

# EU MILITARY FORUM



EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE – EUMC #2/2025



Photo: Michaela Braun

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

## DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS

After two years, my chairmanship of the EU Military Committee is coming to an end. Looking back, I am pleased to notice that we have achieved a lot! In particular, the exceptional military success of the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine, the implementation of Operation ASPIDES in the North-western Indian Ocean and the operationalization of the Strategic Compass by declaring the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity as fully operational.

At the same time, however, we must acknowledge that disruptive events and hybrid actions have steadily increased, as a result of which the security environment has become more volatile. Therefore, Europe needs to become faster, more flexible and more resilient in order to face tomorrow's threats. The approach must not be limited to strategic-conceptual and financial measures or considerations on capability deficits. Rather, it will be a matter of rethinking security and defence on the European continent in a holistic way – with partners and of course NATO. The two recently published EU documents – the “White Paper for European Defence” (including the “ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030”) and the “European Preparedness Union Strategy” to prevent and react to emerging threats and crises – now mark the path towards greater autonomy and deterrence of any aggressor.

This last edition of the Military Forum under my chairmanship will be divided into three sections.

First, we will address the new realities in our globalized world and the EU's response. Steven Everts, Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies, will reflect on *“Europe in danger: Navigating a future without Trump's America”*. Colonel Matthieu Pratt (Chairman's Cabinet) will follow on with *“Military-strategic considerations on European Defence Readiness 2030”* to underline the military implications of the EU's new strategic direction.

The second section emphasizes the role and importance of the EU Military Committee from three different angles. First, the Austrian Ambassador to the EU's Political and Security Committee, Martin Hojni, will share his thoughts on *“The valuable advice of the EU Military Committee in the decision-making process of the Political Security Committee”*. Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone, the current Chair of the NATO Military Committee, will then address *“The role of the Chair in EU-NATO cooperation amid disruptive changes in the security landscape”*. Finally, Colonel Jacek Czubak will share insights from the Polish Presidency of the Council on the topic: *“The role of the EUMC in a fast changing environment. Is it the time for change? Polish view from Presidency 2025”*.

In the third section, we take stock of some achievements during my tenure: Initially, my Director of the Cabinet, Major General Johann Frank, will illustrate *“The role and impact of the EU Military Committee (EUMC) from 2022 to 2025”*. Subsequently, Admiral Alberto Rutteri



**General Robert Brieger**  
Chairman of  
the EU Military Committee

and Colonel Franck Scher (both from the Chairman's Cabinet) will take a look at the milestones of the EUMC Working Group and the Headline Task Force over the last three years. Colonel Daniel Vazquez del Pozo (Chairman's Cabinet) will conclude this section with *“Observations on EU military missions and operations”* during the last years.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your interest in our topics and the EU Military Forum. Keep us in good memory and stay connected.

**Enjoy reading our magazine –  
we look forward to serving you  
across different channels in the  
future!**

Yours,  
General Robert Brieger

# EUROPE IN DANGER: NAVIGATING A FUTURE WITHOUT TRUMP'S AMERICA

by Steven Everts



## **Dr. Steven Everts**

(Netherlands)

is the Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies. Before heading the Institute, he was at the European External Action Service where he served as Senior Advisor to Josep Borrell on Strategy and Communications. Previously, he was a Senior Advisor in the Asia-Pacific Department of the EEAS. He was also a Member of the Cabinet of Catherine Ashton and Javier Solana.

Since his inauguration, Donald Trump has unleashed a torrent of initiatives, threats and decisions upon the world. Each day brings a new target and another broken taboo. Last autumn, discussions focused on how to 'Trump-proof' the transatlantic relationship. Plans were in place to counter his threats – whether imposing tariffs on European trade or linking America's NATO commitments to increased European defence spending, preferably on US-made weapons.

But what we are seeing now is more radical and more damaging. There is something akin to a 'cultural revolution' underway, characterised by ideological extremism, the silencing of internal critics and the imperative of loyalty to the leader. In six short weeks, Trump and his team have threatened to seize European territory, abandoned Ukraine while bullying its president, aligned with Europe's far right, and attacked the EU's regulatory autonomy in the tech sphere.

