EU MILITARY FORUM

EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE – EUMC #3/2025

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Cover image: EU-NATO complementarity, 2025.
Photo: POLMILREP

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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF THE EU MILITARY COMMITTEE

by General Seán Clancy

It is an honour to pen my first foreword to the EUMC Forum as the newly appointed Chair of the European Union Military Committee.

As I assume this privileged role, I wish to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to my predecessor, General Robert Brieger, and his dedicated Austrian team. Their professionalism and steadfast leadership over the past years ensured continuity and credibility for the EUMC in a time of great turbulence. Their work has left a solid foundation upon which my colleagues and I can build.

I would also like to extend sincere thanks to my Cabinet, the EU Military Staff, and the Military Representatives. The collegial spirit of the Military Representatives, coupled with the tireless efforts of the EUMS, has allowed me to settle quickly into the role and immediately contribute to the discussions shaping our common security and defence agenda.

I have been struck by the welcome and engagement at the political level. The High Representative/Vice President, the Chair of the Political and Security Committee, Colleagues at the EEAS and many Ambassadors have underlined their determination to work hand-in-hand with the Military Committee. Equally, my early engagements with the European Commission have been fruitful and forward-looking. This comprehensive support reflects the high expectations placed upon the EUMC and confirms the value of our collective military voice in EU decision-making.

These exchanges take place against a geopolitical landscape that remains highly challenging. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine continues to reshape the European security order. Instability persists in the Sahel, tensions are rising in the Middle East, and maritime security is increasingly contested. To deter, defend, and preserve peace, we must act with unity, urgency, and resolve. This is the spirit guiding our collective work on the Joint White Paper for Defence Readiness 2030 and the Preparedness Union Strategy. These initiatives are more than documents: they are roadmaps to a stronger, more credible European defence.

I also wish to acknowledge the leadership of the recent and current holders of the rotating EU Presidency. Poland has been a tireless advocate for reinforcing European security and defence, consistently underlining the urgency of readiness and the imperative of sustained support to Ukraine. Denmark, building on this momentum, has placed security and defence at the very heart of its Presidency agenda, driving forward work on the White Paper implementation, military mobility and deepening EU–NATO cooperation.

Photo: CEUMC

General Seán Clancy
Chair of the
EU Military Committee

Their efforts exemplify how national leadership within the EU framework can create real added value for our collective security.

My initial period in office have been exceptionally busy. The highlight so far was my visit to Ukraine. Meeting our Ukrainian counterparts on the ground left a profound impression. Their courage and determination reaffirm why our support must remain steadfast and adaptable. The European Union Military Assistance Mission has already trained tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops, but the needs of Ukraine are evolving, and so too must our support. Ukraine's fight is Europe's fight, and sustaining our unity of effort will remain a defining task of my tenure.

In this context, I have shared my vision with the political level, Chiefs of Defence and the Military Representatives: "*Security through Unity. Credibility through Capability.*" Our collective strength lies in unity of purpose and delivery of tangible capabilities. My priorities are clear: Strengthen our operational readiness, with a deployable Rapid Deployment Capacity and a fully functional MPCC. Ensure sustained, agile support to Ukraine. Drive forward the military implementation of the Strategic Compass, the White Paper, and the Preparedness Union Strategy. Embed the military dimension into the EU's Integrated Approach alongside diplomatic, economic, and informational tools. Maintain a 360° posture, ensuring Europe can act across all domains and theatres. Deepen cooperation with NATO and key partners, guided by the principle of the single set of forces.

My vision for the EUMC is underpinned by a simple truth: Europe is stronger when it works hand in hand with partners, and for security and defence NATO is our key partner. By acting together under the principle of the single set of forces, we avoid duplication, maximise interoperability and ensure that stronger European defence also means a stronger NATO. This complementarity is not optional, it is essential to our credibility and effectiveness in today's contested security environment. This is why EU – NATO cooperation is the theme of this issue of the EU Military Forum.

None of this can be achieved without the collective effort of the entire EU community. I therefore thank all contributors to this edition of the EU Military Forum. Your analysis, reflections, diversity of thought, expression and experience are vital in informing an expansive debate, broadening awareness and inspiring action, while challenging established views. I encourage all readers to engage with the material, share it within your networks, and help us spread understanding of the EUMC's work at this critical juncture.

Looking ahead, I am under no illusion about the magnitude of the challenges. Yet I remain confident that with the unity, professionalism and determination of the EU's military community, we can meet them. The coming period of my tenure will be dedicated to translating ambition into capability, plans into action and unity into credibility.

Europe's security is our collective responsibility. Together, we can ensure that the EU remains a credible, proactive and resilient actor on the global stage.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

by Colonel Fiacra Keyes

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the first issue of the EU Military Forum under the leadership of General Seán Clancy. Firstly, I wish to express my gratitude to Lt Col Bastian Erber (DE), my predecessor in this role as Editor, for his guidance and support in the preparations for compiling this edition.

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, geopolitical uncertainties, and evolving lessons from the Russo-Ukrainian war, the landscape of military strategy is continually transforming. As we introduce this latest edition of the EU Military Forum, we address the theme of the EU-NATO relationship and how it may shape the future of European security. This issue offers a comprehensive analysis of this relationship.

As the first issue of this semester with this theme in mind I am pleased to introduce a diverse selection of contributions from CDS Kubilius to Gen Michael Wiggers Hyldgaard of the Danish Armed Forces and esteemed academics such as Dr Irene Morlino, Dr Daniel Fiott and others. Finally, we have also included an update of EUMAM in the form of an interview with Maj Gen Olaf Rhode ST-C and from Rear Admiral Louis Tillier an update on EU SatCen. Our experts provide insightful commentary on how developments in these spaces nest in the overall EU-NATO theme. Our contributors, comprising esteemed analysts, seasoned military personnel, and thought leaders, share their perspectives on the future trajectory of this strategic relationship. We invite you to engage with the narratives and analyses presented in this issue, as we strive to illuminate the path forward in an increasingly uncertain world.

I wish to thank publically all of the contributors to our publication and to you our readers I hope that you find the articles engaging and informative. Lastly, I would like to encourage you to forward me any comments or observations you may have on this semester's edition or indeed, any proposals you may have for future articles. I sincerely hope that you enjoy this edition and that it stimulates debate in our shared space.

Thank you for choosing the EU Military Forum.

Photo: CEUMC

Colonel Fiacra Keyes
STRATCOM CEUMC

EU AND NATO - EUROPEAN DEFENCE IDENTITY AND ITS MILITARY DIMENSION

by General Sławomir Wojciechowski

Photo: POLMILREP

General Sławomir Wojciechowski
(Polish Army)
is the Polish Military Representative to NATO and EU Military Committees, since 2019. His main operational engagement were in Iraq and Afghanistan. He commanded the first EU Battlegroup in Poland in 2010.

In the European Union declarations, documents and papers, security and defence gain a more significant position than may be implied when they are continuously spoken about. Needless to say, defence issues are undisputedly interrelated with military affairs. Therefore, the discussion pertaining to the European military dimension and the role of its armed forces in EU defence seems unavoidable. The author's opinions are based on his military background while the insights are built upon the foundation of experience from the EU, NATO, frontline state perceptions and on the likely end-user perspectives of military capabilities.

In the summer of 2025 Europe experienced the effects of a shift in the global security climate. NATO and the EU, as the most important elements of the European political environment, organised and hosted its' own events to respond to new challenges stemming from the international security arena. The European Council decided on more investment in preparedness and defence industry. At the NATO Summit, nations accepted a new level of spending on defence. Despite significant overlap of membership of the two organisations, they work in parallel to enhance and rebuild defence and resilience capabilities of their respective spheres of responsibility.

Coordination and harmonisation is declared and even practiced. Still, there is a long and challenging way to go with significant room for improvement. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the roles and aims of both organisations, the EU is confronted with new dilemmas and choices to make. This predicament includes not only defence matters but also most of the member states armed forces in the capacity as the instrument of military power of the Union.

In order to discuss the military perspectives on EU defence issues, it is advisable to start with the phenomena that we currently witness. These have their origins as much within the EU including the broader Euro-Atlantic ecosystem. Conditions change and develop rapidly in an unpredictable way. Numerous events are underway; war in Ukraine, Russia's war oriented economy and aggressive posture on the global stage, its' interventions into Africa, the weaponisation of tariffs and all-out trade wars, US acceleration to pivot militarily to Asia, Middle East Israeli Iranian competition and conflict, Gaza humanitarian catastrophe and the Houthis attacks on sea lines of communication.

In response to these fluctuations, we are witnessing a significant change in threat perception, security challenges and the role of defence in the security aspects of the EU. Starting with the Draghi Report on EU competitiveness, followed by the Niinistö Report, the Commission's mission letters, "Joint White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030" and "The European Preparedness Union Strategy", the Union communicated that security and defence are no longer perceived as only costs. They should be viewed more often as an investment in our own development and a stable future, the

Photo: POLMILREP

Working Group Meeting Polish Presidency 2025.

prerequisite for prosperity.

The latest European Council conclusions from 26th of June are evidence that the processes need to be accelerated, that Europe must become more sovereign, more responsible for its own defence and better equipped with a 360-degree approach to security. All by increasing expenditure and investment in defence.

These documents are a European response to current geopolitical challenges and threats. All of them are important and significant, but all of them are only initial expressions of intent. What really matters is the process of implementation with identification of executors, allocation of tasks, provision of resources, supervision and feedback. If we genuinely want to be prepared for our unpredictable future, we now must truly focus on the implementation phase.

This is not going to be easy. Over the past few months, we have heard many statements about preparedness, resilience and defence, but when asked, "How is this going to be achieved?", "How are the strategies going to be implemented?", there is never a specific response. If we fail to consider the "How", we might be wedged between very high ambitions and a rather slow and ineffective performance.

