our combined contribution, linking operational assessment with capability delivery, will remain essential to identifying requirements, addressing shortfalls, and strengthening EU defence.

Happy Birthday EUMS! 🍷



On the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary

By Stefano Tomat, Civilian Operations Commander (CivOpsCdr)

There seems to be no shortage of significant CSDP anniversaries these days. They are coming thick and fast—a welcome sign that our institutions are reaching a level of maturity and experience that only time, shared purpose and sustained commitment can bring. In this context the EUMS has now reached an impressive milestone, celebrating its first quarter of a century.

Twenty-five years ago, the European Union took an important step towards strengthening its capacity to anticipate, understand and respond to crises. Today, as Europe confronts the most demanding security environment in a generation, the value of that decision has never been clearer.

From military planning and strategic assessment to operational support and situational awareness, the EUMS has become an indispensable pillar of the European Union's security architecture. Its expertise has helped shape the Union's response to an increasingly complex landscape characterised by geopolitical competition, hybrid attacks, cyber operations and persistent instability. In doing so, the EUMS has not simply kept pace with change—it has helped the European Union adapt to it.

For the Civilian Operations Headquarters, our partnership with the EUMS reflects one of the European Union's greatest strengths: the ability to bring civilian and military expertise together in pursuit of common political objectives. The security challenges we face today do not recognise organisational boundaries, and neither should our response. They demand shared understanding, mutual trust and coordinated action across the full spectrum of crisis management.

Every day, colleagues from our two organisations work side by side to turn political ambition into operational effect. Whether strengthening resilience on the ground, providing complementarity of support to our partners or developing integrated responses to emerging crises,

our cooperation demonstrates that the EU's integrated approach is far more than an institutional aspiration—it is a practical advantage that delivers real results.

Behind every institutional success are people. The women and men of the EUMS have, over the past quarter century, earned a reputation for professionalism, expertise and dedication. They have helped build an organisation that commands respect across the European security community, and they should take genuine pride in what they have achieved.

The presence of military professionals in uniform as part of the EEAS everyday environment is itself an important expression of the European Union's integrated approach. Beyond the practical contribution of military expertise, it helps foster a shared strategic culture—one in which military action is understood not as separate from diplomacy, but as one of the instruments available to advance political objectives when required. This daily interaction strengthens mutual understanding between civilian and military communities and reinforces the principle that, in today's security environment, diplomacy and defence are complementary tools in support of peace and stability.

On behalf of everyone at Civilian Operations Headquarters, I extend my sincere congratulations to the entire EUMS on this important anniversary. While twenty-five years is a moment to celebrate, it is also a reminder that the work of strengthening Europe's security is never complete. I look forward to our partnership continuing to deepen in the years ahead as we face new challenges with the same spirit of cooperation, professionalism and shared purpose that has defined our work together.

Happy Anniversary, European Union Military Staff—and thank you for being such a valued partner on this shared endeavour. 🇪🇺



EUMS and ESDC: a relationship that continues to flourish

By **Fergal Ó Regan**, Head of the European Security and defence College (ESDC).

The missions of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) and the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) are not just aligned, they are intertwined. As the EU's source of military expertise, the EUMS, and as the distributor of security and defence knowledge, the ESDC, we share a strong, mutually beneficial partnership that has thrived for two decades.

As Head of the ESDC, it is my pleasure to congratulate the EUMS, our older CFSP sibling, on 25 years of success at the forefront of European defence integration. Over these 25 years, the role of the EUMS has gradually expanded, reflecting the Union's evolving security needs and the reliance placed on its considerable expertise.

The ESDC, as the Union's main CFSP/CSDP training provider, has had and continues to have the great honour not only of training EUMS staff but also of benefiting from its vast expertise, which we then distribute together to other EU institutions, Member States and partner countries. As early as 2006, just a year after the ESDC's founding, we collaborated with the EUMS, then part of the Council, on a module for the "ESDP High Level Course", even before the introduction of the CSDP.

This early cooperation has since flourished. Today, we jointly run about six activities per academic year, ranging from CSDP Orientation Courses to Capability Planning and Development and Crisis Management. Beyond these dedicated activities, the EUMS also contributes its expertise through speakers, experts for our quality control exercises and participants in high level events. We also welcome numerous participants from the EUMS on a variety of our courses, whether they are preparing for their new roles within the EUMS or strengthening their thematic expertise through one of our many dedicated courses.

"We act as an amplifier, not only sharing the EUMS's expertise but also spreading its lived European security and defence culture."

This continued exchange is one of the shining examples of how the ESDC fulfils its mandate to enhance the common security and defence culture - a culture that is lived within the EUMS every day. We act as an amplifier, not only sharing the EUMS's expertise but also spreading its lived European security and defence culture.

This short historical reflection on the past 25 and 20 years respectively illustrates one thing: the ESDC would not be where it is today without the continuous cooperation and reliance on the EUMS. Our partnership stands as a strong and enduring example of successful, needs-based cooperation within the EU system and with Member States. We are certain that when the EUMS turns 50 and the ESDC 45, our collaboration will have continued on its path of growth, reliance, and reliability.

Our security environment, alongside growing European integration and reliance, will require the EUMS to play an even more pivotal role. Together with all partners in the CFSP/CSDP family, we must advance our common and shared defence interests.

From me personally and the entire team at the ESDC, we extend our sincere congratulations to the European Union Military Staff and to all our colleagues and friends on your success, and we look forward to our joint future.



United Nations Shoulder to Shoulder with the EU Military Staff for 25 Years

By **Rory Keane**, Head of United Nations Peace & Security Liaison Office, Brussels

For a quarter of a century, the United Nations has worked side by side with the EU Military Staff (EUMS). Over this period, the EUMS has proven to be a reliable, predictable and steadfast partner to the UN—both at headquarters and in some of the world’s most challenging operational theatres.

From the earliest days of the EUMS in the early 2000s, cooperation between the UN and the EU has been close and continuous. This was particularly evident in the Western Balkans, where for example the EU’s military operation **EUFOR Althea** has long operated under a **UN Security Council mandate**, and thus has helped to ensure stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Some of the deepest and most innovative cooperation has taken place on the African continent. The UN and EU deployed **parallel, sequential, and bridging missions** in Chad, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Central African Republic (CAR). These missions demonstrated the ability of both organisations to coordinate effectively in highly complex environments in support of government efforts.

One standout example is the EU’s **EUSEC RD Congo** mission, which launched the pioneering “**Chain of Payments**” project in 2005. This initiative—developed in close coordination with the UN—helped to eliminate “ghost soldiers” and ensure that salaries reached troops directly. It remains to this day and innovate example of a practical security sector reform effort.

Another example of good partnership relates to the deployment of **EUFOR RCA** in 2014 in the Central African Republic. This temporary EU military operation

in Bangui played a stabilising role during the transition from the Africanled MISCA force to the UN’s **MINUSCA** peacekeeping mission. EUFOR RCA stands as an illustration of a **CSDP bridging mission** – having addressed security issues at a pivotal moment.

The partnership also delivered a **rehatting** in Chad in 2009. Under **UN Security Council Resolution 1778 (2007)**, the EU deployed **EUFOR Tchad/RCA** in early 2008 to protect civilians fleeing the Darfur conflict and to support humanitarian operations. On **15 March 2009**, the mission was formally rehatting as the UN peacekeeping mission **MINURCAT**, which assumed EUFOR’s responsibilities. The rehatting example remains a model of UN–EU operational coordination.

Between 2013 and 2023, cooperation between **EUTM Mali-Sahel** and the UN’s **MINUSMA** peacekeeping mission became part of daily operational life. A joint lessons learned review conducted after the closure of both missions confirmed that, despite an increasingly difficult political and security environment, the partnership delivered results.

In the wider Middle East and North Africa region, the UN and EU have also worked closely together. The EU’s naval operation **EUNAVFOR MED IRINI**, mandated through a UN Security Council resolution, continues to play a role in enforcing the UN arms embargo.

At the strategic level, cooperation has been equally strong. Regular exchanges between the EUMS and UN peacekeeping leadership—including regular **UN–EU Military Dialogue**—has helped shape shared priorities and strengthen mutual understanding. The UN Under Secretary General for Peace Operations is also routinely



invited to brief EU defence ministers and defence policy directors, underscoring the depth of the relationship.