Shockwaves are reverberating across Europe, triggering a flurry of crisis meetings in different configurations as leaders scramble to respond. Meanwhile, European public opinion is ahead of its politicians. Trust in the US among Germans has plummeted from 84% to just 16%, only slightly above Russia's 6%. Strikingly, support for Europe's populists is waning, suggesting a recognition among voters that the Trump tornado is harmful to European interests.

## **WHAT TO DO?**

Rather than obsessing over the latest events in Washington, Europe must focus on itself and above all on investing in its own strength. The 'to do' list is long, but three things stand out: Ukraine, European defence and the EU's global posture.

## **UKRAINE: THE PATH TO A JUST PEACE**

With massive uncertainty surrounding American military aid and intelligence support, Europe must step up to fill the void as HR/VP Kaja Kallas has urged. Ukraine's most urgent needs are known: air defence to shield cities and infrastructure from relentless Russian bombardment; satellite communications to reduce dependence on American-controlled assets like Starlink; long-range missiles to target Russian supply lines; and military training programmes, ideally conducted inside the country.

European options exist for each of these, but they need scaling up – immediately. Supporting Ukraine is not only strategically necessary but also a feasible goal. Annual US military support to Ukraine was around \$ 17 billion; spread out over 450 million Europeans this means €40 per person per year – an affordable sum.

## MOSCOW'S GOAL REMAINS UKRAINE'S SUBJUGATION, NOT PEACE

Yes, some form of negotiations are underway. But we should be clear that Moscow's goal remains Ukraine's subjugation, not peace. Without robust enforcement mechanisms, any hastily brokered ceasefire will simply pave the way for renewed aggression. We must also keep in mind that economic and other pressures are also mounting on the Russian side. That is why Europe must support Ukraine in resisting a 'quick and dirty' deal that freezes the conflict in a way that benefits the Kremlin for example by forcing 'neutrality' on Ukraine or limiting the size of its armed forces. Instead, the focus should be on using every available tool – economic, military, and diplomatic – to ensure Ukraine's survival as a democratic and sovereign state.

One necessary step now is to seize (part of) Russia's frozen assets (worth around €200 billion in Europe) and hand them over to Ukraine. This should come with one clear condition: the money should only be spent inside Ukraine (for weapons or reconstruction) or in the rest of Europe.

## EUROPEAN DEFENCE: TIME TO LEAP FORWARD

The urgent question now is: how to build deterrence with significantly reduced American involvement?

On the financial front, large sums are now being mobilised, with unprecedented increases in Germany, Denmark and elsewhere. The European Commission's new initiatives, including the Re-Arm Eu-

rope proposal, mark a clear shift toward collective military investment.

But spending alone is not enough. Europe must demonstrate that spending at EU level is also better spending. This requires a sharp focus on flagship projects that no single country can acquire alone: integrated air defence (such as the Sky Shield initiative), satellite networks and next-generation drones.

## EUROPE MUST DEMONSTRATE THAT SPENDING AT EU LEVEL IS ALSO BETTER SPENDING

Beyond hardware, we also need to address issues of structures and training. A robust European defence cannot be built without the UK, or Norway. Similarly, with the US cancelling its participation in some NATO exercises planned for 2026, Europe must organise its own alternatives.

Moreover, deterrence requires more than military preparedness. Russia is already waging a shadow war against Europe – through cyberattacks, sabotage and disinformation. The EU must raise the costs of such actions, whether via proactive cyber defence, tougher economic sanctions, or counterintelligence operations.

## EUROPE AND THE WIDER WORLD: A STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA


America First is morphing into America Alone. For its part, Europe is under pressure but it is not alone. Many countries

share Europe's alarm over Trump's coercion, unpredictability and aggressive unilateralism. They seek new anchors of stability. This presents opportunities for Europe to expand its global partnerships – to gain access to the things we need (energy, critical raw materials) but also respond to partners' priorities.

It is striking that the Mercosur agreement was finally concluded after 20 years of talks, just when Trump was entering the White House. When he threatened Mexico with 25% tariffs, they turned to Brussels, seeking to finalise the upgrade of the EU-Mexico agreement. President von der Leyen was right to take the whole Commission to India to give that long under-performing relationship a push. Upcoming summits with the African Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are other opportunities to advance this diversification agenda.

## EUROPE IS UNDER PRESSURE BUT IT IS NOT ALONE

Some in Europe suggest that Trump's madness means that Europe should now pursue a 'China option'. This is a dangerous idea. It is not because our relative distance to the US has increased that our absolute distance to Beijing has decreased. The obstacles to better relations with China – overcapacities, economic coercion, human rights – are still there.