The question is "Where have we seen the military part of the process?". Within its capacities, the EU Military Committee, the EU Military Staff and adjacent military working groups and cells, have produced "European Defence Readiness 2030 - EUMC Military-strategic Considerations". Then identified, from a military point of view, there are the principles that should guide us through the process of EU defence developments in years to come:

- Follow a capability-driven and threat-informed rather than industry-oriented approach. More synergy is needed.
- A revised EU threat analysis should be the baseline for coherent defence capability development and the strategic documents.
- EU defence industry initiatives must always be driven by EU Member states.
- Operational needs and prioritisation of capability development has to remain a Member state responsibility.
- The Strategic Compass sets the political objectives for Common Security and Defence.
- Beyond the short-term focus on support to Ukraine, prepare for a high intensity full spectrum conflict (from robust crisis management to the operationalisation of Art. 42.7).
- Complementarity with NATO, based on Member States' initiatives, is the precondition for success.
- For the prioritisation and implementation, follow a "flagship oriented" and "framework nation" approach, utilising PESCO, with an essential role for the EDA.

Out of many challenges that the EU will soon have to address the most urgent are: NATO-EU cooperation and co-existence, capability building, Military Mobility and the Military as the Instrument of Power.

In the light of the Niinistö Report and the EU Preparedness Union Strategy (PUS), the preparation for the worst-case scenario and the extreme military contingency, is of the greatest importance. It is apparent that the possible need for the defence of EU territory almost equates to the defence of NATO territory. This must include the operationalisation of Art. 42.7. of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), which speaks of the need to identify and allocate responsibilities, roles, procedures and tasks for the EU institutions and member states, including cooperation with NATO.

The necessity to know who is responsible for what, how and when to react needs further justification. In addition, competencies and tasks should be trained, verified and improved during a series of exercises, ranging from the European and national political levels through the military strategic, operational and tactical, including European societies. This is the only means by which we can verify the readiness and functionality of our systems.

We must do it in cooperation with NATO and with recognition of the conditions required to facilitate Art. 5 of the treaty. Notwithstanding current ambiguities and interpretations surrounding the Article. It applies especially to the Art. 222 of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU

Photo: POLMILREP

EU-NATO complementarity, 2025

(TFEU), chiefly in the context of escalation management and military alert systems in the process of deterrence effects.

By definition, capability is the ability to create an effect through the employment of an integrated set of aspects categorised as doctrine, organisation, training, materiel, leadership development, personnel, facilities, and interoperability. In simple terms hardware and software. How does it fit to the discussion about EU defence? We are concentrating on production, industrial base, technology, procurement, and infrastructure. Unfortunately, the ability to produce high quantities and qualities of lethal and non-lethal equipment and stockpiles is insufficient. Although European industry and the economy have been boosted, we should not forget the truth that aircraft, howitzers, tanks and drones do not fight by themselves. Materiel is vital but cannot be dominant. To achieve synergies in this production cycle, the end-user perspective matters, especially in the context of military requirements for industry.

We need to ensure that European industry provides promptly, what soldiers – the end users, need in terms of quality and quantity. In times of the renaissance of the notion "peace by strength" on the international stage, our strength must be credible. The credibility requires military capabilities and a robust political willingness to use it, if required and finally strategic communication to convey our agreed messages.

The magnitude of the tasks, we may judge, by observations on the issues concerning Military Mobility. With EU and NATO experts on Military Mobility, we have tried to understand why we do not experience much faster progress, despite the importance of having at hand capabilities to provide logistics and large-scale planned movements all over Europe in order to deter our adversaries. If supply chain challenges as regards the provision of fuel are contemplated, this situation could be considered critical.

These considerations lead me to the process of achieving EU defence readiness and the recognition of the role of the military instrument of power. This can happen if we deliberate, communicate and apply all the instruments available within the EU integrated approach. Without the military end-user perspective, residing currently mostly with NATO, strategic papers will not produce results adequate to current threats and challenges. Here the EU should play a significant role to provide knowledge, expertise and experience for defence capability building and the application of the military instrument of power during crisis and war.

Within the EU context, military aspects of the defence agenda still await recognition. With NATO experiencing tribulations resulting from Euro-Atlantic tension and variances in worldview, discussions on the "European dimension" of the Treaty is getting more attention than before. Without an EU framework capable and ready to defend militarily the territory of the Union, we will not be ready to protect our citizens, our values and our way of life. This judgement may require a realisation that the world around us is becoming more unstable and that the time of soft power is diminishing fast.

AFTER THE NATO SUMMIT: WHERE TO FOR EUROPEAN SECURITY AND NATO?

by Dr Irene Morlino

The NATO Summit of 2025 took place against a backdrop of profound uncertainty in Transatlantic relations. For decades, the United States (U.S.) has underwritten European security, with NATO providing both the institutional framework and the military muscle. Yet, today, the international order as we know it is rapidly changing, casting doubt on the durability of Washington's role as Europe's ultimate security guarantor. For the EU, the June 2025 summit was a reminder that it must prepare for a future in which U.S. engagement may be conditional, reduced, or even withdrawn. The EU and NATO are therefore at a crossroads, confronting the challenge of redefining their relationship, strengthening European contributions, and addressing long-standing gaps in capabilities and strategy.

A Longstanding Debate: Burden-Sharing in Transatlantic Relations

Burden-sharing has been at the centre of transatlantic debates since NATO's creation in 1949. As early as the 1950s, the controversy surrounding German rearmament exposed the fundamental divide: some European states, such as the UK and Italy, preferred to rely on NATO and the U.S. as the ultimate guarantors of security, while others, notably France, argued for the development of a distinct European pillar within NATO. Throughout the Cold War and beyond, U.S. administrations consistently called for Europeans to shoulder a greater share of defence responsibilities, while simultaneously seeking to preserve U.S. primacy in security matters. When the UK and France took the initiative in 1998 with the St. Malo Declaration—marking a turning point in European ambitions for autonomous defence capacities—the U.S. response was ambivalent. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's famous "three Ds" (Decoupling, Discrimination and Duplication) formula encapsulated Washington's position. Despite this tension, the underlying reality persisted: Europe's security rested on U.S. capabilities, particularly in high-intensity domains such as intelligence, strategic lift, and advanced weaponry.

EU Defence Integration: Progress but Fragmentation

Over the past two decades, the EU has made incremental progress in building a security and defence identity and capacity. The 2007 Lisbon Treaty created the framework for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which today oversees more than twenty missions worldwide, primarily focused on crisis management, conflict prevention, and peacekeeping.

Institutional innovation accelerated after 2016. The European Defence Fund (EDF) was launched to stimulate collaborative defence research and development; Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was established to foster long-term projects; the Military Planning and Conduct Capability was introduced; and the European Peace Facility began funding military assistance

Photo: LSE

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to third states, including unprecedented support to Ukraine. Most recently, the Commission has advanced a package to deepen Europe's defence investment capacity, including over €800 billion in national spending through fiscal flexibility, a new €150 billion loan instrument (SAFE) for joint procurement, potential use of cohesion funds, and expanded European Investment Bank support, alongside efforts to attract private capital.

These instruments represent significant progress. Yet they remain fragmented, underfunded, and limited in scope compared to NATO. EU missions are typically civilian or low-intensity operations; interoperability across member states is challenging to implement, and duplication with NATO remains a concern. Defence industrial policy remains divided between national priorities and protectionist reflexes. Thus, despite efforts to reduce reliance on the U.S., European dependence has paradoxically grown since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Structural Obstacles to EU Defence and Security Capacity

Why has the EU not invested more decisively in defence until now? Four structural obstacles explain the gap between ambition and reality:

- *National sovereignty.* Defence is considered the last bastion of sovereignty. The failure of the European Defence Community in 1954 still resonates, and the Lisbon Treaty preserves member state primacy by requiring unanimity in defence decisions. National governments remain unwilling to cede control over war and peace.

- *Fighting in the name of whom?* Would Europeans fight and die for the EU? While a European identity exists in economic and cultural spheres, national loyalties dominate in security affairs. The rise of far-right nationalism in several member states exacerbates this problem, making collective commitments politically fragile.

- *Absence of a common strategic culture.* Member states face divergent security priorities: the Baltic states and Poland focus on Russia; Greece looks to Turkey; Mediterranean states are preoccupied with migration and instability in Africa; Ireland and Austria maintain neutrality. These divergences hinder consensus on when and how the EU should use force.

- *Illusions about the international order.* The EU has repeatedly misjudged its environment. It believed it could selectively engage with Russia while sanctioning its aggression; it treated Ukraine as a buffer zone; it underestimated Trump's disruptive impact in 2016 and assumed Biden's election meant a return to normality, assuming NATO and the U.S. would always guarantee its security. Each illusion has now been shattered.

What's next after the NATO summit? Europe's Strategic Choice

The 2025 NATO Summit sharpened these challenges by placing clear expectations on European allies. First, the commitment to invest 5% of GDP annually in defence requires sustained political will. NATO emphasised the need for capability development in areas where Europe remains most dependent on the U.S.: integrated air and missile defence, space and cyber operations, maritime security in contested zones, and rapid mobility of forces. The summit reaffirmed NATO's commitment to expanding defence industrial cooperation, encouraging member states and partners to harness emerging technologies and strengthen transatlantic industrial capacity. Defence industrial cooperation is a central issue, and while NATO insists on interoperability, it also emphasises the need to avoid duplication. This is especially interesting because it prompts further reflection: Does the U.S. truly wish a more autonomous EU? Despite pushing for the EU to take up more of its share of the burden, is it convenient for the U.S. to encourage the EU to become more autonomous, not only strategically but also in terms of capacity? Until now, the U.S. has always had an ambivalent relationship with the EU—wanting it to become more autonomous but always stressing its own leadership.

Regardless of the U.S. intentions, the EU now faces a strategic choice. One path is to continue relying on the U.S. as the ultimate guarantor of security, hoping that U.S. domestic politics will not undermine NATO commitments. This path, however, risks leaving the EU strategically irrelevant, as it is squeezed into great power politics, including China. The alternative is for the EU to assume greater responsibility within NATO, not by replacing the Alliance but by becoming a credible partner. To achieve this, the EU should focus on prioritising capability gaps, push for a greater pooling of resources, industrial coordination and interoperability. First and foremost, however, the EU should be able to act as a leader and reconcile the national priorities of each member state into a common and overarching strategy: only by reconciling the different national perspectives can the EU emerge as a security actor.