EUMS Deputy Director General, Major General Gábor Horváth with former UN Military Advisor Gen. Diop following talks in Brussels. 16 November 2022.

Looking ahead, the UN and EU have endorsed **Joint Peace & Security Priorities for 2025–2028**, setting the direction for cooperation in peace operations, crisis management, and conflict prevention. These priorities are anchored in the UN's *Pact for the Future* and the Secretary-General's *New Agenda for Peace*, reflecting a shared commitment to multilateralism and collective security. As we look to the next 25 years of the UN–EU partnership, it is clear that profound geopolitical shifts will require both organisations to be agile, innovative and politically attuned. In an increasingly multipolar world—where interstate conflict is again on the

rise—traditional intervention models will need to adapt. The UN–EU partnership will be central to this evolution.

What gives confidence is the **depth of trust** built over the past quarter century. This foundation will be essential as both organisations navigate a more complex global landscape. Despite the challenges of our time, the UN–EU partnership has the resilience, experience, and shared purpose needed to move confidently into the next quarter century. 🛡️



EUFOR Althea has long operated under a UN Security Council mandate, and thus has helped to ensure stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



EUMS and EUROCORPS: a longstanding and trusted partnership

By Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz, COM EC.

Dear Members of the European Union Military Staff,

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), EUROCORPS extends its warmest congratulations and sincere appreciation for a quarter century of dedicated service to European security and defense.

Over the past 25 years, the EUMS has become a cornerstone of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy, demonstrating unwavering commitment, professionalism, and strategic vision in supporting the EU's security objectives and operational readiness.

EUROCORPS is particularly proud of the long-standing and trusted partnership that has been built with the EUMS throughout these years. Our close cooperation reflects a shared commitment to strengthening European security, enhancing military interoperability, and contributing to effective crisis management and defense operations in an increasingly complex strategic environment.

This strong partnership has been especially visible in the context of EU Training Missions in Mali (2015 and 2021), the Central African Republic (second semester 2016, 2017, 2021 and 2022), and as designated FHQ for different EU Battle Groups (2016, 2017, 2025 and 2026/27), participating in multiple military exercises such as MILEX 26 / RDC LIVEX 26, where EUROCORPS has had the honor of contributing its operational expertise and multinational command capabilities alongside the EUMS. Such exercises play a vital role in reinforcing the European Union's ability to conduct coordinated security and defense operations, while further strengthening



readiness, cohesion, and collective resilience among European partners. EUROCORPS plays a great role and, as unique dual organization, serves as a professional and operational Headquarters ready for both the European Union and NATO.

As the EUMS celebrates this important milestone, EUROCORPS looks forward to continuing and further deepening this excellent cooperation in the years ahead, united by our common values and our shared responsibility for peace, stability, and security in Europe and beyond.

With highest regards,

Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz
Commanding General EUROCORPS 

MILEX 26 / RDC LIVEX 26

SCENARIO

DVD 18 JUNE 2026



Front page of the MILEX 26 / RDC LIVEX 26 Scenario for the Distinguished Visitors Day in Zaragoza Spain, 18 June 2026.



DIRECTOR GENERAL EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY STAFF

**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
RAINER SCHUWIRTH**
Jun 2001 — Mar 2004



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
JEAN-PAUL PERRUCHE**
Mar 2004 — Mar 2007



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
DAVID LEAKEY**
Mar 2007 — May 2010



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
TON VAN OSCH**
May 2010 — May 2013



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
WOLFGANG WOSOLSOBE**
May 2013 — May 2016



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
ESA PULKKINEN**
May 2016 — Jun 2020



**VICE ADMIRAL
HÉRVE BLÉJEAN**
Jun 2020 — Jun 2023



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL
MICHIEL VAN DER LAAN**
Jun 2023 to date



EUMS 25 Year Anniversary Photo Exhibition



A

Protection of Vessels in the Red Sea
18 February 2025



For the past 25 years the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) has served as the primary source of the European Unions military expertise, providing essential support across all Comon Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) domains and the political-strategic and military-strategic levels.

On 22 January 2001, the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) was established by Council Decision Council Decision 2001/80/CFSP.

To mark the occasion the EUMS hosted a 25 Year Anniversary Photo Exhibition in the Rotunda of the EEAS HQ. The Exhibition, which ran from 26 January to 20 February 2026, displayed a selection of photographs that showcased the staff of both the EUMS and the MPCC, as well as the important work carried out by the men and women deployed on past and present EU CSDP missions and operations over the last 25 years.

Please enjoy a snapshot of some of the photos which were proudly displayed during the exhibition. 🇪🇺



B

Staff Photo

Brussels (Belgium), 26 September 2025



C

Saving lives off the Somali coast - EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA

11 September 2009



D

Joint Exercise in Somalia
Somalia, 25 September 2025



E

The first staff members with Interim Director General Major General Graham Messervy-Whiting CBE (UK), centre.
Justus Lipsius Building, 09 April 2001



F

EUFOR Operation ALTHEA Bosnia and Herzegovina
17 May 2014



G

Secretary General and High Representative Javier Solana visits the EUMS
Brussels (Belgium), 8 June 2006



H

Mortar Training - EUMAM UA

Toledo Training Coordination Centre (Spain), 20 March 2024



I

EUMS Autumn Dinner

Brussels (Belgium), November 2012



K

DG EUMS HOTO Ceremony

Brussels (Belgium), 1 March 2004



J

Lieutenant General Michiel van der Laan: Dual Leadership in EU Security

Mogadishu (Somalia), 7 November 2023



L

EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

12 May 2022

CAPTIONS & CREDITS

A. Protection of Vessels in the Red Sea

18 February 2025

A merchant vessel transiting the Red Sea completed its journey safely under the protection of EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES.

Launched on 19 February 2024, EUNAVFOR Operation ASPIDES is the latest EU Military maritime operation contributing to the protection of freedom of navigation and safeguarding maritime security, especially merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf.

Credits: EUFOR Operation ASPIDES

B. Staff Photo

Brussels (Belgium)

26 September 2025

The Staff of the EUMS and MPCC.

Credits: EUMS

C. Saving lives off the Somali coast - EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA

11 September 2009

Swedish personnel from the Swedish Warship HMS Stockholm provide humanitarian assistance to Somali refugees, as part of EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA.

Credits: Swedish Armed Forces

D. Joint Exercise in Somalia

Somalia

25 September 2025

The photograph shows an EUTM Somali instructor and a Somali soldier covering each other during a joint exercise.

The activity highlights hands-on training, teamwork and operational coordination, reflecting the mission's commitment to strengthening Somali forces' skills, confidence and readiness in real-world scenarios.

Credits: EUTM Somalia

E. The first staff members with Interim Director General Major General Graham Messervy-Whiting CBE

09 April 2001

In the open plan offices of the Justus Lipsius Building, the very first staff members of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) toast their arrival with Interim Director General Major General Graham Messervy-Whiting CBE (UK), centre.

In March 2000, Major General Messervy-Whiting was recruited by SG HR Javier Solana to design a Military Staff for the EU, thus becoming the Director General of the Interim Military Body (iMB). His task for the next 12 months was to recruit, house, equip, train and deliver a fully capable Military Staff.

Note the availability of only one

computer in the photo. This was shared by all eight staff members, before moving to the purpose-adapted Kortenberg Building a few weeks later. In the next three months the EUMS would build from a staff of 8 to eighty.

Major General Messervy-Whiting would go on to become the first Deputy Director General and Chief of Staff of the EUMS from June 2001 to March 2003.

Credits: EUMS

F. EUFOR Operation ALTHEA Bosnia and Herzegovina

17 May 2014

On 2 December 2004, 9 years after the war ended, the European Union launched a military operation entitled EUFOR Operation ALTHEA.

The EU deployed a robust military force (EUFOR) at the same manpower levels as NATO's SFOR (just under 7,000 troops) to ensure continued compliance with the Dayton/Paris Agreement and to contribute to a safe and secure environment (SASE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The photo shows EUFOR Operation ALTHEA engaged in supporting civilians during a training exercise for natural disasters in May 2014.

Credits: EUFOR Operation ALTHEA

G. Secretary General and High Representative Javier Solana visits the EUMS

Brussels (Belgium)

28 June 2006

The SG HR is pictured with Lieutenant General Jean-Paul Perruche (FR), DG EUMS from March 2004 to March 2007.