Europe has long talked about becoming a geopolitical actor, speaking the language of power, and taking responsibility for its own defence. Results have often fallen short. But Trump is leaving us no choice. Only one thing matters now: investing in our strength. For only the strong can remain free. 

# MILITARY-STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS ON EUROPEAN DEFENCE READINESS 2030

by Matthieu Pratt



**Colonel  
Matthieu Pratt**

(French Army)

is recently the Head of the Policy Cell in the Cabinet of the Chairman of the EU Military Committee. In his previous assignments, he gathered profound experience on all military levels, with a clear operational focus in international environments. From 2020 until 2022 he was the Commanding Officer of the 152<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment.

Europe's security, and consequently the EU Military Committee (EUMC), have been confronted in the last three years with nothing less than a paradigm change facing a conventional war in Ukraine (UA), hybrid attacks against Member States (MS'), crises in the wider strategic areas of European interest, as well as with the consequences of the new US administrations decisions.

The military threat posed by Russia's consistent and enduring intent to contest EU's interests will potentially lead to an increase in the spectrum of clashes with this country, spanning from current hybrid operations through potential small scale, regional conflicts to a potentially large scale war of aggression. In this regard Russia should be considered as a genuine threat in European defence planning. Considering also overall fundamental paradigm changes, including the global technology race and the competition for critical raw materials, strengthening the European preparedness, readiness and defence capabilities for all military contingencies is vital and time-critical. From a military perspective the core challenge is to balancing the short-term military support to UA with the necessity to re-constitute and adapt combat-ready EU MS' defence forces and larger formations as quickly as possible.

Considering the accelerating US pivot towards the Indo-Pacific area, and

repeated calls for fairer burden sharing within NATO, the EU cannot take the US contribution to the European security for granted. Even though NATO remains the cornerstone of deterrence and Collective Defence, Europe has to substantially step up its own capabilities in order to take care of its own security and defence. At the same time the EU must remain a capable and reliable security and defence actor with a 360° orientation. Hence, military capabilities of the EU MS' must be useable across the full spectrum of engagement and contribute to the deterrence and territorial defence of Europe and crises management likewise. Strengthening military capabilities of EU MS' also strengthens NATO. At the same time it contributes to an effective and sustainable military support to UA. It also facilitates the projection of stability through military contributions to crisis management into the EU's strategic areas of interest.

In this context, three key documents have recently paved the EU way to address these challenges:

First, the White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030 lays down the EU Commission's political vision for a "true European defence union" in which EU countries will remain in the driving seat for defence whilst benefitting from the added value offered by the EU. It intends to offer solutions to strengthen

the defence industry by closing important gaps (such as Air Defence or Space Capabilities) and ensuring long-term readiness. It also suggests ways for MS' to invest heavily in defence, buy necessary equipment and support the industry's growth over time. The White Paper outlines three key areas of action:

- closing capability gaps and supporting the European defence industry,
- deepening the single defence market and
- enhancing European readiness for worst-case scenarios.

Second, the ReArm Europe Plan/ Readiness 2030 is the vehicle to implement the boost in defence funding by giving EU countries more financial flexibility.

And third, the European Preparedness Union Strategy shall further implement "improve central and cross-sectoral crisis response coordination and capability" by strengthening EU's foresight and anticipation functions, crisis management structures (Emergency Response Coordination Centre as operational crisis coordination hub) and mechanism as well as to operationalise the Mutual Assistance Clause (Art 42.7 TEU). However, there is no reference at all to military preparedness and the military role apart from the enhanced role of EU Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) and the need for better civil-military cooperation through preparedness arrangements, dual use planning, investments, standards and exercises.

These key documents have laid down political vision or policy guidance, in the remit of the competences of the related editors; leaving therefore somehow out the military perspective because defence is still a MS' competence, but triggering some strategic deductions and reflexions to reflect in the military domain.

Considering this momentum, the Chairman of the EU military Committee (CEUMC) has engaged the EUMC in a series of workshops and informal working sessions to develop incrementally a mili-

tary strategic view on European Defence. The purpose is to generate considerations to inform, inspire or initiate discussions, which may lead to a common military understanding, at EU Chiefs of Defence (CHOD) level, on European Defence that shall serve as a basis for the respective political-military interaction.