The NATO Summit of 2025 is a historical turning point in the EU-NATO relationship. It exposed the limits of the EU's reliance on the U.S. and highlighted the urgent need for the EU to invest more decisively in its own defence. The EU must choose whether to remain a dependent junior partner, risking irrelevance in a volatile geopolitical landscape, or act decisively to become a credible contributor to NATO's collective defence. The tools exist, the resources are available, but political will remains the decisive factor.

EU-NATO COOPERATION IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

by Dr Giuseppe Spatafora

The European Union and NATO are the two most relevant institutions for European security. However, cooperation between them has not always been the most effective. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the re-election of Donald Trump have created a new impetus for cooperation, but obstacles remain. Will the two institutions be able to find a way forward?

Between ebbs and flows, NATO and the EU in the 21st century

The partnership between the EU and NATO started to emerge after the end of the Cold War, as European countries grappled with the question of taking ownership of security and crisis management in the continent. Formal cooperation was set up in the early 2000s, with the Declaration on the European Security and Defence Policy and the "Berlin Plus" arrangements, which paved the way for the EU to use NATO infrastructure for CSDP missions and crisis management operations.

However, cooperation between the two organisations has faced enduring obstacles. Differences in membership – and in particular the dispute between Türkiye and Cyprus – have blocked intelligence sharing and formal joint planning between EU and NATO. NATO allies who are not in the EU recurrently voice concerns about being excluded from new European security structures that would weaken NATO's centrality. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright summarised these concerns in the "three D's" speech: no diminution, no discrimination and no duplication.

While these tensions may have limited cooperation, they have also helped in defining the separate roles that the EU and NATO should play in European security. The latter would remain the central institution for planning European deterrence and defence, whereas the former would

Milestones in EU-NATO cooperation

Photo: Spatafora

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Photo: Christophe Licoppe / European Union

NATO's Secretary General Mark Rutte and European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen in 2025.

contribute to Europe's security through crisis management operations, civilian aspects of security and the development of a EU defence industry.

Facing obstacles at the level of member states, the EU and NATO have advanced cooperation at the staff level, especially since the first Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014. In 2016, the Secretary General of NATO and the Presidents of the European Commission and Council signed the first of three Joint Declarations. Over the following two years, 74 areas of practical cooperation were agreed. These are the subject of bi-yearly progress report covering the following areas:

- Political dialogue on the broad set of security challenges facing Europe
- Countering hybrid threats across multiple domains
- Cyber security and defence
- Defence capabilities (with a special focus on capability development, space assets and military mobility)
- Defence industry, innovation and research, including on emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs)
- Operational cooperation and maritime security, recently expanded to include assistance to Ukraine
- Exercises, such as Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACEs) involving both EU Member States and NATO allies
- Defence and security capacity building for members of the two institutions and partners.

In addition, NATO and the EU have established structured dialogues – on military mobility, resilience, cybersecurity, defence industry, EDTs, space, and climate and defence– and task forces on protecting critical infrastructure and supporting Ukraine. Hence, the flow of information between the two institutions is frequent and significant, albeit limited to the unclassified level.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has given new impetus to EU-NATO cooperation. The challenge of war in the European continent required a coordinated response that could leverage the strength of the two organisations. The EU has taken the lead on providing financial and military assistance (like the European Peace Facility and the Ukraine Facility), imposing sanctions against Russia, and integrating Ukraine's defence industry into the continent's defence industrial base. NATO coordinated military assistance to Ukraine through the NATO Support to Ukraine (NSATU) mission and accelerated the interoperability between Ukrainian and allied militaries.

The Trump cards of 2025…The year 2025 has brought new dynamics to the EU-NATO relationship, many linked to the re-election of Donald Trump as US president. Trump held a long-standing position that Europeans should take responsibility for their own defence rather than relying on the US, chiefly by spending more of their national budget on defence. This is a position that today all European countries support, considering the worsened security environment. This has led NATO allies to agree a new spending target of 5% of GDP, split between core defence activities (3.5%) and defence related investments (1.5%).

Trump has also called for the redeployment of American forces and assets away from Europe. While the new defence pledge has toned down fears of a major transatlantic rift, the concern remains that the next US force posture review will propose a significant drawdown of American forces and assets in Europe. This may create significant deterrence gaps that European armed forces are not ready to fill in the near term.

The other dynamic that Trump has changed concerns the war in Ukraine. First, the US declared that Ukraine would not become a NATO ally. While NATO membership was always a contentious matter, the US decision to take it off the table complicates Kyiv's Euro-Atlantic integration trajectory. The second element is the changing dynamic of support. The US started the year opening negotiations with Russia, pressuring Ukraine to accept a ceasefire and suspending assistance as part of the process. The latter decision has been reversed, with the US agreeing to resume assistance to Ukraine mostly through sales – coordinated through NATO's new Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List (PURL) initiative.

While the war continues and negotiations are stalled – due mainly to Russia's

Photo: EDA

A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft, an example of EU-NATO cooperation in capability development.

reluctance to renounce its maximalist goals – EU and NATO countries have to deal with the new strategic reality. The current exclusion of NATO prospects for Ukraine increases the value of EU membership, as Ukraine could benefit from the EU mutual defence clause under Article 42.7. With the process likely to take years, EU and NATO countries need to find new solutions that can provide security guarantees to Kyiv in the short term. The current debate revolves around a reassurance/deterrence force in a post-ceasefire Ukraine, to be implemented outside a NATO framework and mostly by European countries, relying however on US intelligence and logistical support. At the time of writing, however, the prospects of a ceasefire remain bleak, and continued military assistance to Ukraine remains the priority for EU and NATO countries.

…and the response. The dynamics that emerged in 2025 have pushed the EU and NATO's leadership to galvanise cooperation. Both HR/VP Kaja Kallas and CDS Andrius Kubilius maintain that the EU had no intention of replacing NATO as the central institution for EU deterrence and defence and stressed the EU's key role in supporting Member States' ability to contribute to NATO's plans. The Rearm Europe-Readiness 2030 plan, presented in March 2025, envisages up to 800 billion euro in additional defence spending, which can be used by EU Member States in NATO to fulfil their capability targets. The SAFE instrument, in particular, can be used by multiple Member States to jointly procure priority assets that can reduce dependency on the US and increase EU capabilities.

NATO's new SG Mark Rutte has also agreed to disclose a portion of the capability requirements with EU counterparts. At the same time, a number of European countries in NATO have agreed to share their assigned capability targets to the EU on a voluntary basis. This additional flow of information should facilitate the EU's support of Member States in capability

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The age of Trump

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Mutual Defence

development – including through new instruments such as SAFE and the upcoming European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP). While limits to classified information sharing remain, these steps should streamline processes and increase trust between the two institutions.

Additionally, the pace of EU-NATO high-level meetings has increased since last year. Rutte partook in several meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council and European Parliament's Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE), while HR/VP Kallas and CDS Kubilius have attended Ukraine Defence Support Group meetings at NATO HQ and NATO ministerial meetings. Both Rutte and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen were part of meetings of the coalition of the willing for Ukraine, including the summit at the White House on 17 August – signalling that both institutions are involved in the key efforts to end the war in Ukraine and structure the continent's security.

Moving forward. EU countries have a complex but essential task ahead: implement the largest continental deterrence effort in a generation, in a very difficult security environment, and without the guarantee that the largest security partner (U.S.) will step in. All available instruments will need to be used including NATO and EU frameworks. For the two institutions to remain central to defence efforts, as their leadership want, they will need to move beyond dialogue and advance in practical cooperation.

Ukraine is a key area where the EU and NATO can play a very important role. They can leverage all the instruments they created over the past three years; the Ukraine Facility, the EU Military Assistance Mission to Ukraine (EUMAM), NSATU, PLUR, etc.) to put their member states in the best possible position to support Ukraine, either in a prolonged war or in a (as of yet unlikely) peace. One possible option is to use NATO infrastructure to enhance EUMAM's contribution to the reassurance force. That would be compatible with the "Berlin Plus" arrangements and would maximise NATO's involvement in a ceasefire in Ukraine without crossing the red line of direct NATO involvement.

In terms of developing European defence structures, the obstacles to sharing information and plans remain. This is unfortunate, as better information sharing would facilitate the alignment of EU-level investments with NATO's defence plans. Better information flow can facilitate reaching the 5% target, and support the development of shared enablers, following for instance the model of the Multinational Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft fleet, which emerged out of cooperation between the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA). This could potentially reduce the dependency on some US assets (although for others it will take many years).

Further, the EU and NATO should continue their expanded cooperation in areas that used to be adjacent to defence but are now essential components of deterrence – like stopping hybrid threats, leveraging new technologies, and protecting critical infrastructure. For instance, NATO and EU countries could coordinate common projects to spend the 1.5% of "defence-related" investments, which are so far based on loose criteria.

The current environment, and especially the presence of a less trustworthy United States in NATO, might reduce the appetite for NATO and the EU to work together. Other formats, such as coalitions of the willing, might be more practical solutions. However, the impact of joint EU-NATO synergy can be significant. The key question for the future of EU-NATO cooperation is whether respective member states will be able to overcome the obstacles that remain, and develop creative solutions to make effective use of these institutions. The future of the continent's security architecture might depend on it.

SHARED PURPOSE, SHARED STRENGTH: NATO AND EU IN DEFENCE OF EUROPE

by Andrius Kubilius

Photo: EU Commission

Andrius Kubilius
is a Member of the European Commission responsible for Defence and Space. He was a member of the Lithuanian Parliament and served twice as Prime Minister.

Established after 1945 having learned the tragic lessons of two world wars, NATO and the EU are two children of the Cold War, established to meet, at that time, a great danger, the Soviet domination of Europe.

The purpose of both the EU and NATO has been the same from the beginning. That is, to preserve peace. NATO on the outside by deterring aggression, by preventing war, by saying, an attack on one is an attack on all. The European project on the inside, by making another European war, in the words of Robert Schuman, "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible", by sharing sovereignty over the production of coal and steel, the industrial ingredients to fuel war.

NATO and the EU are built on the same universal values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. This is unsurprising considering that both the EU and NATO share the same populations. In 1955, out of the six countries that signed the founding Treaty of Rome, all were Members of NATO and today most NATO States in Europe are EU member states, or candidate member states. With our transatlantic cousins, we share historic links of trade, culture and kinship going back centuries.