In early 2004, SG HR Solana tasked Lieutenant General Perruche to plan the take over from the NATO-led multinational peacekeeping Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. EUFOR Operation ALTHEA commenced in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02 December 2004 and is the EU's longest ongoing CSDP Military Operation.

Credits: EUMS

H. Mortar Training - EUMAM UA

Toledo Training Coordination Centre (Spain)

20 March 2024

Ukrainian soldiers practicing mortar drills during EUMAM UA training. The training strengthens battlefield skills, teamwork and operational readiness, reflecting the EU mission's commitment to enhancing Ukraine's defence capabilities and supporting soldiers as they prepare for real frontline conditions.

Credits: EUMAM UA

I. EUMS Autumn Dinner

Brussels (Belgium)

November 2012

The EUMS Sports & Social Club (SASC) was established with the aim of fostering the esprit de corps, and physical health of the EUMS and its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) partners by organising social and sporting events and activities for its members.

One such event is the Autumn Dinner where EUMS personnel and their partners don their Mess Dress and celebrate an evening of military style and splendour.

Credits: EUMS

J. Lieutenant General Michiel van der Laan: Dual Leadership in EU Security

Mogadishu (Somalia)

7 November 2023

Lieutenant General Michiel van der Laan in his role as Director of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). He oversees planning, commanding and conducting EU non-executive military missions, ensuring operational coherence, strategic alignment and effective direction of national forces in advisory and training missions worldwide.

Credits: EUTM Somalia

K. DG EUMS HOTO Ceremony

Brussels (Belgium)

01 March 2004

Lieutenant General Rainer Schuwirth (DE), right, was the first Director General of the EUMS from June 2001 to March 2004. He is pictured handing over command of the EUMS to Lieutenant General Jean-Paul Perruche (FR), left.

Credits: EUMS

L. EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

12 May 2022

EUNAVFOR MED IRINI commenced operations on 31 March 2020 as a concrete and tangible contribution to achieving peace and stability in Libya. As part of the wider European Integrated Approach to Libya, IRINI is a military maritime security operation deployed in the Mediterranean Sea under the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

Credits: EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

THE EVOLUTION, ROLE AND FUTURE OF THE MILITARY PLANNING AND CONDUCT CAPABILITY



By Major Olivier Vandegard, MPCC

1. Introduction

The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), established in 2017, represents the European Union's first strategic level military headquarters and a central component of the Union's evolving Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Its creation marked a decisive institutional milestone in the EU's longstanding ambition to develop credible military planning and command structures. The MPCC's emergence reflects a broader trajectory of European defence integration shaped by geopolitical shocks, institutional learning, and shifting expectations regarding Europe's role in international security.

2. Strategic Origins: From Helsinki to the European Security Strategy

The conceptual foundations of the MPCC can be traced to the early post Cold War period, when the European Union sought to define its security identity and operational ambitions. The Helsinki Headline Goal (HHG) of 1999 was particularly significant in this regard. By committing Member States to the creation of a 60,000 strong rapid reaction force deployable within 60 days and sustainable for one year, the HHG established the principle that the EU required autonomous military planning and command structures. Although the HHG was never fully realised, it introduced the idea that effective crisis management demanded strategic level coordination beyond ad hoc arrangements.

This ambition was reinforced by the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003, which identified terrorism, regional conflicts, state failure, and organised crime as key threats to European security. The ESS argued that the EU must become "more active, more capable, and more coherent," thereby strengthening the case for integrated civilian military planning structures. Despite these aspirations, political resistance—particularly from the United Kingdom—prevented the establishment of a permanent EU military headquarters. As a result, the EU relied on national headquarters, NATO structures under the Berlin Plus arrangements, and temporary mission specific command setups.

3. Institutional Evolution and Renewed Momentum

Throughout the 2000s, the EU's reliance on dispersed command arrangements limited strategic coherence. The creation of the EU Military Staff (EUMS), the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and the EU Military Committee (EUMC) improved coordination but did not resolve the absence of a standing military headquarters. The geopolitical environment of the 2010s fundamentally altered this dynamic. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, instability in the Middle East and North Africa, rising terrorist threats within Europe, and growing uncertainty regarding longterm US security commitments created renewed urgency for European defence integration. The United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU in 2016 removed a major political obstacle to deeper cooperation.

In this context, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) of 2016 articulated the concept of strategic autonomy, calling for a more credible and capable EU security role. The EUGS highlighted deficiencies in command and control arrangements and emphasised the need for more coherent planning structures. It also catalysed several defence initiatives, including Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and the European Defence Fund (EDF). Within this broader reform agenda, the MPCC was established as a permanent strategic headquarters for EU military missions.

4. Establishment and Early Mandate of the MPCC

The MPCC was formally created on 8 June 2017 within the EU Military Staff (EUMS) of the European External Action Service (EEAS). It was deliberately framed as a strategic headquarters rather than a theatre level operational headquarters, in order to avoid perceptions of duplicating NATO structures. Its initial mandate focused on nonexecutive military training missions in Mali, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. Although modest in scope, the MPCC represented a major institutional breakthrough: for the first time, the EU possessed a permanent military command structure capable of providing strategic level planning,



Lieutenant General Esa Pulkkinen (FI) was the first Director of the MPCC which was established as an OHQ in 2017. He is pictured with members of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) on a visit to EUTM Mali Mission Force Headquarters in Bamako, September 2018.

command, and control. The MPCC also became a central component of the EU's integrated approach to crisis management, working closely with the Civilian Operations Headquarters (CivOpsHQ) to coordinate civilian and military instruments.

5. Expansion of Mandate and Capabilities

The MPCC's mandate and capabilities expanded significantly after 2018. Member States agreed that it should eventually be capable of conducting one executive military operation of EU Battlegroup size, approximately 2,500 troops. This required enhancements in staffing, intelligence coordination, secure communications, logistics support, and operational planning. The creation of the Joint Support Coordination Cell (JSCC) in 2020 further strengthened civilmilitary coordination. The adoption of the EU Strategic Compass in 2022 accelerated the MPCC's development by designating it as the preferred strategic headquarters for the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC), a force of up to 5,000 personnel intended for crisis response, stabilisation, evacuation, and humanitarian operations. The MPCC now serves as the strategic level operational headquarters for the RDC and continues to command several ongoing military assistance and training missions, including EUTM Somalia, EUTM Central African Republic, EUMAM Mozambique, and EUMAM Ukraine.

6. The MPCC in the Contemporary Security Environment

Russia's fullscale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 profoundly reshaped European defence policy. It prompted significant increases in defence spending and renewed

political momentum for deeper EU defence cooperation. In this evolving security environment, the MPCC has gained strategic relevance as a central node in the EU's military command architecture. The Union's new High Representative / Vice President (HR/VP), Kaja Kallas, has become one of the most influential voices shaping Europe's strategic posture. In her recent public statements, she has argued that Russia's longterm objective is to weaken and divide Europe, and that the EU must prepare for the possibility of further Russian aggression. She has emphasised the need to accelerate defence industrial production, strengthen readiness, and ensure that Europe can act even if the United States is preoccupied elsewhere. At the same time, she has stressed that European strategic autonomy must complement rather than replace the transatlantic alliance. Her strategic messaging reinforces the need for stronger EU command structures such as the MPCC, particularly in the context of high intensity conflict preparedness.

7. The Transatlantic Dimension

The MPCC's development has occurred alongside evolving debates about the future of the transatlantic partnership. Both the EU Global Strategy and the Strategic Compass emphasise that European strategic autonomy is complementary to NATO, not a substitute. The MPCC contributes to this balance by strengthening



Mission Force Commanders from the EU's CSDP Military Training Missions meet with DMPCC, Lt Gen van der Laan in Brussels, Feb 2024.



Maj Gen Albl COS MPCC (left) and Lt Gen van der Laan DMPCC (right) at the presentation of the MILEX 24 Initiating Military Directive, April 2024.



DMPCC Lt Gen Michiel van der Laan (centre), at the transfer of responsibility at the European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) July 2024.

European burden sharing, focusing on missions where NATO is unlikely to engage, and enhancing Europe's ability to act when US attention is directed elsewhere. This approach aligns with Kaja Kallas's argument that Europe must be capable of standing on its own feet while remaining anchored in the transatlantic alliance.