Therefore, beyond solicited military expertise, the CEUMC initiative seeks to anticipate and identify, with wider military and EU CHODs perspectives, further relevant topics to be addressed to boost and tailor EU institutions as part of the collective effort to frame European Defence. This is even more important ahead of the first European Council dedicated solely to Security and Defence in June 2025.


In its responsibility to provide military end-users perspective, the EUMC considers important to raise military aspects that underpin the wider themes of capability requirement, governance, strategic partnerships and strategic autonomy. Some of the key aspects that have already been discussed and captured as recommendations in the "European Defence Readiness 2030 - Military-strategic considerations" are the following:

- The progressive framing of Common Defence requires the further development of an EU strategic culture, both within the EU institutions and among MS'.
- The development of practical scenarios (and related exercises) taking into account the implementation of Article 42(7) EU Treaty with the simultaneous activation of Article 222 EU Treaty and NATO Article 5.
- This option-based operationalisation of the treaties needs to result in conclusions on capability requirements:
  - for a possible EU Command Structure and
  - to ensure the highest possible complementarity between NATO and the EU but also a capability assessment of non-necessary du-

plications, necessary duplications, and useful redundancies.

- Regarding capabilities, in a two-track approach, the EU should pragmatically and continuously support the fulfilment of MS' national and international capability objectives by including contributions to the territorial defence in the EU capability planning process. For the longer term, the EU should start a planning process to define its own needs for territorial defence, based on a new political guidance.
- The EUMC, as the highest military body established within the Council and supported by the EU Military Staff, must be enabled to provide Military Advice on all military matters to all relevant existing and future bodies that are part of the decision-making structure on EU defence
- This includes a comprehensive recommendation for an adapted military Command and Control structure from the political level down to the tactical level, building on existing capabilities, considering NATO and EU civilian interfaces in support of the EU military-strategic decision-making process.

At the end of the day, as the EU steps up at a new level to support MS' defence planning, coherent continuity and sustainability along the whole cycle (from the threat analysis to the military end-user, through capability development, funding, and defence industry policy), remains an efficiency imperative, owed to EU citizens' security.

In this endeavour, clarity of roles and responsibilities, between NATO and EU and inside the EU between MS' in the driver's seat and EU institutions/agencies, as well as the related clear delineation of these responsibilities in Defense governance are key. Defence is a specific system that must remain coherent so that the EU military end-users always prevail in combat. 



# THE VALUABLE ADVICE OF THE EU MILITARY COMMITTEE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF THE POLITICAL SECURITY COMMITTEE

by Martin Hojni



## **Ambassador Martin Hojni**

(Austria)

has served as the Representative of Austria to the Political and Security Committee of the EU since January 2022. Previous functions in the Austrian Foreign Ministry included i.a. Deputy Head of Policy Planning and Deputy Head of office of the State Secretary for European Affairs. He held diplomatic functions at the Austrian Permanent Representation to the EU, the Austrian Delegation to the OSCE, the Austrian Embassies in Prague, Luxembourg and Mexico-City.

**From the outbreak of Russia's unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, to the ongoing crisis in the Red Sea, the shift of the USA attention to the Indo-Pacific as well as the current need to boost Europe's defence capabilities: the international order is undergoing deep and fundamental changes which has a decisive impact on European security and defence. In these times the sound military expertise provided by the EU Military Committee (EUMC) has proven to be of immense value to the decision-making in the Political Security Committee (PSC).**

## **THE MILITARY COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The EUMC is the highest military body within the Council's decision-making structure. It is tasked with advising the EU's political and security leadership on military matters, ensuring that the Union's defense and security policies are underpinned by sound military expertise. Comprised of the Chiefs of Defense of all EU member states, who are regularly represented by their permanent military representatives, it serves as a central hub for military strategic thinking in Brussels. Its work spans a wide range of areas, among others the development of the military part of crisis management concepts, risk assessment of potential crises as well as the EU's military relationship with candidates for EU accession and other states and organizations, such as NATO. In addition, the EUMC monitors the proper execution of EU military missions and operations, without being part of the operational chain of command. In order

to cover these vast topics, the EUMC is supported by two Working Groups: The "EUMC Working Group" (EUMC WG) discusses policy, strategy as well as conceptual, operational and exercise matters. Furthermore, the experts in the "EUMC Working Group – Headline Goal Task Force" (EUMCWG/HTF) support the work of the EUMC in questions related to capability development, defence planning and technical requirement. Building on the work of its two Working Groups and based on consensus, the EUMC gives military advice and makes recommendations to the PSC, while also providing direction to the dedicated European Union Military Staff (EUMS).