Once again, we are confronted with and live in turbulent historic times and NATO and the EU yet again must face a great threat:the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the increase in Russian military production directed against Ukraine – and NATO. We faced such existential threats before and can do so again.

When I was nominated to become the first EU Commissioner for Defence and Space there were many rumours in the corridors of Brussels' that the EU was going to compete with NATO. I emphasised from the very outset, No! The EU is not going to compete with NATO. We are coming to support NATO. How? The answer is simple: with EU added value. European scale, European coordination, European law, European money.

NATO together with EU member states prepares our common defence and deterrence plans and decides on so called "capability targets" (what the requirements of weapons and equipment are for member states). The EU can help NATO member states and the European defence industry to fulfil its' obligations to meet capability targets.

EU added value comes with EU possibilities to raise additional funds for defence; to implement industrial policy beneficial for European defence industry; to adopt legal regulations in order to ramp up defence production. Only the EU can leverage this space. NATO does not have such power. A good example of EU added value is, for example, the

European Defence Fund. At one billion euro a year, the European Defence Fund is one of the top three R&D investors in Europe.

Because of rising Chinese power, our transatlantic partners are shifting their attention to the Indo-Pacific, another reason why Europe is taking more responsibility for defence. This will only strengthen our alliance. At the historic June 2025 summit, NATO agreed on capability targets, and set ambitious new spending targets: 5% in total. 3.5% directly for defence.

In addition, the European Union is taking equally historic decisions, so member states can actually meet these ambitious NATO spending targets. Such is the flexibility for Member States under the Stability and Growth Pact and our SAFE loans – 150 billion euro in attractive loans backed by the EU budget. This is a significant sum, a total of 800 billion euro extra for defence for the next four years.

On top of this for the next multi-year EU budget, the multiannual financial framework (MFF), the Commission has proposed a five-fold increase in EU space and defence spending up to 131 billion euro.

However, there is even more money being made available for defence. Considering NATO member states pledged an annual 3.5% of GDP on defence by 2035, we can estimate average spending for the entire budgetary period will be about 3% of GDP. That is 600 billion euro per year, or a colossal 4.2 trillion euro for the entire budgetary period.

The next phase is delivery and making sure this fiscal resource is spent economically, efficiently and in the best possible way. Encouraging joint procurement to end fragmentation of military production and stimulating investment where capabilities in Europe are now lagging behind is necessary. These capabilities include strategic enablers such as airlift, air to air refuelling or on joint common projects with EU added value, like the space for defence systems or the Eastern Border Defence Shield to protect the EU and NATO border.

It will not be enough to have more and better equipment, such as armour, artillery and frigates. We must be able to fight the wars of tomorrow, which will be a war of drones. That is why we launched the initiative with Ukraine "Brave Tech EU", a mechanism to enable European industry to learn and benefit from Ukrainian battletested experience.

We are removing the red tape that prevents defence expansion. It is unacceptable for companies to have to wait four years to get a permit to start production. This is the current situation. That is why we have proposed a new EU law to end bureaucratic obstacles to defence production. This is the defence readiness omnibus.

Soon we will present proposals to improve military mobility, as the EU will need to urgently adapt its rail, road, sea and air corridors to ensure the swift movement of personnel and equipment in the event of conflict. We need to develop that infrastructure cognisant of NATO planning considerations and then we need to ensure effective defence of these key assets.

This we do in collaboration with NATO. Institutionally our cooperation has strongly increased and improved over the past ten years. Through joint declarations, structured dialogues, sectorial talk formats and EU – NATO staff interaction, we're now working closely together on areas like military mobility; climate change, security and defence; emerging and disruptive technologies; space; cyber; and defence industry. I have personally twice addressed the North Atlantic Council, NATO's decision-making body. There and at the June NATO summit in The Hague, I assured NATO partners of full EU support.

To ensure security, EU and NATO will each do what they do best. That brings added value to joint efforts. NATO focuses on areas like military planning and leadership, while the EU can contribute through its financial instruments, regulatory frameworks and industrial policies. The EU has a key role to assist member states through joint procurement and industrial policy support to ensure the defence capabilities as agreed within the NATO capability-planning framework.

With the expected US pivot towards the Indo-Pacific, the EU must strengthen its strategic autonomy. The pursuit of autonomy does not undermine transatlantic relations but will only strengthen Europe's capacity to contribute to collective security. The biggest threat to that security is now Russian aggression. No Member State alone can stand against Russia. However, together, as a European Union, and with NATO, we can.

Together, the EU and NATO represent over one billion people. We share the same history, the same values, and the same purpose: To deter aggression, prevent war, and preserve peace. The European Union is the largest single market in the world. NATO the largest defensive military alliance.

If we join forces, we need fear no aggressor. Our ability to meet the challenges of the future depends on our ability to unite.

EUROPE FIRST: A NEW DIVISION OF LABOUR IN EUROPEAN SECURITY

by Dr Ken McDonagh

Photo: McDonagh

Dr Ken McDonagh
is Associate Professor of International Relations in Dublin City University. His research is focused on EU Foreign Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the role of small states in CSDP.

Europe has faced a series of ever more alarming wake up calls in the field of security and defence over the past 25 years. The slowness of both the EU and NATO to recognise and respond to these challenges in that time is a puzzle for future historians to figure out. What circumstances those historians will find themselves writing in depends on the decisions that are taken in the present.

Much has been made of the shocks that the European security system is currently facing, whether that is the large-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the wobbling of the Trans-Atlantic relationship as both the UK and the U.S. experience political instability, and the rise of illiberal governments within the European Union. However, the reality is that these shocks are neither new nor all that unexpected.

Russia has been a persistent source of instability in the European neighbourhood, and any doubts about the need for credible deterrence should have been removed following the invasion of Georgia in 2008.

Washington has been calling on Europe to do more for its own security since at least the Clinton administration and the underlying strategic logic that suggested the United States commitment to European security was likely to wane has been evident since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2012, Barack Obama dismissed Russia as a regional power – and he was correct, Russia is a source of instability for Europe and its neighbourhood but unable to project the kind of global influence it had in the Cold War.

Similarly, the rise of illiberal forces within EU member states is nothing new. Europe reacted strongly to Austria electing the far right to government in 2000 but has been found wanting when faced with democratic backsliding in Hungary, Poland and Slovakia or with the rise of far right parties in Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany and France.

Europe then finds itself facing a crisis of its own making but also an opportunity to address some fundamental weaknesses in security and defence. The positive news is that, perhaps for the first time, the European political consensus has shifted to understanding the precariousness of the security situation and to more agreement on what should be done. In addition, the steps currently being taken will pay off even if the worst-case scenarios about the future of trans-Atlantic cooperation do not come to fruition.

Existing EU initiatives such as the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) and the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) and calls for the swift adoption of the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) regulations to allow the EU to provide up to €150 billion in finance to member states to meet the necessary increases in defence spending to meet the capability needs of Europe into the future. If EU member states take

Photo: McDonagh

Maidan encampment Kyiv

up the additional fiscal space enabled as part of the ReArm Europe initiative this additional financial capacity could reach 800 billion euro.

Critically, this is a win-win situation for both the EU and NATO. The EU member state capabilities are in most cases at NATO's disposal as well. It also serves as a useful signal to Washington that Europe is willing to pay its own way when it comes to security and defence, whatever party controls the White House.

While defence spending is one part of the necessary European response to the present challenges, more difficult is replacing the military equipment that the US provides and the security reassurance created by US boots on the ground, either in permanent bases or as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltics and Poland.

As regards to military equipment, the short term challenge is the need to plan to replace US supplies to the Ukrainian military particularly in areas such as air defence and rocket artillery systems should the need arise. In the medium term, European states need to address their over-reliance on US capabilities in force-enabling technologies particularly, but not limited to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and air-to-air refuelling. The above-mentioned initiatives have taken some steps in this direction, but more urgency is needed.

Europe also needs to develop contingency plans for replacing the US presence in Europe. The recent meeting in Paris that indicated 26 countries would be willing to provide forces as part of a security guarantee in Ukraine suggest that where there is political will such a deployment is possible. This could be a model for similar deployments in the Baltic States, Finland, Poland and other countries seeking security reassurance should the US withdraw.

The internal challenge of rising illiberal forces is a more difficult one. Compounded by the need to balance regulating largely non-European owned digital media companies with broader economic interests in positive trade terms with the US may shift the political calculus. This is where security interests bleed into the wider society and policy space. Finding the right strategy to communicate the nature and immediacy of the threat is a key challenge for European leaders not least when the need to increase defence spending may come at the cost to other parts of public spending.

The EU also faces the challenge of moving forward with defence cooperation while operating with the consent of member states who for reasons of longstanding strategic policy (the neutral states Ireland, Malta and Austria) may oppose further integration with both EU and NATO defence and security structures. However, Finland and Sweden's decision to join NATO and Denmark's ending of its CSDP opt-out indicate that national orientations are not set in stone.

Europe has reached a point where the political consensus in national capitals and in Brussels are largely in agreement. The Russian invasion of Ukraine focussed minds on the vulnerability of Europe's Eastern flank. The unpredictable foreign policy emanating from Washington has similarly underlined the need to develop, fund and deliver an independent European capability in security and defence. At both the policy and institutional level, the last few years have seen an unprecedented rate of development of the EU as a coordinating actor in the defence realm but this progress remains precarious. A 'Europe First' approach to defence within NATO and the EU will make Europe a more credible partner to the US and enhance the deterrent factor of both Article 5 of the NATO Charter and Article 42(7) of the TEU. Delivering this approach is the defining challenge of this generation of Europe's leaders.

BEYOND THE SUMMIT: NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF NATO AND EUROPEAN DEFENCE

by Prof Dr Daniel Fiott

Photo: Vrije Universiteit

Prof Dr Daniel Fiott
heads the defence and statecraft programme at the Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy (CSDS) and is a Professor at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels.

The Hague NATO Summit on 25 June 2025 will possibly go down in history as the moment when Europeans were put on serious notice by the United States that Washington was no longer going to subsidise European security. As a long-standing objective of the Trump administration, European allies were cajoled into accepting increased defence spending levels as a way of rebalancing burden-sharing within the alliance. At the NATO Wales Summit over a decade ago, allies pledged to spend up to 2% of GDP on defence, but, in the Hague, they increased this objective to 5% of GDP.