8. Way Ahead: Strategic Priorities for the MPCC

Looking ahead, the MPCC's future development will be shaped by several strategic priorities. Strengthening strategic readiness will require enhanced scenario based planning, joint exercises, and rapid decision making mechanisms, particularly in support of the RDC. Deepening civil military integration will be essential for addressing hybrid and grey zone threats. Enhancing defence industrial capacity, as emphasised by HR/VP Kallas, will be critical to ensuring that the MPCC can rely on sustainable capabilities and munitions stockpiles. Finally, reinforcing transatlantic complementarity will remain central to ensuring interoperability, burden

sharing, and strategic coherence between the EU and NATO.

9. Conclusion

The MPCC represents the culmination of a long trajectory of European defence integration, beginning with the Helsinki Headline Goal and shaped by the European Security Strategy, the EU Global Strategy, and the Strategic Compass. As Europe confronts an increasingly uncertain security environment—marked by Russian aggression, global instability, and shifting US priorities—the MPCC has become a central component of the EU's evolving security architecture. Its future development will depend on political consensus, defence industrial capacity, and the EU's ability to balance strategic autonomy with a strong transatlantic partnership. In this context, the MPCC is poised to play an expanding role in shaping Europe's military posture, crisis management capabilities, and longterm strategic responsibility. 🇪🇺

**MAJOR GENERAL
GÁBOR HORVÁTH**
Deputy Director General
and Chief of Staff of
the European Union
Military Staff



Major General Horváth is the Deputy Director General and Chief of Staff of the EU Military Staff. European Union Military Staff (EUMS), a position he has held since September 2022. In this role, he supports the Director General in providing strategic military advice to the EU's political leadership, overseeing the day-to-day functioning of the EUMS, and contributing to the planning and conduct of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations.



A senior officer of the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF), he brings over four decades of operational, command, and multinational experience within national, NATO, and EU military structures. He entered the Hungarian Defence Forces as an Officer Cadet in 1982 and was commissioned in 1986. Throughout his career, he has held a wide range of command and senior staff appointments at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Promoted to Major General in 2020, he has demonstrated leadership across force development, training, operational planning, and multinational military cooperation.

His key appointments at national level include Director of Training Directorate, HDF Command; Acting Deputy Commander (Land), Joint Force Command; Commander, 25th Infantry Brigade (Tata, Hungary); and Commandant, HDF Non-Commissioned Officers Academy (Szentendre, Hungary).

In the international environment he has filled the posts of Hungarian Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee and to the EU

Military Committee; Hungarian National Military Representative at SHAPE (Mons); Chief of Staff, ESDP Operation ALTHEA (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Director, Concepts and Capabilities, EUMS (Brussels); Head of the NATO Permanent Liaison Team to the EU Military Staff and Deputy Hungarian Military Representative to the EU Military Committee.

Major General Horváth is also a graduate of the Joint Defence College in Paris and has completed senior professional military education at the NATO School Oberammergau, the NATO Defence College and the Centre for Higher Defence Studies in Rome, as well as the European Security and Defence College.

He has been awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary (2015), Knight of the French Ordre National du Mérite (2016), and the Austrian Military Recognition Medal (2019), among other decorations.

He is fluent in English and French and has dormant knowledge of Russian. He is married with two children, both officers in the Hungarian Defence Forces. 🇭🇺

GIVING THE NEO COMPLEX A STRONGER IDENTITY

In March 2024, the first sections of the EUMS moved to the New Espace Urban (NEO) Complex after spending the previous 23 years at Avenue de Cortenbergh 150. The move was met with both excitement—at the prospect of settling into a modern new workspace—and a sense of nostalgia as staff left the building that had been home to the EUMS since 2001, witnessing its growth and evolution over more than two decades.

In IMPETUS 33, we introduced readers to the NEO Complex and highlighted the third phase of the project, aimed at making the complex a true home for its occupants. This phase included the corporate branding of the complex, upgrading the spaces, and providing it with an identity. Now, almost 18 months later, the project is complete. The occupants of the NEO Complex, including the EUMS and MPCC, now have a modern, welcoming environment that will support the continued evolution of both organisations for the next 25 years and beyond.

The NEO Corporate Identity Project has been completed. Launched at the beginning of 2025, the project marks a major milestone in the transformation of the European External Action Service's (EEAS) highly secured multi-entity office building in Brussels, the NEO complex located at Rue d'Arlon 88.

Divided into three sub-buildings (ARLON 88, SCIENCE 27 and SCIENCE 29), the NEO complex hosts several entities involved in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). NEO therefore occupies a unique position within the EEAS building portfolio, bringing together diverse mandates, civilian and military operational environments, and stringent security requirements within a single shared infrastructure.

Conceived and developed by Florencio Montealegre de la Torre, architect in RM.SCS.6 Division - Real Estate, Safety and Greening, the project has strengthened

the building's identity, improved wayfinding, and created a more professional, representative and welcoming environment for staff and visitors, fully aligned with the EEAS Corporate Identity approach already implemented across several EEAS buildings. Beyond its visual dimension, the project has improved the functionality, usability and institutional presence of the building.

Its significance also lies in the collaborative process behind it. The project has been the result of excellent collaboration with the representatives of the entities based in NEO. Through a dedicated working group, colleagues with different mandates, cultures and operational requirements co-created a coherent identity for a unique and complex shared building:

"There was a genuine cooperative approach throughout the process, allowing the group to evaluate

alternatives thoroughly before engaging the respective hierarchies."

Lt Col Irving FROKLAGE
Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)

"The NEO Corporate Identity Project was a fully collaborative experience with colleagues working in harmony to achieve optimal outcomes. Florencio was particularly receptive to new ideas and very successful at transforming abstract proposals into concrete deliverables."

Oliver HALL HALLEN
Civilian Operations Headquarters (CivOpsHQ)

"The transformation from the project's initial concept to the impressive facility we see today is a testament to the outstanding collaboration between the architect and the representatives of the entities that are housed in the NEO. Throughout the entire process, there was a shared commitment to ensuring that the building would meet the diverse needs of its



Identity project and how they are interconnected:

1. Entrance Hall

As the main arrival point for both users and visitors, the entrance hall received particular attention within the project. The design aimed to emphasise the presence of the different entity insignias as well as the representation of the Member States. The double-height entrance space was used to its fullest potential, creating a strong visual composition that works both horizontally and vertically. The result is a reception space that is more representative, more expressive and more closely connected to the institutional and operational reality of the building.

2. Visual Narrative

Another major component of the project has been the development of the decoration walls, which combine visual identity with acoustic improvement. Two main themes were developed for these walls.

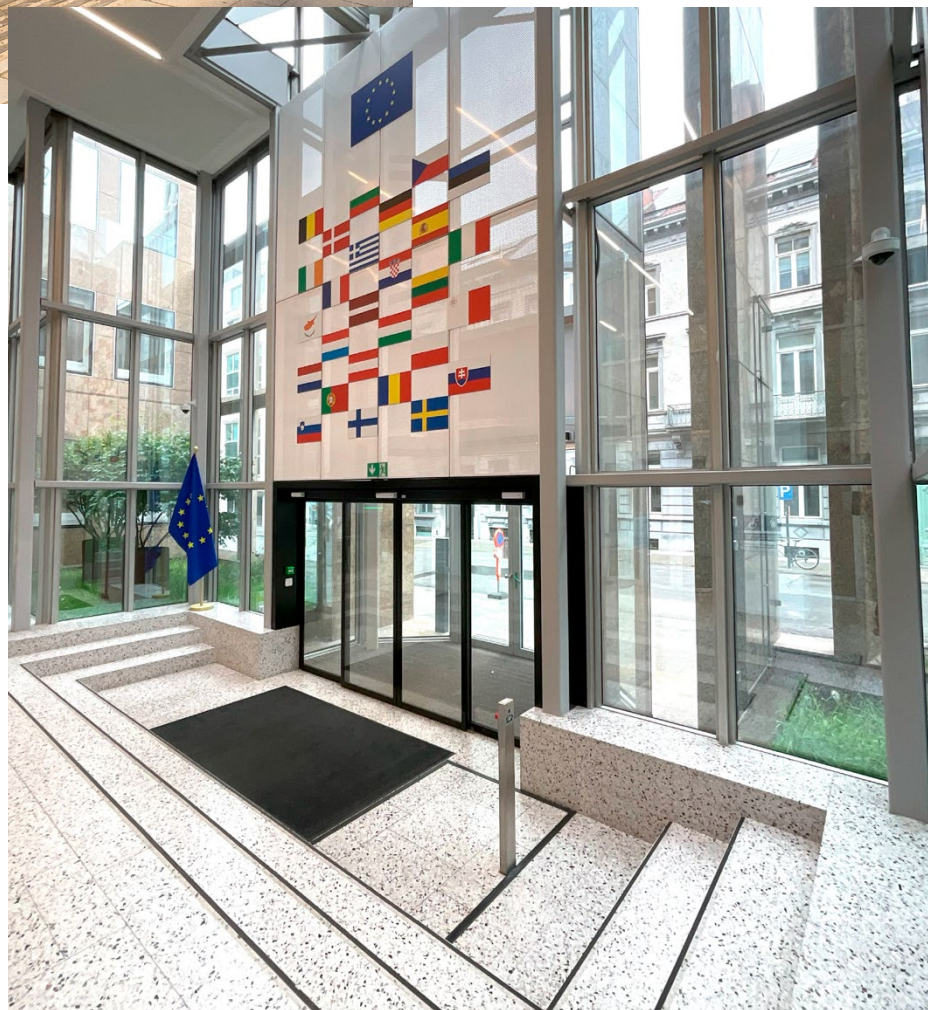
occupants while fostering a sense of unity and purpose. The result is a modern, functional, and inspiring facility that successfully reflects the requirements, identities, and ambitions of all the entities it serves.”