As the PSC is tasked to provide overall guidance on matters falling within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the PSC regularly invites the EUMC to offer military advice on relevant topics. The EUMC has always provided timely, accurate, and highly valuable military advice, ensuring that the political decision-making is aligned with the military realities on the ground. Therefore,





Photo: flickr.com/ Amio Cajander

it is vital for shaping the military aspects of the CSDP. In this context, I would like to highlight three key achievements over the last three years:

Firstly, I would like to underline the EUMC's highly appreciated contribution to the successful implementation of the Military Advisory Mission for Ukraine (EU-MAM Ukraine), which has demonstrated the EU's unwavering support to Ukraine and by now has provided training for over 73.000 Ukrainian soldiers.

Secondly, the establishment of EU-NAVFOR Aspides was crucial in order to safeguard free passage for international merchant ships via the Red Sea. Here again, the cooperation with and the expert input of EUMC was indispensable to assure a smooth launch and sustainable functioning of this naval operation. By now, over 700 vessels have already benefited from support provided by Aspides.

Thirdly, the EUMC has contributed to the successful implementation of the military deliverables of the Strategic Compass, especially reaching the Full Operational Capability of the Rapid

Deployment Capacity in 2025. It will allow to swiftly deploy a modular force of up to 5.000 troops, including land, air and maritime components, as well as strategic enablers. This improves the ability of the Union to respond to imminent threats or quickly react to a crisis situation outside of the EU at all stages of the conflict cycle.

While making political decisions regarding the three above mentioned CSDP's key engagements, the PSC has always paid close attention to the military advice and listened carefully to the assessment provided by the Chairman during our respective discussions.

### **THE WORK OF THE EUMC'S CHAIRMAN, GENERAL ROBERT BRIEGER**

As General Brieger prepares to step down from his role as the Chairman of the EUMC, I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude for his

work. As permanent Chairman of the EUMC, which is elected for three years, he has represented the EUMC at the PSC and the Council and has served as a military adviser to EEAS hierarchy. He has acted as the primary point of contact for the Operation Commanders of EU military operations and has advised the respective political decision making. General Brieger's personal leadership in the EUMC was defined by his unwavering impartiality as an honest broker, which contributed to efficient and quality decision-making within the EUMC. The Chairman has always presented a straight-forward military assessment during our discussions, considering both risks and opportunities for the Union's interests. In doing so, he made sure that the EUMC provided exactly what was needed to facilitate steadfast political decision-making in the PSC. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Chairman's team, which ensured that the EUMC serves as a central hub for military strategic thinking in Brussels.



# THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR IN EU-NATO COOPERATION AMID DISRUPTIVE CHANGES IN THE SECURITY LANDSCAPE

by Giuseppe Cavo Dragone



## Admiral

### Giuseppe Cavo Dragone

(Italian Navy)

is the Chair of NATO's Military Committee since 17 Jan 2025. In his function, he is the senior military officer and the senior military spokesperson for the Alliance on all military matters.

**Forewords:** Many thanks to my counterpart, colleague and friend Robert, General Brieger, Chairman of the EU Military Committee, for inviting me to provide a personal contribution to this edition of the EU Military Forum. I know this quarterly magazine very well. Since its first release, it has provided a high quality of articles. I strongly believe in the topic's relevance, particularly in terms of today's compelling need for enhanced sharing and cooperation, among NATO and EU. I hope you enjoy my thoughts on the matter. Happy reading!

## INTRODUCTION: COHESION, COORDINATION, AND COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

The European and transatlantic security landscape is shifting at an unprecedented rate. We all know this too well. Large-scale war has returned to European soil, hybrid threats designed to destabilize are multiplying, and new domains or dimensions of conflict—cyber, space, and information—are challenging traditional defence and deterrence frameworks. These disruptions demand not just stronger cooperation but smarter, more agile coordination between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU).