While only a couple of NATO allies publicly rallied against this new 5% target, most would have agreed to the objective, knowing full well that meeting it will be a struggle economically, especially given Europe's current economic climate. So, if President Trump's desire for a 5% target was achieved, European allies are now faced with the task of spending more on defence. This, of course, raises serious questions about where the additional capital will come from and how best to spend it, especially given Europe's continued military gaps.

Realistically getting to 5%

To some degree, the alliance's new 5% spending target does come with some degree of flexibility, and, if we are honest, ambiguity. For one thing, NATO agreed to split the 5% target into two main blocks. The first, adding to 3.5% of GDP, which should be invested in core defence tasks such as military capability development and procurement, and operations. The second, totalling 1.5% of GDP, is more vague and relates to security investments in civil preparedness, resilience, innovation, critical infrastructure and the defence industry.

The task is not only to increase defence spending, but to do so in a way that genuinely contributes to European security

Should NATO allies actually meet the 5% target by 2038, long after President Trump has left office, then the alliance will be in a stronger position. Much depends, however, on how the additional investment is used by allies. The fear is that the 1.5% parts of the new target is so ambiguous that allies may classify any form of investment as a contribution to NATO's security, including homeland intelligence, bridge building and new airports. So, as ever, the task is not only to increase defence spending, but to do so in a way that genuinely contributes to European security.

One of the obvious ways for NATO allies to boost European security is to lean heavily into the 3.5% element of the overall target. In doing so, governments can fill the long-standing military gaps that have emerged in Europe over the past few decades. Not only has Europe failed to meet its own headline goals for force development, but it still lacks many of the strategic enablers needed for European defence. And this is particularly important given the uncertainty surrounding the United States' commitment to

Photo: Craig Manners, 2024, Unsplash

Defence Readiness

European security and Ukraine. The truth is that should the U.S. substantially pull its forces and capabilities from Europe, the continent would be left largely defenceless in conventional terms.

Many European states, including through the recently agreed "EU-U.S. Trade Deal", have pledged to invest billions of euros in American-made defence equipment. If Europe is, however, to truly develop its defences, then it will need its own functioning and sizeable defence industry. Here, it is expected that the additional 900 billion euro in investment being raised by the EU through loans, regulatory changes and the multi-annual financial framework will lead to a positive chain reaction on the industrial front. This way, Europeans can build a more autonomous defence that positively contributes to NATO and the EU.

A chance to genuinely deepen EU-NATO cooperation?

Although the official Hague Summit declaration does not mention the EU once, the new 5% target gives us more optimism for enhancing EU-NATO cooperation. While the long-standing reasons that block deeper cooperation will remain, there is clearly a role for the EU in supporting its member states that are also in NATO to meet the new targets and enhance European defence overall. Indeed, through its "Readiness 2030 Plan", the European Commission has revised the Stability and Growth Pact rules, which were long seen to inhibit defence spending due to public debt fears, to promote additional investments up to €600 billion through increased budgetary space. Likewise, the €150 billion in loans under the "SAFE instrument" will also help EU/NATO states meet their 3.5% obligation.

The EU can help meet NATO's 1.5% target in security-related investments

Should EU member states endorse the European Commission's plan to invest over €130 billion in the next EU budgetary cycle, even more investments will be unlocked. Here, the additional finances will go largely towards the European Defence Industrial Programme, which aims to develop common military capabilities between EU states. NATO has already identified air and missile defence, long-range weapons, logistics and large land formations as the most pressing military capabilities today, and the EU's own coordinated capability development priorities chime with these targets. It will be no surprise to learn, therefore, that additional defence investments will be directed to large-scale European defence projects of common interest in these areas.

The EU can also make a sizeable contribution to security-related investments

Photo: Louise Beaumont

Defence Technical Resilience

in the new NATO 5% target. Arguably, the Union is better placed than NATO for issues related to resilience, critical infrastructure protection, innovation, civil preparedness and more. Let us not forget that the EU is a regulatory power that uses legislation to better protect Europe's digital networks and physical infrastructure, and the Union is already investing multiple billions of euros into cybersecurity, civil innovation and more. Again, it is likely that the Union will help EU/NATO states meet the 1.5% of GDP target, even though it will not likely be praised for doing so.

More than money is needed

Developing EU-NATO cooperation and embracing the Union's role in defence are critical elements of any future European defence. Europe's overall preparedness, resilience and defence will be necessary to shield the Union from strong geopolitical headwinds. Without military capabilities and a functioning defence industry, Europe will struggle to defend itself and support Ukraine. As the Hague Summit declaration stated, any allied contributions to Ukraine's security will be counted as part of the 5% target, but the main challenge for Europe today is not spending more money on Ukraine – Europe is already the largest financial contributor to Ukraine.

Real commitment to European security cannot only be counted in terms of investment levels

What is really challenging for Europeans today is how best to militarily support Ukraine in a context where the United States decreases its support for Kyiv. The post-Hague Summit period has already seen the growth of a so-called "Coalition of the Willing" to potentially deploy forces to Ukraine in support of any peace deal with Russia. This is an extremely tall order for Europeans, especially given the glaring military gaps mentioned before. It is doubtful whether Europeans have the will to deploy and sustain a large force in Kyiv, not to mention doing so without the relevant strategic enablers.

Over the past years, Europe has certainly been thrown in at the deep end on defence. Governments are slowly reinvesting in their militaries, and industry is developing the technologies, systems and supplies we need for defence. However, it will still take more time for Europe to become a more autonomous defence actor. The Hague Summit is but one among many instances of our American friends pushing Europe towards more self-sufficiency in defence. However, real commitment to European security cannot only be counted in terms of investment levels, as Europe still needs to desperately acquire military capabilities and learn to act alone, if necessary.

THE EUROPEAN UNION SATELLITE CENTRE (SATCEN): EUROPE'S EYES IN THE SKY FOR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN SECURITY & DEFENCE

by Rear Admiral Louis Tillier

Photo: SatCen

Rear Admiral Louis Tillier has been serving as Director of the European Union Satellite Centre since June 2024. With a distinguished naval career, his background also includes advanced engineering training and leadership in both national and European space and security initiatives.

In an era marked by increasing geopolitical tensions, from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to the growing complexity of hybrid threats, the European Union's ability to maintain autonomous situational awareness has nev er been more critical. At the heart of this capability lies the European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen), a unique and indispensable operational asset that provides imagery and geospatial intelligence (IMINT/GEOINT), under the control of the EU Member States (MS), to support the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It has also progressively evolved to support EU's external action, supporting the UN on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and to create synergies with other Union agencies. SatCen is entrusted by the Commission to support FRONTEX, monitoring irregular migrations and in its fight against cross-border crimes, but also in protecting cultural heritage and providing humanitarian aid, always under Member States (MS) governance and control.

Established in 1992 under the Western European Union and integrated into the EU framework in 2002, SatCen was a response to the need for autonomous, space-based situational awareness. Hosted by Spain at the Torrejón de Ardoz military base near Madrid, SatCen has evolved into the EU's primary provider of IMINT/GEOINT, operating under the political oversight of the Member States and the operational direction of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

AN OPERATIONAL AGENCY USED ON A DAILY BASIS

At the core of its mission stand timely, reliable, autonomous geospatial analysis, intelligence from the exploitation of space and collateral data. The Centre covers a wide spectrum of activities - supporting CSDP & CFSP in crisis management or monitoring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), from external action to strengthening the security of the EU and its citizens, from border security to support for humanitarian crises.

The Centre also plays a critical role in supporting EU civilian and military missions, including the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Mediterranean, and Eastern Europe. Its support to missions and operations, notably EUNAVFOR IRINI, has increased fivefold in recent years, reaching 20% of its production.

Photo: SatCen

European Union Satellite Centre HQs in Torrejón de Ardoz, Spain

SatCen exemplifies the EU's strategic autonomy in action and maximizes synergies with the European Commission. Among its activities, the Copernicus Security Service production currently represents 22% of the Centre's total 2024 output. It consists of the Copernicus Support to EU External and Security Actions (SESA) and the Support to Copernicus Border Surveillance Service (CBSS implemented by FRONTEX). The SESA service supports a diverse group of users consisting of Member States, EEAS, Commission (i.e. DG ECHO for humanitarian aid), and EU agencies. When the service is activated to support EU external and security actions, it addresses a wide range of domains, from Security of EU citizens, Crisis and Conflict to Transport Safety and Security.

SatCen's experts and highly skilled analysts—a good percentage with military background—produce around 6,000 reports annually. After prioritization by the High Representative, the analysis is processed by nine specialised teams operating seven days a week and always remaining on-call. The resulting reports are then shared with the requester, first of them being SIAC within EEAS, and the 27 MS intelligence services on an equal basis. By sharing a common knowledge, SatCen is contributing to a common strategic culture in the EU on major security and defence challenges.

A KNOWLEDGE HUB

SatCen plays a crucial role in sustaining excellence through training and innovation. The Centre offers a wide range of courses - from basic imagery analysis to specialised seminars, like on Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and nuclear fuel cycle - serving both internal staff and external partners. These seminars not only build capacity but also harmonize analytical standards across the EU, fostering a shared understanding and interoperability among relevant entities in the EU and its Member States. SatCen effectively works as a knowledge hub, which could develop into a pillar for a possible reinforced European contribution to NATO, if Member States decide.

OPERATING WITH NEW AND FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES

This high-output environment is supported by an internally developed classified digital platform that enables secure real-time interaction with end-users. Being the first EU SECRET cloud infrastructure, it is a breakthrough for both SatCen and its users, including connected Member States. The platform provides access to data, tracks workflows, and offers tailored products and services for download. This shift from a document-based model to Intelligence as a Service (INTaaS) further increases responsiveness and significantly enhances user engagement, coordination and cooperation within the EU.

SatCen is at the forefront of integrating cutting-edge technologies into its analytical workflows. The exponential growth in satellite data—driven by high-resolution electro-optical sensors, multi-spectral radar, and new space technologies—necessitates advanced tools for data processing and analysis.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data analytics are increasingly used to automate the detection of relevant features in satellite imagery, such as identifying relevant objects in vast areas of interest, or even small vessels in maritime surveillance. While AI supports analysis throughout the workflow, human expertise remains essential for interpretation and validation.