Lt Col Dermot EARLEY

European Union Military Staff
(EUMS)

At the same time, the NEO project reflects a broader ambition. Through the work of Division RM.SCS.6, the EEAS is progressively developing and implementing Corporate Identity not only across its building portfolio in Brussels, but also throughout its Delegations around the world. NEO is therefore part of a wider effort to ensure that EEAS premises project a recognisable, professional and consistent institutional image, wherever they are located.

Let's take a closer look at the key features of the NEO Corporate





The first is the operational character of the building, both military and civilian. Using photos from missions and operations as well as specially developed contemporary illustrations, these installations convey a modern, professional and representative image of the work carried out by the entities based in NEO. Their purpose is to create a visual environment that reflects the nature of their missions and operations while moving beyond a purely abstract decorative approach. To ensure their long-term relevance and suitability, the selected visuals were deliberately designed to avoid references to specific missions, operations or geographical contexts.

The second theme is the abstract representation of strategic maritime and trade corridors, often referred to as “global choke points”. These strategic locations have become increasingly visible in global affairs and in our daily lives, illustrating how geography, and security remain deeply interconnected. Among the locations represented are the Suez

Canal, the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Danish Straits, the Turkish Straits, the Strait of Malacca, and the Panama Canal.

Through an abstract and graphic treatment, these themes introduce a broader global dimension into the building while remaining aligned with the project’s overall visual



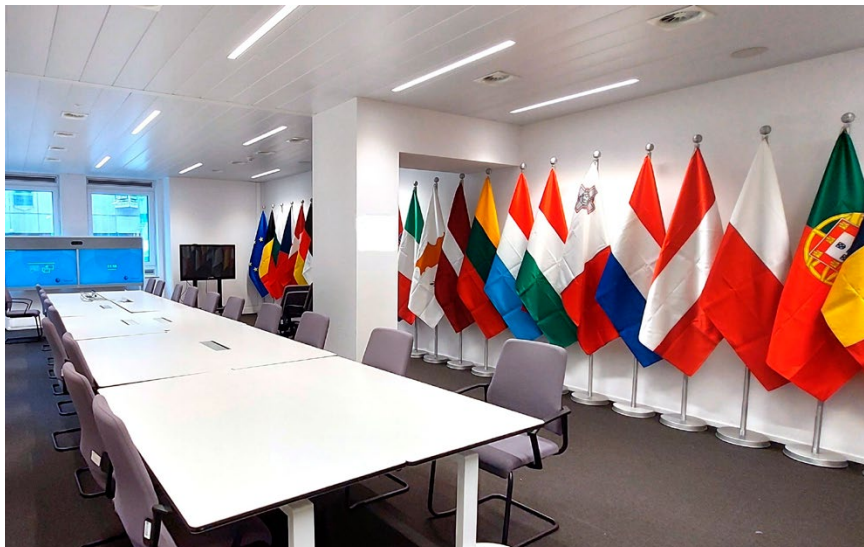
language and the operational context associated with NEO.

3. Clear Signage

A key pillar of the project has also been the creation of a clearer and more coherent signage system.

Conceived as an integral part of the Corporate Identity project, rather than a separate layer added afterwards, the signage system was designed to facilitate wayfinding throughout the building and to create a working environment that is easier to use, more accessible and more intuitive for everyone. The new system helps clarify circulation flows, identify destinations more easily, and make the location of offices, rooms and meeting spaces immediately understandable. This was particularly important in a complex where users and visitors need to navigate between different spaces, mostly with different layers of security.





Conclusion

With the completion of the NEO Corporate Identity Project, the building has taken a significant step forward in terms of image, usability and institutional presence. What was once a rather neutral and unfinished environment has now become a more coherent, recognisable and welcoming EEAS space.

The project demonstrates how Corporate Identity can do more than shape appearances: it can strengthen identity, support functionality, and create a stronger and meaningful link between a building and the work carried out inside it. 🏡



EUMS HOSTS WORKSHOP ON “RPAS CONTRIBUTION TO EU MILITARY-LED OPERATIONS”

By Lt Col Juan Manuel Perez Chomon
and Lt Col Mindaugas Matukonis,
CONCAP Directorate, EUMS

After four years of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine, Europe’s security environment has undergone a profound transformation. Ukraine has demonstrated an unwavering will to defend its freedom, territory, and people, while the conflict itself has accelerated military innovation at an unprecedented level. The war has become a testing ground for emerging technologies, particularly the large-scale and highly effective use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems (C-UAS).

Importantly, the rapid diffusion of drone technologies and tactics from the war with Russia is already visible in regions where the EU conducts its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations. Against this backdrop, EU Member States (MS) have recognised the necessity of refreshing the EU Military Staff (EUMS) doctrinal foundation governing the use of UAS and C-UAS. A strategic update is required to reflect current capabilities, incorporate lessons learned, enhance interoperability, and provide clearer guidance for C-UAS planning at the strategic military level.

Seminar Organisation & Participants

To initiate the revision of the EU military concept on the contribution of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), a dedicated seminar was organised in February 2026 by EUMS Concepts and Capability directorate (CONCAP), bringing together representatives from the MS and relevant EU institutions, including the European Commission (COMM), the European Defence Agency (EDA), the European External Action Service (EEAS), and the Civilian Operations Headquarters. Experts from the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), NATO, EU Affairs Advisor from Escribano Mechanical and Engineering (EM&E group) and partner nation Ukraine also contributed to the conference, sharing their practical experiences and insights from the current theatres of operation.

The Aim of the Workshop

Workshop facilitators highlighted the need for a comprehensive revision of the framework governing



the use of UAS and Counter-UAS (C-UAS) within the European Union’s CSDP missions and operations. The existing concept, published in 2014, has become increasingly outdated given the rapid evolution of military technology and the changing character of warfare.

Technological developments have reshaped the security environment, introducing more complex and accessible threats. At the same time, enhanced UAS capabilities have significantly expanded their operational utility, while progress in C-UAS technologies has strengthened defensive responses against hostile UAS. A strategic-level reassessment is therefore essential to reinforce the EU’s defence posture and ensure adaptability to an increasingly dynamic security landscape.

Air Ops perspective of UAS and C-UAS in Current and Future EU Military Operations & Missions

One of the speakers emphasised the importance of systematically integrating UAS and C-UAS into the EU’s CSDP framework in line with NATO standards, noting their strategic relevance in theatres such as the Gulf of Guinea, Ukraine and Somalia. Training, capacity building, and technological adaptability were identified



*A drone workshop during the LRU AlertEx.
Credit: Lithuanian Riflemen's Union*

as critical enablers of operational readiness. The discussion also underlined and called on MS to update the Capability Database (CoDa) to provide the MPCC with an accurate overview of available UAS and C-UAS capabilities, to support operational planning and force generation.

Advanced innovations in UAS & C-UAS systems

Another expert highlighted the accelerating pace of technological innovation, including fibre-guided drones, autonomous non-radio-frequency (RF) systems, and coordinated swarms. Such developments pose increasingly complex risks to personnel and infrastructure in EU-led missions and operations.