As Chair of the NATO Military Committee, my role is that of a facilitator—bringing together military representatives to foster unity and provide clear, unfettered military advice to political decision-makers. In this, I share a common responsibility with General Brieger, my friend Robert. Though we sit at different tables, our

perspectives align in one fundamental belief: cohesion among member states is the cornerstone of our organizations. A cohesion now under greater pressure, like rarely before.

To address these challenges, I would like to emphasize three core principles that directly impact our day-to-day work:

- **Cohesion as our most valuable asset**—NATO and the EU must continue to stand together, resisting disruptive narratives and external attempts to divide them.
- **Efficient and complementary NATO-EU cooperation**—Strategic initiatives should be pursued in a way that respects and builds upon each organization's strengths, in line with agreed political frameworks.
- **A whole-of-society approach to security**—The DIME framework (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic) is more relevant than ever in integrating all instruments of power to defend our shared values.



## COHESION UNDER PRESSURE: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

We live in an era where the global security environment is more unpredictable than ever. By the time this article is published, new uncertainties may emerge, or past dilemmas may have found solutions. Yet one constant remains: our need for unity and resilience, grounded in shared principles and common purpose.

Cohesion is NATO and the EU's greatest strength, but it is often tested by internal different points of view, and constantly by external pressures. Some of the key challenges include:

- **Disruptive Narratives and Disinformation**—Adversaries seek to exploit differences in perception to fracture public opinion and political resolve.
- **Competing Priorities and Political Fragmentation**—National interests can sometimes hinder consensus-building.
- **Economic Pressures and Defence Investments**—Sustaining defence spending and capability development is challenging in times of financial strain, whilst ensuring coherence and complementarity.
- **Emerging Technologies and Security Gaps**—State and non-state actors exploit disruptive technologies, such as cyber warfare and artificial intelligence, necessitating deeper cooperation in these domains.

To tackle these challenges, I intend to continue fostering the maximum cohesion within the Military Committee. Externally, I will actively engage with partners, industry leaders, think tanks, and opinion leaders—those influential voices shaping public debate—to foster understanding, collaboration, and the reinforcement of common strategic trajectories.

Belgium, home to NATO and key EU institutions, provides the ideal setting for such engagement, facilitating discussions to identify challenges and develop solutions. As Belgian philosopher Philippe Van Parijs aptly stated, *“Collaboration is not the absence of conflict but the ability to work through it together.”* This embodies what NATO and the EU must achieve—unity, not despite our differences, but through leveraging them, especially in times of crisis.

## STRENGTHENING NATO-EU COOPERATION: GOING FURTHER, FASTER, TOGETHER

Many of the ideas I have outlined are already reflected in the recent NATO-EU Joint Declarations (2016, 2018, and 2023), which emphasize cooperation - *inter alia* - in countering hybrid and cyber threats, enhancing military mobility, and strengthening resilience in cyber and space.

Currently, NATO and the EU are advancing 74 joint projects, spanning unmanned systems, cyber defence, and space security. My goal is to ensure these efforts remain complementary, avoiding duplication and enhancing interoperability.

Among these initiatives, Military Mobility—the EU's flagship PESCO project—is of high strategic value for NATO. Together with the European Defence Fund (EDF), these efforts are improving infrastructure and reducing bureaucratic barriers, ensuring rapid force deployment across Europe.

In times of crisis, my responsibility is to ensure NATO's military advice is clear, actionable, and strategically aligned. This extends to NATO-EU interactions, ensuring our responses remain coherent and decisive.

Since the early stages of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NATO and the

EU have swiftly coordinated military aid, sanctions, and humanitarian support. The NATO Military Committee played a pivotal role in ensuring that military recommendations were aligned with broader strategic objectives while complementing EU initiatives.

Crises do not create cohesion; they reveal it. And today, we recognize more than ever that cohesion within NATO, the EU, and between them is fundamental—not only to counter current threats but to better prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

## DIME: A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH TO SECURITY

One point must remain absolutely clear: security has never been solely a military responsibility, and today more than ever, a whole-of-society approach is essential. This requires integrating:

- **Diplomatic efforts** to prevent conflicts and provide forums for discussion.
- **Information campaigns** to anticipate threats and counter disinformation.
- **Military preparedness** to deter and defend.
- **Economic stability** as a foundation for resilience.