SatCen shares its operational knowledge to support EU's competitiveness by participating in numerous capability development initiatives in space, defence and security. It cooperates with the European Commission, the European Defence Agency (EDA), and participates in EDF, PESCO and Horizon Europe projects. The Centre's participation in those top EU research initiatives, as well as its involvement in high-tech projects, further reinforce its dual role as a collaborative and operational instrument.

Looking ahead, the project for a possible future Earth Observation Governmental Service (EOGS) marks a significant step forward. A European autonomous access to top-quality data, including fast responsiveness and high volumes, is key to assuring strategic autonomy and to better protect the EU and its citizens in an unstable world. The capabilities available to the EU and its Member States

Photo: Worldview3

Monitoring of Kabul International Airport (© Worldview-3)

clearly need to scale up to be able to successfully face imminent challenges and uncertainties.

The potential future EOGS could provide such capacities and reinforce the EU's situational awareness. The Centre is uniquely positioned to serve as a service hub, capable of operating a federation-layered system with contributions from different space payloads.

The 'pilot EOGS' has been designed to validate this concept. The pilot will test the governance, providing raw images and Earth observation services for security and defence, where Member States play a key role. Thanks to more than 30 years of experience, building on its unique expertise in the EU and the trust created through regular operational interaction with Member States intelligence services, SatCen plays a key role in the pilot and could become the major implementing tool for this data hub and broker function, as well as for the production and dissemination of sensitive products and services. Using the Centre as a hub for a possible EOGS would drastically reduce operational and financial risks, as well as the timing to establish an Initial Operational Capability. It also aligns with the EU's Strategic Compass, which explicitly calls for strengthening the SatCen to boost the Union's autonomous GEOINT capacity.

ALIGNING WITH THE EU'S POLITICAL AGENDA AND PRIORITIES

The Strategic Compass, adopted in 2022 and confirmed through the 2024 Progress Report, provides a clear mandate for SatCen's future development. The Centre contributes directly to its four pillars. It supports "Act" and "Secure" through timely geospatial analysis for crisis management and operational readiness, providing near-real-time intelligence to missions. It enhances strategic foresight via long-term monitoring and trend analysis and strengthens resilience by enhancing the EU's autonomous decision-making capacity. Under "Invest", it advances capabilities and technologies, while under "Partner", it fosters cooperation with partners and organisations like the UN, to whom it proposes its services under the control and mandate of Member States through the Political and Security Committee.

The Centre stands as a testament to what the EU can achieve through strategic vision, technological innovation, and collective commitment. It is not only "Europe's eyes in the sky" for security and defence, but also a cornerstone of EU strategic influence - empowering decision-makers from the HR/VP to the Member States, supporting EU missions

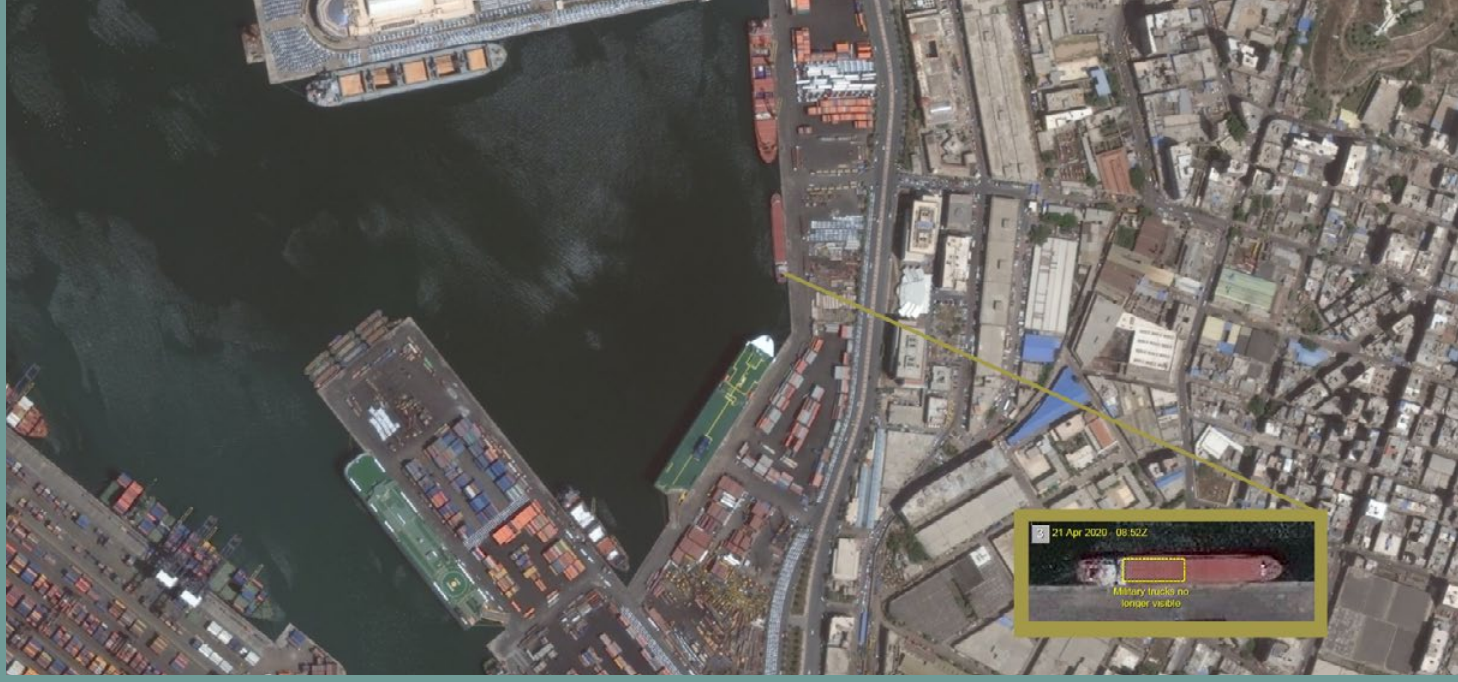

Photo: Worldview-2

Monitoring of Suspicious Vessel in Support to EU Missions and Operations

and operations, and safeguarding the security of the EU and its citizens.

Upon assuming office as HR/VP on December 1st, 2019, Josep Borrell affirmed that his mandate would be guided by the principles of realism, unity, and partnerships, with the goal of strengthening the EU's role as a globally engaged actor. He emphasised that the European Union possesses all the necessary tools to fulfil this mission—from diplomacy and trade to development cooperation and crisis management. In his own words: "*We need a truly integrated foreign policy that combines the power of EU Member States and the potential of their joint action, with the coordinated mobilisation of EU instruments. Only this way will our common voice be heard loud and clear.*"

This *integrated approach* - aligning and coordinating political instruments to enhance EU's responses to conflicts and crises – will be even more effective by equipping EU decision-makers with a comprehensive understanding of complex situations, enabling timely and informed action. In this context, SatCen, described by HR/VP as "*Europe's main tool for providing intelligence to Member States and European leaders,*" plays a pivotal role in bridging gaps between political insight and intelligence, ensuring that the EU's strategic decisions are grounded in reliable, relevant and actionable information.

As coordination of intelligence services is key to better understand the growing complexity of the new world order, driven by major global transitions, SatCen proposes a unique opportunity to add multiple layers and views on each area of interest for EU's security, to enhance situational awareness. The *integrated approach* called by the HR/VP has been *de facto* adapted to situational awareness and intelligence for SatCen's first-hand users, especially the EEAS including SIAC, and Member States' intelligence services.

Photo: SatCen

Trainings at SatCen

As geopolitical challenges mount and the demand for trusted intelligence grows, SatCen with its unique set of geospatial analysis capabilities, is poised to remain at the heart of Europe's security and defence architecture. The Centre has built this CFSP success story progressively over the past three decades and is now more than ever - quietly but decisively - contributing to the EU's ability to act with informed foresight, unity, and strength.

In the new world order, SatCen can be an even more essential tool to help the EU and its Member States understand major global transitions. In the context of today's unprecedented polycrisis, where global challenges are no longer isolated but deeply interconnected, compounding, and often mutually reinforcing, the Centre directly supports the EU and its Member States CFSP/CSDP actions by providing "integrated situational awareness".

TOWARDS STRATEGIC SYMBIOSIS: STRENGTHENING EU–NATO COOPERATION FOR EUROPE'S SECURITY

by General Michael Wiggers Hyldgaard

Photo: DKMIL

General Michael Wiggers Hyldgaard
Chief of Defence in the Kingdom of Denmark since 2025.

Europe is at a historic inflection point. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, continuing hybrid threats, and increasing global instability have made it abundantly clear: The security of the European continent can no longer be taken for granted. In this environment, the strategic partnership between the European Union and NATO is not just beneficial, it is indispensable.

Security on the European continent is the responsibility of both the EU and NATO – it needs to be a closely coordinated effort

As Chief of Defence of Denmark, I am proud to contribute to the Danish EU Presidency's priority of strengthening European security. Our continent faces complex threats that transcend institutional boundaries. These challenges require a near seamless cooperation between the EU and NATO that goes beyond traditional complementarity. It is time to move decisively toward a true strategic symbiosis.

A shared responsibility for security

The EU and NATO each bring distinct strengths to European security. NATO remains the cornerstone of the defence of Europe with its integrated command structure, nuclear deterrence, and decades of operational experience. The EU contributes with a broad toolbox ranging from regulatory authority to funding mechanisms that can accelerate capability development, support resilience, and generate comprehensive approaches to security that NATO alone cannot deliver.

Too often, however, our efforts are fragmented. We must overcome this fragmentation by integrating planning and execution more closely, aligning priorities, and pursuing joint solutions to common challenges. The declaration on EU–NATO cooperation signed in 2023 was an important step and must now translate into binding habits of coordination, information-sharing, and joint decision-making. Only then can we ensure that no gap remains between what NATO requires and what the EU can enable.

Building and sharing military capabilities

The development of military capabilities is an area where EU and NATO cooperation must intensify. European nations are under pressure to modernise their armed forces, ensure interoperability and fill critical capability gaps. These needs are equally relevant for national defence, EU-led operations and NATO missions.