The need to revise the existing Concept was stressed, particularly with regard to updated Rules of Engagement (ROE) and clearer legal and ethical frameworks to address emerging technologies and hybrid threat scenarios.

UAS & the Battle for the Electromagnetic Spectrum

A further intervention examined the strategic integration of UAS in EU military operations, emphasising their dependence on access to the Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS) for communication, navigation and sensing. This dependency exists in an environment characterised by growing civilian and military spectrum demands.

The increasing threat posed by adversarial Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities was highlighted, reinforcing

the need for layered and integrated C-UAS systems that combine multiple sensors and effectors. Effective EMS control, a common C-UAS framework, and rapid operational learning were identified as key factors in countering evolving drone threats.

Application of C-UAS Systems in CSDP Missions and Operations

Industry perspectives underscored the critical importance of strategically deploying and integrating C-UAS capabilities within CSDP missions and operations. With the rapid proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), such systems are essential for responding effectively to an evolving threat environment. The speaker emphasised that success depends on flexibility, interoperability, sustained innovation, and a strong commitment to training and operational readiness. The systematic incorporation of emerging C-UAS technologies was presented as crucial for safeguarding personnel, assets and critical infrastructure.

Towards a 'Smart' Approach: Ukraine and the Transformation of European Defence

Experience shared from the Ukrainian context illustrated the rapid transformation of C-UAS technologies over the past decade — from relatively basic detection systems to sophisticated solutions incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) and Directed Energy Weapons (DEW).

The discussion highlighted that effectively countering



the growing use of UAS technologies requires strategic adaptability, interoperability among partners, and continuous investment in both technology and training. The Ukrainian experience demonstrates how rapid innovation cycles and battlefield learning can significantly accelerate defence transformation.

Lithuanian National Approach to Countering the Drone Threat

In 2025, Lithuania's parliament adopted amendments to its Aviation Law and the Statute on the Use of Military Force, allowing the Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF) greater flexibility to respond to UAVs violating national airspace*. The updated ROE allows the use of military force against drones operating in restricted or prohibited zones, on the decision of the Defence Minister, even in cases where the UAV is not proven to pose a direct threat. Alongside these legal changes, the Ministry of Defence has accelerated the procurement of advanced layered Counter-UAS systems — combining radar, passive and optical sensors, GPS and communications jamming, and kinetic options — designed to protect critical infrastructure and integrate into the national Air Defence architecture in the event of aggression**.

Strengthening National Defence: UAS Development in the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union

The briefer from Lithuania detailed the strategic integration of UAS within the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union (LRU) as part of its total Defence strategy, closely



Participants of the EUMS seminar on RPAS Contribution to EU Military-Led Operations, Brussels, February 2026.

coordinated with the LAF. The initiative strengthens national defence through technological innovation and operational autonomy, reducing reliance on foreign suppliers. Between 2025 and 2035, the plan foresees the establishment of specialised UAS battalions within regional commands, full integration into LAF, and the eventual creation of dedicated C-UAS units. The strategy emphasizes leveraging national technological capabilities and the domestic defence industry to achieve operational independence.

Key Take Aways

The workshop highlighted the urgent need to comprehensively revise the relevant military Concept, last updated in 2014, to reflect the profound technological and operational changes shaping today's security environment. Rapid advances in UAS capabilities, including autonomous, non-RF and swarm-enabled systems drones together with the proliferation of low-cost precision technologies, have significantly increased the threat landscape facing in CSDP missions and operations.

* <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2681676/lithuania-moves-to-give-military-faster-authority-to-neutralize-drones?srsId=AfmBOoq1vjd14oPSnf3zw-JegLjIPc-MZ3CkWL6jF6Zb9mptaKCxNO2>

** <https://euromaidanpress.com/2025/09/23/lithuanian-military-granted-new-powers-against-drones-law-revised-after-border-airspace-intrusions/>

Participants agreed that a strategic-level update is required to integrate emerging technologies, ensure coherence with allied (NATO) standards, and provide clearer ROE while addressing legal and ethical considerations. The discussions reaffirmed the central role of UAS and C-UAS capabilities across multiple operational theatres, highlighting interoperability, training, and capacity building as essential to sustaining operational readiness. Control and access to the EMS were identified as critical enablers, and systematic updates to the CoDa were recommended to support realistic MPCC planning.

Finally, the national total-defence approaches, such as Lithuania's long-term roadmap for integrating UAS and CUAS within its Armed Forces and auxiliary structures, demonstrate that EU success in this domain depends on strategic adaptability, technological innovation, interoperability, and continuous learning in the face of an accelerating unmanned threat landscape. MS were invited to consider participation in a dedicated working group tasked with developing the revised Concept and translating these lessons into concrete doctrinal guidance. 🍷



*Drone Teams in action during the LRU AlertEx.
Credit: Lithuanian Riflemen's Union*



2026 EU MILITARY MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

[AS OF JULY 2026]



EUMAM MOZAMBIQUE

Sustaining a Trusted Partnership for Stability and Resilience

Supporting capacity-building of the Mozambican Armed Defence Forces through specialised military training, operational advice and strategic support, the European Union Military Assistance Mission in Mozambique (EUMAM Mozambique) has continued over the past six months to demonstrate the value of a long-standing partnership rooted in trust, mutual respect and shared responsibility.



During the reporting period, EUMAM Mozambique continued to reinforce national efforts to strengthen security and stability, with a particular focus on Cabo Delgado province. Through tailored training programmes delivered in close coordination with the Mozambican authorities, the mission further improved the operational readiness, leadership and tactical capabilities of the Mozambican Armed Forces. Notable examples included the regeneration training of the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in Katembe and the training provided to the support commands, both of which contributed to enhancing operational effectiveness and command capacity.

Special emphasis remained on the protection of civilians, compliance with international humanitarian law and the promotion of human rights, underlining the European Union's commitment to fostering accountable, disciplined and professional armed forces.

The past six months have further highlighted the importance of regional and international coordination. EUMAM Mozambique worked closely with regional partners and international stakeholders to reinforce a comprehensive approach to security, linking military support with broader governance and development efforts.

As Mozambique continues its path towards long-term peace and recovery, EUMAM Mozambique remains a symbol of enduring partnership and shared commitment. The mission's achievements over the past six months demonstrate not only concrete progress on the ground but also renewed hope for a future in which stability, resilience and prosperity can take deeper root across the country.



EUTM RCA

Reinforcing Professionalism and Long-Term Stability in the Central African Republic

Acting under its mandate to support the modernisation and professionalisation of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), the European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) has, over the past six months, continued to provide steadfast support to national authorities in strengthening security institutions and promoting long-term stability.

Throughout the reporting period, EUTM RCA focused on consolidating advisory efforts aimed at enhancing the operational effectiveness, discipline and leadership capacities of FACA personnel.

A key achievement during the past six months has been the investment in the future leaders via the construction of the Non-Commissioned Officers School and the Officers School together with CAR authorities.



In addition, EUTM RCA has helped lay the foundations for a more autonomous and effective national defence framework.

Beyond operational achievements, the past six months have demonstrated the enduring importance of the partnership between the European Union and the Central African Republic. Despite a challenging regional environment, EUTM RCA has remained committed to accompanying national authorities on the path towards stability, professionalism and institutional ownership.

The mission's continued engagement reflects a long-term investment in peace and resilience. Through institution-building, leadership development and sustained cooperation, EUTM RCA continues to provide hope for the future, supporting the emergence of security institutions capable of protecting the population and contributing to lasting stability in the Central African Republic.



EUTM SOMALIA

Advancing Security Through Enduring Partnership and Capacity Building

Mandated to support the development of the Somali National Armed Forces through strategic advice, mentoring and military training, the European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) has over the last six months continued to play a central role in strengthening Somalia's security architecture and supporting the country's long-term stabilisation efforts.

During the reporting period, the mission further expanded its strategic advisory engagement with Somali defence authorities, supporting reforms aimed at improving command and control systems, force

generation processes and institutional coordination. This sustained advisory role has reinforced national ownership while promoting accountability, transparency and adherence to international humanitarian and human rights standards.

The mission maintained its commitment to fostering sustainable capacity-building by prioritising train-the-trainer approaches and long-term institutional development. This focus has enabled Somali personnel to increasingly lead and sustain training activities independently, representing an important step towards greater self-reliance. The continuing cooperation on medical training and the recent commencement of the Basic Officers Course are prime examples.