This comprehensive approach is the only way to safeguard our values and way of life. As Robert Schuman, one of the architects of the EU, noted, *“World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it.”*

Indeed, security today demands precisely that—creative, determined, and united efforts. Civil society must be prepared to secure digital infrastructures, ensure economic stability, and counter disinformation. Security is no longer just about armies; it is about a whole of society resilience, unity, and shared responsibility.



## CONCLUSION: THE DILEMMA OF HISTORY—WHAT WILL WE CHOOSE THIS TIME?

History is filled with security dilemmas that remain as relevant today as they were centuries ago. How much deterrence is enough to prevent war? How do we balance sovereignty with collective defence? Can democracies remain strong without becoming what they stand against?

If history teaches us anything, it is that we often fail to learn from it—or at least, not enough. The echoes of past conflicts remind us that divisions are exploited, complacency is punished, and peace is never guaranteed. It is maintained only through effort and will.

Today, we stand at another pivotal moment, facing forces that seek to divide us, weaken our institutions, and test our resolve. But history is not written by fate—it is shaped by the choices we make. NATO and the EU, working together, can ensure that those choices lead us toward strength, unity, and security.

As we confront old dilemmas in a new era, the question remains, especially for those who are in a position of responsibility: **will we act before history repeats itself, or will we wait until we are forced to relearn its harshest lessons?**


We must stay strong. Jointly.  
Because alone we may go faster, but together we will go further. 



Photo: [www.flickr.com/photos/nato/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nato/)

### Allied Reaction Force (ARF) trains in Romania

Greek army soldiers prepare to assault a building while taking part in close-quarters combat drills during exercise Steadfast Dart 2025 in Romania.



Photo: [www.flickr.com/photos/nato/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nato/)

NATO Allies conduct submarine rescue operations in exercise Dynamic Monarch 24 – Swedish submarine rescue ship HSwMS Belos prepares to take part in exercise Dynamic Monarch 24.



Photo: [www.flickr.com/photos/nato/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nato/)

US trains with other NATO Allies and partners in exercise Saber Junction 2023  
A French Army soldier provides security in Hohenfels, Germany.

# THE ROLE OF THE EUMC IN FAST CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

## IS IT THE TIME FOR CHANGE? POLISH VIEW FROM PRESIDENCY 2025

by Jacek Czubak

In January 2001, the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) was established. Its main role was to be a preparatory body of the Council and to provide military advice and recommendations to the Political and Security Committee. All that took place in a completely different geopolitical situation, where the majority believed in "The End of History and the Last Man" of Francis Fukuyama: end of the Cold War, spreading of Western liberal democracy standards, free market and global cooperation, would define our reality forever. Unfortunately, over two decades later the world is entirely different. Nowadays, Europe is facing a deteriorating global situation: violence and conflicts in North Africa and the Middle East, tensions in the Western Balkans, hybrid activities in the Baltic Sea and the consequences of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and the need to strengthen its own defence potential. We are witnessing rising geopolitical tensions, the erosion of the rules-based international order and hybrid attacks against European democracy, and the weakening of alliances and partnerships. It is European reality today; that is our world.

Therefore, alongside with the EU must adapt EUMC and do it fast, before it is too late. Endless delay in difficult decisions is not an option any more – Adapt

or Die!! However, the question HOW the adaptation may occur is still open.

### STRATEGIC MILITARY ADVICE

In the light of the ongoing implementation of "Joint White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030" (JWP) and "Preparedness Union Strategy" (PUS) the **EUMC has a significant role in providing military knowledge, expertise and experiences within Military Advice and how optimally use the Military Instrument of Power within the EU integrated approach for conducting Multidomain Operations.** Therefore, the EUMC must provide timely and relevant information and unfettered advice for political leaders to ensure its military credibility, visibility, and transparency within processes.

### EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

The EUMC, being the EU's highest military body, should also fulfil an educational role. This is especially important in the context of countering a wide spectrum of threats, from hybrid to armed aggressions. We have to be ready to face all the most extreme contingencies, and education has a special place in these preparations.



#### Colonel

#### Jacek Czubak

(Polish Armed Forces)

is Head of the EU Operations Division - Deputy Polish Military Representative. In previous assignments he gained experience at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. He was involved in the operational planning process, preparation of Polish military contingents and PL EUBG. At strategic level, in ACT and General Staff, he was responsible for coordination NATO Defense Planning Process and EU capability development in the Polish Armed Forces. He served two tours in Iraq.