We must align defence-planning processes and ensure that EU initiatives, such as the European Defence Fund and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) support NATO's Defence Planning Process. By coordinating investments and harmonising requirements, we can avoid duplication and generate real operational strength.

Denmark will continue its efforts towards systematic exchanges between

Photo: Military Machine

Military Mobility

the EU's Capability Development Plan and NATO's Defence Planning Process. Our goal must be a transparent two-way flow of information and a culture where nations feel that contributions to one framework directly strengthen the other. This is the essence of strategic symbiosis.

Military Mobility: A test case for co-operation

One of the most tangible and urgent areas for EU–NATO collaboration is military mobility. NATO must be able to rapidly deploy large formations across Europe in times of crisis. However, without EU action to streamline customs procedures, modernise transport infrastructure and reduce regulatory bottlenecks, this mobility will be compromised.

The EU has already taken important steps by initiating the work towards an Action Plan on military mobility. We must now ensure that the plan is effectively translated into accelerated implementation, which ensure interoperability of standards and deepen coordination with NATO to make Europe a truly military-ready space. If we succeed, military mobility can become a prime example of the cooperation between the EU and NATO, displaying the strength of their partnership and making it clearly visible to both allies and adversaries.

Resisting hybrid threats together

Russia continues to engage in persistent hybrid aggression against European nations. These include cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns, and other grey-zone activities aimed at destabilising our societies and undermining our political will.

Both NATO and the EU are targeted by these attacks, and both have developed capabilities to counter them but we must continue to enhance our response through closer integration. NATO brings strong intelligence, operational coordination, and military cyber defence. The EU contributes with regulatory power, civilian resilience measures, and the ability to coordinate across sectors such as energy, transport, and finance.

The protection of critical infrastructure; energy grids, transport networks, communication systems, is a shared responsibility. We must enhance joint situational awareness, conduct coordinated resilience exercises and share intelligence in real time to stay ahead of these evolving threats. Only by acting in concert can we deny our adversaries the space in which hybrid strategies thrive.

Strengthening the EU Defence Industrial Base

No strategy for European security is complete without a robust and responsive defence technical and industrial base. This is not just an economic matter, it is a strategic imperative. The war in Ukraine has revealed the scale and pace of production needed to sustain military operations in a high-intensity conflict.

The EU and NATO both have a role to play in strengthening industrial capacity, securing supply chains, and incentivising innovation. NATO can define the operational requirements, while the EU can mobilise investment, standardisation and regulatory frameworks to ensure timely delivery. We must ensure that our industries can deliver the capabilities our armed forces need, when they need them. It is this industrial base that enables Europe to endure and prevail, especially if the conflict spreads beyond Ukraine.

A call for strategic symbiosis

The time has come for a new phase in EU–NATO cooperation. Complementarity is no longer enough. We must pursue strategic symbiosis, an interdependent, mutually reinforcing partnership where the strengths of one are amplified by the other.

The EU and NATO need each other. Their unity is not only a political signal to adversaries but also a strategic necessity for resilience, deterrence, and defence. Europe's security and stability depend on it.

As we advance through the Danish EU Presidency, I urge our allies and partners to seize this opportunity. Let us move beyond rhetoric. Let us build a security architecture in which the EU and NATO operate as one strategic ecosystem, agile, aligned and determined to protect our shared future.

SECURING THE BALTIC SEA: A PERFECT CASE FOR EU/NATO COOPERATION

by General Benjamin Hodges (retired)

Photo: Hodges

General Benjamin Hodges (retired) became commander of United States Army Europe in November 2014, holding that position for three years until retiring from the **United States Army** in January 2018.

On 14 January 2025, President Stubb of Finland hosted a meeting of the Heads of Government of all eight Baltic littoral states plus the NATO Secretary General and the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission. He called for the meeting after a series of incidents in the Baltic Sea had damaged or destroyed undersea pipelines and cables. At the conclusion of their meeting, the Heads of Government signed a "Joint Statement of the Baltic Sea NATO Allies Summit". It outlined what they should do to address these actions by Russian or Russian-connected vessels.

This article intends to address the actions agreed at this Summit and why cooperation between the European Union and NATO is essential to protecting undersea infrastructure and deterring Russia from further aggression and violations of international law in the Baltic Sea region.

The Threat

The threats from Russia are frequently referred to as "grey zone" actions or "hybrid warfare", primarily because they are below the threshold of NATO's Article 5 of the Washington Treaty which states that "an armed attack against one shall be considered an armed attack against all". However, it is because they are below that threshold which makes EU-NATO cooperation so important. These hostile acts are typically violations of law, questionable activities that avoid sanctions, or else they do not involve traditional direct kinetic action against a nation. Therefore, perhaps the most effective solutions for deterring these hostile acts might also be non-kinetic, using instead the economic and legal means available to nations.

The Joint Statement reads: "Increasing the security of the Baltic Sea and its critical undersea infrastructure is a joint interest for the Alliance and the EU. Through our joint actions, as outlined in this declaration, we actively contribute to efforts to secure and safeguard our undersea critical infrastructure, thereby strengthening NATO's collective efforts and advancing NATO's ongoing work, including the renewal of NATO's maritime strategy, as we approach the NATO Summit in the Hague."

How can NATO and the EU respond to or deter Russia's illegal, hostile activities in the Gray Zone?

Russia has been exporting oil and gas through the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea to its main customers, China and India (about 70% of Russian oil and gas goes to these two nations). Most of this oil is transported using so-called "shadow fleet" vessels. At the Riga Security Forum in October 2024, the European Commission's Sanctions Envoy, Mr David O'Sullivan, referred to these vessels as "end of life" ships, meaning that they are likely to have numerous aspects which potentially make them unseaworthy, environmentally unsound, and or improperly insured. Most of the incidents which

have damaged undersea infrastructure are attributed to these "shadow fleet" vessels. So, a key part of protecting this infrastructure in the Baltic region will be stopping or disrupting these vessels.

The Joint Statement reads: "We are taking robust steps to address these threats. We reserve our rights, in accordance with international law, to take action against any suspected vessels that circumvent sanctions and threaten our security, infrastructure and the environment." What does that mean? What are some steps that can and should be taken?

Photo: Kiosk Magazines

Baltic Sentry

Monitoring and a common maritime operational picture

One example would be increased surveillance of shipping moving through the Baltic Sea. This would entail a comprehensive, detailed common maritime picture that is shared amongst all the nations around the Baltic Sea. This would help relevant nations, coast guards, navies, and law enforcement agencies identify those vessels which appear to be unsafe, a threat to the environment, or which are most likely to be improperly insured. Nations should take the necessary steps to inspect these vessels, in accordance with the law, for proper insurance certificates as well as safety and protection from environmental damage. This surveillance would discourage shadow fleet vessels from loitering over undersea infrastructure or dragging their anchors across the bottom of the Baltic Sea, damaging pipelines and cables.

NATO has launched "Baltic Sentry" to improve its ability to keep an eye on hostile and illegal operations in the Baltic Sea. This is a good start, but not sufficient. Nations can increase their own operations in the air, at sea, and below the surface to deter Russian efforts to damage or destroy undersea infrastructure. The EU has conducted very effective counter-piracy maritime operations in the past so there is plenty of experience as well as precedent for an EU contribution to this monitoring, surveillance and enforcement effort.

There are of course potential technological solutions that should be a part of the efforts to monitor undersea infrastructure and deter hostile Russian activities against this infrastructure. Significant advances in maritime unmanned systems (UMS) are proving to be effective in anti-submarine warfare and can operate almost continuously at significant distances from shore, making them useful for monitoring shipping in the Baltic Sea as well as undersea. There have been improvements as well in technology for monitoring pipelines and cables on the floor of Baltic Sea and should be included as part of the overall effort, whether they are operated by pipeline and cable companies or the nations.

Obey the Law

The Joint Statement reads: "Together, we will identify further measures in accordance with international law of the sea, including the freedom of navigation, to prevent and effectively respond to wilful damaging of critical undersea infrastructure or irresponsible behaviour. Such behaviour interferes, inter alia, with the freedom to lay cables and pipelines and poses a significant risk to the marine environment. We will also take actions for accountability and stronger enforcement against those responsible for damaging undersea infrastructure, including compensation for damage."

It goes on to describe steps needed to take increased protection and resilience of communications and energy infrastructure, rapid repair, partnering with industry and businesses in the private sector.

At the end of the day, the damage to undersea infrastructure in international waters and within the exclusive economic zones of nations is a violation of international law. Nations have a responsibility to enforce the law, including those nations whose flags are flying on these shadow fleet vessels.

This seems to be a perfect case for cooperation between the European Union and NATO.

EUMAM ST-C UPDATE

by Major General Olaf Rohde

Photo: ST-C

Major General Olaf Rohde is serving as Commander of the Army Training Command in Leipzig and has been in command of the MN ST-C in Strausberg since 21 November 2024.

The Multinational Special Training Command (MN ST-C) of the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA) was established on 15 November 2022. Since then, the ST-C has been responsible for coordinating the training of Ukrainian forces in Germany under EU mandate. In a recent interview conducted by ST-C personnel, Major General Olaf Rohde, currently serving as Commander of the ST-C, looks back on the past few years:

Q: General, the Multinational Special Training Command (MN ST-C) of the EUMAM UA mission in Strausberg is celebrating its third anniversary this November. How would you summarise the past three years?

Over the past three years, the efforts and hard work of all personnel serving at the MN ST-C have ensured thorough and high-quality training for Ukrainian personnel, which has helped the country to improve its sustainability and defence capability in the face of the Russian attack. We are proud of this achievement, and I would like to thank all those who have contributed or are currently contributing to this and those who will do so in the future.

In total, EUMAM UA has trained approximately 80,000 Ukrainian military personnel until August 2025 – over 21,000 of them under the command of the MN ST-C. In Germany alone, we have conducted over 620 training courses to accommodate the various requirements of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The training requested covered a wide range of competencies, ranging from classic land warfare, special training for naval forces, training of IT operators to training for entire brigade and corps staffs. All parts of our Armed Forces are involved in the training courses offered to Ukraine and contribute their expertise. Thus, I can say that the MN ST-C has really proved its worth as a hub for coordinating the training of Ukrainian forces in Germany under the EU mandate. The efforts made by more than 20 European nations involved in the EUMAM UA mission – many of which are represented here at the MN ST-C – are clear proof of the successful European attempt to defend our common values.