The achievements of the past six months underscore the mission's enduring relevance and its contribution to a future in which Somali institutions are increasingly capable and prepared to ensure lasting security for the population.



EUMAM UKRAINE

Supporting Ukraine's Defence Through Unity, Commitment and Long-Term Partnership

Established to provide military assistance, specialised training and capacity-building support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) has over the past six months continued to demonstrate the European Union's unwavering commitment to Ukraine's security, sovereignty and resilience.

Throughout the reporting period, EUMAM Ukraine adapted its training activities to evolving battlefield realities, delivering specialised instruction across a broad range of military domains. Thousands of Ukrainian personnel benefited from programmes focused on leadership, combined arms operations, medical support, logistics and the use of specialised equipment. These efforts have contributed directly to enhancing operational effectiveness and preparedness. By July 26, more than 95,000 Ukrainian troops have been trained by EUMAM UA.

The mission also strengthened coordination among participating Member States, ensuring the efficient delivery of training and assistance in line with Ukraine's identified priorities. This cooperative framework has become a defining feature of EUMAM Ukraine, reflecting the European Union's collective determination to

provide sustained and coherent support.

Over the past six months, EUMAM Ukraine has further consolidated itself as one of the European Union's most visible and impactful security partnerships as the largest provider of military training to Ukraine. Beyond the immediate operational dimension, the mission represents a long-term investment in Ukraine's future resilience and its ability to safeguard its independence.

The achievements recorded during this period underscore the strength of the partnership between the European Union and Ukraine and reaffirms the enduring value of European cooperation in the pursuit of peace, stability and security.



EUSDI GULF OF GUINEA

Strengthening Regional Security Through Coordinated Partnership

Launched in December 2023, the EU Security and Defence Initiative in the Gulf of Guinea (EUSDI GoG) has steadily gained momentum and is now emerging as a concrete example of effective European defence cooperation in action. Its mission is clear: to help Gulf of Guinea countries strengthen their capabilities to contain the spillover of the terrorist threat moving southwards from the Sahel.

The Initiative operates across four partner countries — Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin, while its headquarters remains firmly anchored in Brussels. What makes EUSDI GoG stand out is its innovative operational model: flexible, modular, partner-driven and designed with a light footprint. In a fast-changing security environment, this approach allows the EU to provide tailored and timely support where it is needed most.



At its core, the Initiative reflects the EU's integrated approach, combining responsiveness, partnership and practical delivery on the ground. It responds directly to African partners' requests by deploying teams of trainers from EU Member States to the Gulf of Guinea. These teams provide highly targeted courses in key counter-terrorism fields such as counter-IED, drone piloting, and combat medical care. It is a model built on trust, efficiency and real operational value.

The figures speak for themselves. EUSDI GoG delivered 4 courses in 2024, expanded to 20 courses in 2025 across three of the four partner countries, and is set to deliver 46 courses in 2026 across all four. A major step forward this year is Togo's first formal expression of training needs, with delivery expected before the end of 2026.

The Initiative is also attracting broader European engagement. New Member States are joining the effort, including Germany and Austria, reinforcing the collective dimension of this growing mission.

EUSDI GoG is more than a training initiative. It is a credible, scalable and visible demonstration of how Europe can act fast, act smart and deliver security with partners, not just for them.



EUNAVFOR ATALANTA

The first half of 2026 was marked by a significant increase in piracy incidents attributed to active groups based in Somalia, and likely fuelled by the volatile situation at sea in the region. Although the threat remains under control and below historical levels, conditions conducive to piracy persist and underscore the need to maintain maritime security efforts. Therefore, operational activity remained very intense over the last six months, demonstrating the value and important role of ATALANTA within the overall maritime security architecture in the Western Indian Ocean.

Incidents of **piracy** have increased notably during this period, with up to five cases reported, three of them successful. Although ATALANTA has evolved into a broader maritime security provider, the fight against piracy remains at the core of the Operation. For this reason, ATALANTA will remain committed to put an end to this threat, working closely with our partners and nations in the region, particularly with Somali police forces.

Another key part of its remit remains the protection of **World Food Programme** vessels as they carry out



their invaluable work of delivering humanitarian aid to those most in need. During this period, Operation ATALANTA protected five vessels carrying humanitarian aid, enabling the delivery of over 65,000 metric tonnes of food within the area of operations.

ATALANTA continues to provide crucial support to the **EU sister missions** in Somalia, EUTM and EUCAP Somalia, whilst enhancing synergies with EUNAVFOR ASPIDES. Furthermore, ATALANTA has been conducting joint activity at sea with **international partners** in the region, such as the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), Japan and the Republic of Korea, strengthening ties with these forces and ensuring increased effectiveness against maritime threats. Also, the Operation Commander visited India in the context of the International Fleet Review and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, strengthening the close relationship between the Indian Navy and ATALANTA and improving the coordination and cooperation.

In the framework of **regional maritime security architecture** and **cooperation with regional nations**, ATALANTA and the Seychelles Defence Forces conducted the first phase of the joint exercise “ALDABRA V” in Victoria, Seychelles. This advanced training activity aimed at promoting cooperation among ATALANTA, Seychelles Defence Forces, and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC). Moreover, the exercise was supported by relevant partners in the Indian Ocean, such as CMF, the Critical Maritime Routes in the Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

ATALANTA remains a **reference in maritime security for the shipping industry**. This was confirmed at the 17th

Industry Strategic Meeting conference, held in Madrid. This high-level annual meeting, organised by Operation ATALANTA and co-chaired by CMF and EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, brought together the shipping industry and other key organisations to discuss current threats in the Western Indian Ocean, the Strait of Hormuz and the Red



EUFOR OPERATION ALTHEA

Over the past six months, EUNAVFOR Operation ALTHEA has continued to deliver on its mandate to support the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining a safe and secure environment for all citizens. Through a broad range of operational activities, training events, engagements and public outreach, EUNAVFOR has reinforced its role as a credible, impartial and visible force throughout the country.

A major focus during this period was Exercise Combined Response, EUNAVFOR’s annual large-scale exercise conducted together with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and other partners. The exercise demonstrated EUNAVFOR’s ability to deploy, operate and respond effectively across Bosnia and Herzegovina, while also strengthening interoperability, coordination and mutual understanding with domestic security

actors. It provided reassurance to the public that EUFOR remains prepared and capable of fulfilling its mission whenever required.

EUFOR also hosted the Security Round Table, bringing together senior representatives from relevant institutions and international partners to discuss the current security environment, cooperation, and shared efforts in support of stability. This engagement highlighted the importance of dialogue, coordination and transparency in addressing security challenges.

Another key event was the EU, NATO and Operation Commander tripartite engagement at Camp Butmir. The visit underlined the strong strategic cooperation between the European Union, NATO and the EUFOR chain of command, reaffirming the continued commitment of international partners to peace, stability and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EUFOR also placed strong emphasis on engagement with young people and civil society, including through presentations and panel discussions involving COM EUFOR at the University of Sarajevo, University of Mostar and University of Banja Luka. These events provided an opportunity to explain EUFOR's mandate, role and activities directly to students, while encouraging open discussion on peace support operations, security cooperation and the importance of continued stability.

Across all activities, EUFOR has remained focused on supporting the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, maintaining readiness, strengthening cooperation with local and international partners, and contributing to a stable and secure environment for all citizens.



EUNAVFOR ASPIDES

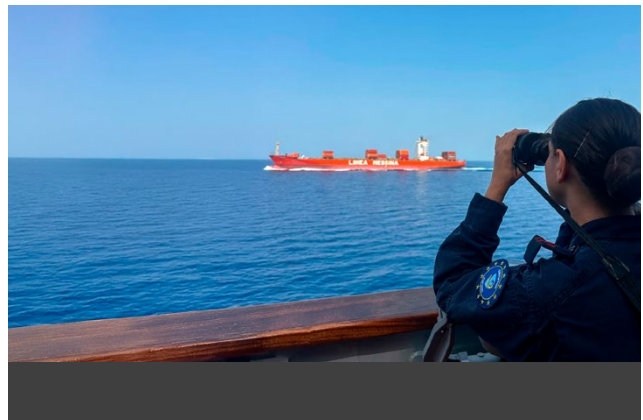
Since the beginning of 2026, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES has continued to play a key role in safeguarding freedom of navigation and supporting maritime security across one of the world's most strategically important maritime regions. Operating under a defensive and de-escalatory mandate, the mission contributes to protecting international trade routes and global common goods and supports regional stability.