Q: As you have just mentioned, the ST-C is multinational. What is your experience of cooperation between the participating nations under EU mandate?

This cooperation is excellent and provides the basis for the strength and success of the mission. Every participating nation contributes in its own way and provides capabilities and knowledge we can rely on. The large number of participating EU nations makes it perfectly clear that we have formed an alliance of solidarity to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces in their defence against the Russian aggressor. My overall conclusion is that multi-nationality works excellently at the ST-C; united by our common goal, we rise to any challenges occurring in our daily interaction – such as language

barriers – and continuously improve our cooperation. This is something we can build on.

Q: In your opinion, what makes the training of Ukrainian military personnel so special?

Our participation in the training of our Ukrainian comrades is an active and targeted contribution to the defence of our values and of Europe, which makes it very special. When it comes to the actual conduct of the training, the most notable feature is the large variety of requirements. The EUMAM UA mission provides training sessions for small groups of people and brigade-size or larger units alike. At the same time, the staff process needs to focus on thoughtful long-term planning while ensuring that we retain the required flexibility. As I have mentioned earlier, the Ukrainian Armed Forces request several different military training courses – based directly on the requirements they identify during the war in Ukraine. This requires us to be somewhat flexible because not all developments are easily foreseeable. As soon as the Ukrainian Armed Forces express a requirement, we begin to examine how we can meet this requirement. Various questions must be answered in this context: Who can conduct the training? What training objective is to be achieved in what time frame? Where will the training be conducted? What resources are required? The coordination and organisation of these training activities may be best described as tailored to the mission. In close cooperation with our sister command, the CAT-C in Zagan, Poland, we are continuously working to find a balance between all variables – requirements, qualified instructors, ideal training conditions, associated logistics, etc. – expeditiously. Every day, we dedicate ourselves to this mission to provide the Ukrainians with the training they require to defend themselves more effectively. Whether this involves training for command personnel, specialised training or basic recruit training is of secondary importance.

Photo: Shutterstock

Drone training

Q: Some of the personnel being trained in Germany are battle-hardened and have been serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces for years. To what extent can the nations conducting the training benefit from the experience gained in Ukraine?

Of course, we have lively discussions with our Ukrainian comrades about their experiences in Ukraine, because they know very well how the Russian Armed Forces fight. Based on this information, we can assess what we need to do, adjust our training courses and continuously develop our own skills. Some examples of this are the effective use of drones for reconnaissance purposes and proper maintenance of equipment on the battlefield. To sum it up, our partnership with Ukraine has the common goal of increasing Ukraine's resilience. We are aware that effective training modules must be guided by the reality we see in Ukraine. A continuous exchange of information is thus vital. In addition, our collaboration with the Ukrainians provides us with the opportunity to gain valuable insights that will help us to improve our own Armed Forces.

Q: Before we conclude this interview, can you tell us what you think the future will look like? Which goals would you like to achieve with the ST-C?

What exactly the future support for Ukraine will look like depends on the developments in Ukraine and the mandate of the mission. Within the scope of our mission, we will continue to do everything we can to maintain and sustainably improve Ukraine's defence capability. Ukraine still has a right to defend its territory against the attack. It is up to us to keep supporting it in the best possible way. So far, EUMAM UA has been living proof that we, the states of the European Union, are able to react quickly and appropriately to crises affecting our freedom. The multinational effort put into this mission is a clear sign of solidarity.

NEWS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE

CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE VISITED UKRAINE

On July 25, a delegation from the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) visited Ukraine. The delegation met with Ukrainian Defence Minister Denys Shmyhal, as well as Deputy Heads of the Office of the President, Ihor Zhovkva and Pavlo Palisa.

Discussions focused on security challenges, priority areas for the EU/Ukraine cooperation in the defence sector and the priorities for Ukrainian forces. Ihor Zhovkva expressed gratitude for the military support provided by the European Union and its Member States and reaffirmed Ukraine's readiness to strengthen cooperation under the new SAFE instrument to address the Defence Forces' most critical requirements.

Photo: UAF

The meeting with Ukraine's Defence Minister included an overview of the current operational situation, strategies to enhance Ukraine's defence capabilities, and the training provided by EUMAM. While options for expanding EUMAM were explored, key battlefield needs were also addressed, highlighting the EU's enduring support and solidarity with Ukraine on the path to lasting peace.

This engagement follows on from the European Parliament's resolution of July 9, 2025, which condemns Russia's ongoing war crimes in Ukraine and expresses unwavering support for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The resolution also emphasises the EU's dedication to providing continued military, financial, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE VISITED DENMARK TO ATTEND THE INFORMAL FAC 28 - 30 AUGUST 2025

Photo: DK Press

As part of the Danish EU presidency, together with the EEAS, Denmark organised an informal Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Denmark. This was an informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers and an informal meeting of defence ministers. These informal meetings take place once every six months.

Leaders of the defence ministries emphasised support for Ukraine, increasing EU defence readiness, and the role of missions and EU operations in relevant crisis scenarios.

The FAC meeting demonstrates the EU's determination to support Ukraine in defence matters while also working to strengthen European defence capabilities. An important aspect will be aligning approaches to future missions and integrating joint defence planning within Denmark's presidency of the Council of the EU in 2025.

Photo: DK Press

CHAIR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE VISITED ITALY OPERATION EUNAVFOR MED IRINI

Photo: EUNAVFORMED Op Irini

The CEUMC and a small delegation visited Italy in September to engage with senior Italian defence officials and attend the Change of Command ceremony for Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. This visit underscored the EU's unwavering commitment to enhancing defence cooperation and operational readiness in the Mediterranean region.

Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto

General Clancy met with **Guido Crosetto**, Italy's Minister of Defence, to discuss strategic defence priorities within the EU framework. Minister Crosetto emphasised Italy's dedication to strengthening European defence capabilities and highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing emerging security challenges. The discussions focused on enhancing interoperability among EU member states and reinforcing the EU's strategic autonomy. Both leaders reiterated the significance of the EU's contribution to initiatives complementary to those of NATO, aiming to bolster the European pillar of the Alliance.

General Luciano Portolano, Chief of the Defence Staff

At the Joint Operations Command (COVI) in Rome, General Clancy engaged with General Luciano Portolano, Chief of the Italian Defence Staff. The conversation centred on aligning Italy's defence strategies with EU objectives, particularly in ongoing Mediterranean and African operations. General Portolano reaffirmed Italy's commitment to EU-led missions and emphasized the importance of coordinated planning and resource allocation to address regional security challenges.

Operation Irini Change of Command Ceremony

General Clancy also attended the Change of Command ceremony for Operation IRINI at Centocelle Air Base. Rear Admiral Marco Casapieri assumed command from Rear Admiral Valentino Rinaldi, marking a moment of continuity and leadership for the EU naval operation. Launched in March 2020 under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Operation IRINI enforces the United Nations arms embargo on Libya, counters oil smuggling and human trafficking, enhances maritime situational awareness, and provides capacity-building and training to support Libyan maritime authorities.

Photo: Italian Army

Rear Admiral Rinaldi, in his farewell speech, reflected on the operation's achievements, noting its role as a trusted Maritime Security Provider in the Mediterranean. Rear Admiral Casapieri, taking command, emphasized the importance of continuity and dedication to the operation's EU mandate, ensuring it continues to support peace, stability, and respect for international law. The ceremony was attended by representatives from EU member states and Libyan authorities, highlighting the operation's strategic and diplomatic significance.

Photo: EUNAVFORMED Op Irini

This visit underscores the EU's ongoing efforts to strengthen military cooperation, operational readiness, and the European pillar of NATO, while promoting stability and peace in one of the Mediterranean's most strategically important regions.

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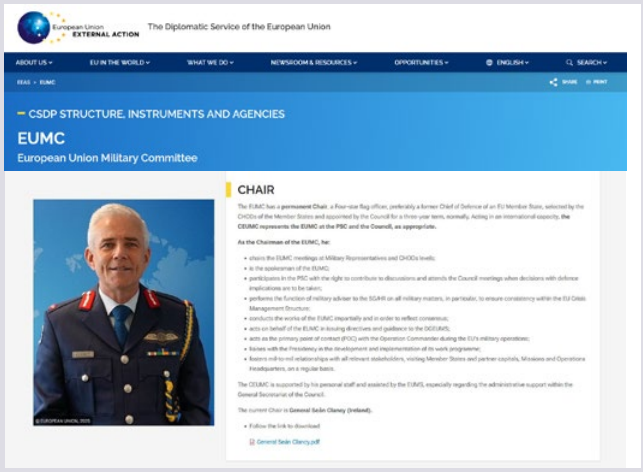

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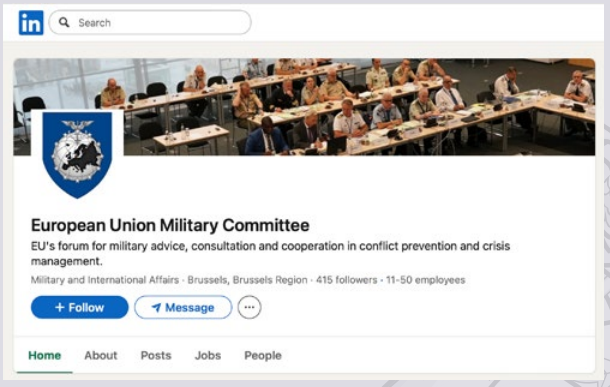

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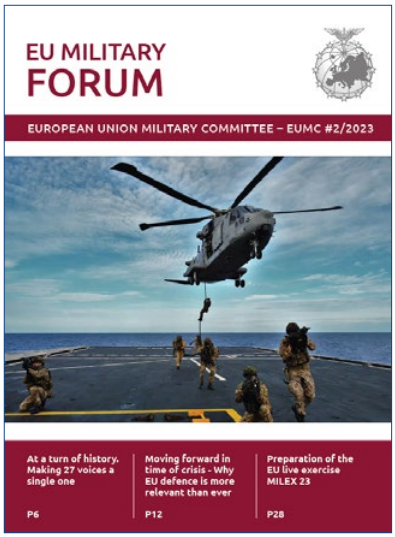

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