The operational area remains extensive, covering the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman, the Gulf region, and parts of the north-western Indian Ocean. Throughout the reporting period, ASPIDES has focused on ensuring the safe transit of merchant

shipping while adapting to a dynamic and complex security environment.

The Operation's primary effort remains the protection of commercial vessels against threats originating from multiple domains. In parallel, ASPIDES is building up Maritime Situational Awareness and provides accompaniment measures to support the maritime community. Additional activities have included the collection and exchange of information related to illicit arms trafficking, the monitoring of so-called "shadow fleet" activities.

In February 2026, the European Council, recognizing the important role and success of the Operation, decided not only to prolong the mandate of the Operation until February 2027, but also to assign additional subtasks. These are to collect/share information on suspicious activities related to critical submarine infrastructure (CSI), to contribute to capacity-building by training Djiboutian maritime forces, to cooperate with the Yemeni Coast Guard, and to coordinate closely with complementary EU initiatives, including CRIMARIO, to enhance maritime security and resilience along key international shipping routes.



In addition to its operational mandate, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES continues to foster cooperation with regional partners and relevant stakeholders.

Since January 2026, the Operation has facilitated the safe transit of more than 598 merchant vessels, while 56 ships have received dedicated close-protection measures. Moreover, whenever operationally feasible, assistance and coordination have been provided to merchant vessels in distress, in collaboration with our regional partners.

ASPIDES remains an integral part of the wider European and international maritime security architecture. Through regular engagement with regional authorities and maritime stakeholders, as well as through the Maritime Security Center Indian Ocean (MSCIO), the Operation delivers threat assessments, guidance, and situational awareness products to the shipping industry.

The effectiveness of these efforts is reflected in a 99.8% success rate for vessels operating under ASPIDES close



protection, with no casualties or cargo losses recorded during attacks against protected merchant ships. Building on these achievements, EUNAVFOR ASPIDES will continue to support secure maritime commerce and the flow of international trade, in full accordance with international law and its mandated responsibilities.



EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

In 2026, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI continued its operations under the EU's integrated approach, in favour of peace and stabilization of Libya and for safeguarding the EU's interests in the Mediterranean.

The tasks of the Operation are:

Contributing to Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA) on illicit activities is the cornerstone of operations, achieved through continuous monitoring, surveillance, and information gathering, including support to the protection of Critical Maritime Infrastructure (CMI) and contingency planning. Furthermore, IRINI constrains the Shadow Fleet by monitoring suspicious vessels and conducting flag-verification boardings in accordance with Article 110 of UNCLOS.

Countering Illegal Arms Trafficking (CIAT), supporting the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya through gathering information and reporting to competent authorities.

Gathering Information on Oil Smuggling (GIOS), particularly considering its impact on the Libyan economy and its potential use to finance the arms

market.

Contributing to the disruption of the Human Smuggling Business Model (HSBM) by collecting information through operational assets and sharing it with relevant authorities.

Providing Capacity Building & Training (CB&T) initiatives to Libyan institutions responsible for law enforcement and search and rescue at sea.

Within CIAT, IRINI has boarded and inspected 33 suspect vessels. On 3 occasions, IRINI seized cargo and diverted vessels to the port of an EU Member State due to violations of the embargo.

In addition, IRINI has monitored more than 24,000 vessels through radio hailings, conducted more than 800 friendly approaches and issued 108 recommendations to law enforcement authorities for the inspection of vessels in EU Member States' ports.

Furthermore, the Operation has investigated 2,807 suspect flights, monitored 25 airports and 16 ports, and submitted 94 special reports to EEAS and/or the UN Panel of Experts on Libya concerning suspected violations of the arms embargo and oil smuggling activities in Libya.

Regarding MSA, and in line with EU-authorisation, IRINI conducted three flag-verification boardings on vessels suspected of sailing under a false flag. By inspecting the documentation on board, IRINI collected information for assessment and reporting to EU authorities.

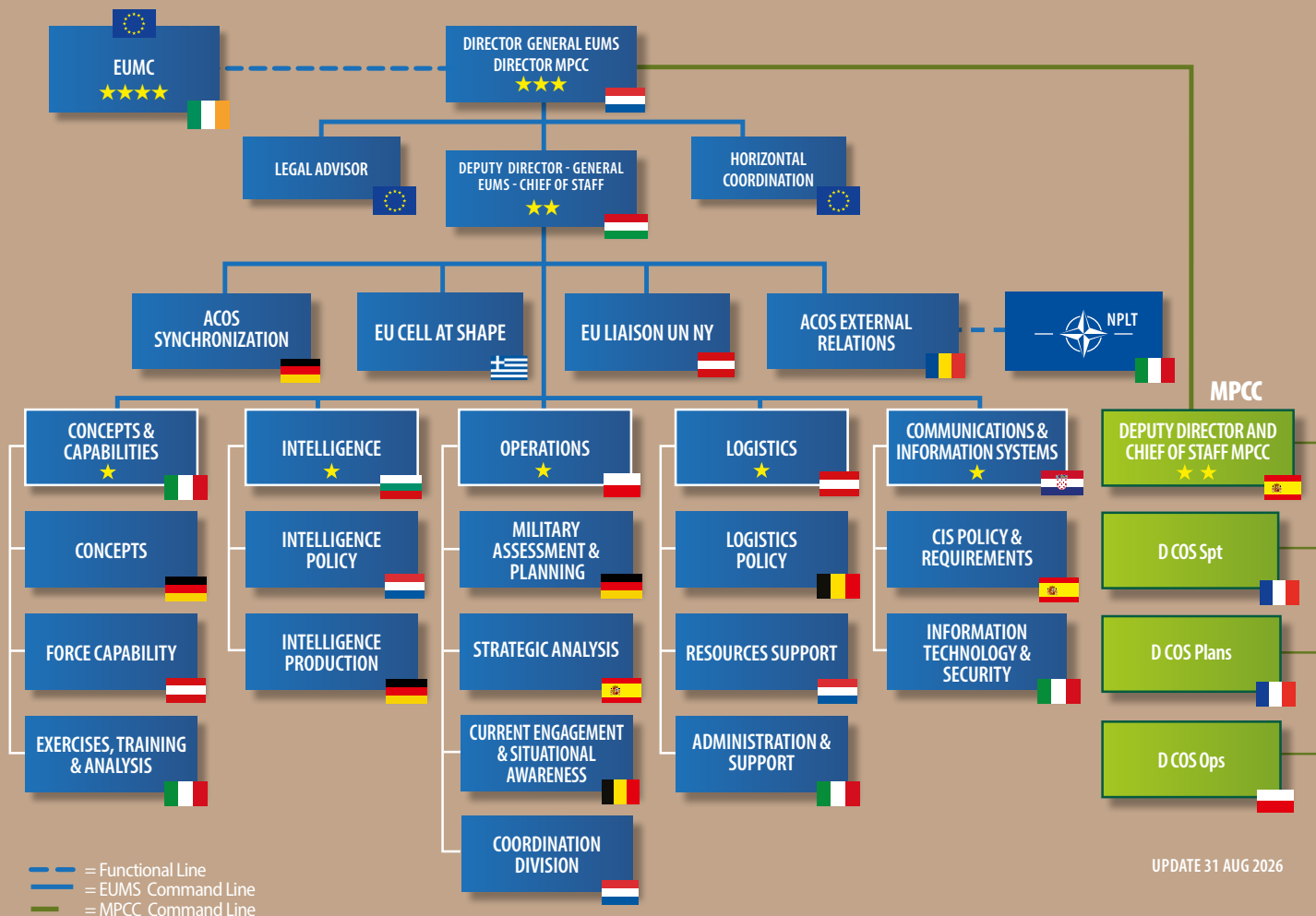
These results demonstrate the effectiveness of Operation IRINI, which continues to strengthen its key role as Maritime Security Provider in the region.

Over the past six months, EUNAVFOR MED IRINI has proven its ability to adapt to a changing operational scenario and is now poised to evolve into a ready, credible, and scalable multi-layered operation capable of addressing future challenges effectively. 🍷



European Union
EXTERNAL ACTION

EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY STAFF - EUMS STRUCTURE



EU MILITARY OPERATIONS AND MISSIONS