1 Based on "Origin of Species." by Charles Darwin: "... It is not the most intellectual of the species that survives; it is not the strongest that survives; but the species that survives is the one that is able to adapt to and to adjust best to the changing environment in which it finds itself ...".



Photo: Polish Armed Forces

## ROLES AND TASKS

The activation of the deputy chairman position is a positive example of the EUMC's adaptation within an existing legal frame. It allows for a better response to the growing activity in the area of security and defence. Today, in an era of global unrest and competition, we need to consider the new role of the EUMC in such a rapidly changing environment. Therefore, parallel to the above work, it would be necessary to analyse whether the current legal framework is adequate for our reality. Does it allow us to act effectively, freely and quickly? Furthermore, what should be the place of the EUMC in the current security situation, and its structure? **The EUMC has the right to take the initiative and provide military advice if it deems appropriate;** this would help to draw attention to emerging threats and crisis situations, speed up consultation processes and decision-making in specific situations

as a part of an integrated approach. The right should be used more often.

## ADVOCACY FOR MILITARY END-USER

The above mentioned JWP and PUS set out a wide range of tasks to be implemented, which, from a military perspective, will fill the fundamental gaps in defence capabilities, rebuild ammunition stocks, purchase the necessary equipment and weapons and continue support for Ukraine in the short term. In the medium and long term, however, the focus will be on developing priority capabilities identified by the EU and NATO while developing the European industrial and technological base. These tasks cannot be implemented without the participation of the military side - as the end user. The EUMC must define requirements, set priorities, supervise the process of developing capabilities, and ultimately

decide on their use. This can only be done in tight cooperation with the European Union Military Staff, the European Defence Agency and EU Member States.

## INFLUENCING THE ENVIRONMENT

The implementation of JWP and PUS is very important and will require a comprehensive approach, the involvement of many EU and national institutions and rapid actions. Time is a critical factor today. In order to meet this, the pace of work must also be high, which is why **the EUMC must keep up with fast-changing challenges to support and influence political leaders.**

## WORKING CULTURE CHANGE

Foreign and Defence Ministers meet face to face in different formats almost





Photo: Polish Armed Forces

monthly, while the Chiefs of Defence (CHOD) twice a year. Undeniably, the EUMC meets weekly in the format of Military Representatives. However, in such a dynamic world, should not the CHODs meet more often to talk to each other directly? Why should not we extend the time of the CHOD meetings and allow them for a more complimentary exchange of ideas? Maybe we should add a meeting in January, as in May, together with NATO. Introducing the VTC format to the CHOD meetings could increase the EUMC's responsiveness. After applying these proposals, the CHODs could meet face to face three times a year, twice in Brussels in January and May and a third time in October in a place chosen by the Presidency. Furthermore, through the VTC, the CHODs could meet regularly, for example, in March, July and November, or ad hoc, if necessary. Another option might be combined meetings of Minis-

ters with CHODs and/or PSC with EUMC in the MILREP format. It could shorten decision-making time, especially when time is critical, and minimise the possibility of misunderstanding.

### EU-NATO LINKAGE

The EUMC, in line with the decisions on cooperation with NATO, should launch an initiative to deepen it. One of the first steps could be to try **to promote the culture of work in a classified environment in EU institutions**, which is a barrier hard to overcome. This could facilitate the exchange of classified information. It would also be worth considering organising Joint Military Committees – EU and NATO – in the MILREP and CHOD formats. It would increase communication and understanding for the mutual good, which is common security.

### INSTEAD OF SUMMARY

Adaptation is important, but adaptation is "an adjustment to different conditions or uses, or meeting different situations". It means that we are reactive, in other words, passive. **The current times do not allow for passivity. Europeans must use the current situation as a window of opportunity and regain initiative at political and military levels to ensure security and development.** It is our European chance, and the EUMC has a significant role in this task. It could be the most important one ever since the EUMC was established. **The omnipresent threats and vigilance should be used to shift the EU's posture to an active mode to create and shape our European security environment.** In this context, we should consider accelerating adaptations to meet the challenges. Are we ready for them? 

# THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF THE EU MILITARY COMMITTEE FROM 2022 – 2025

## ADDRESSING NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES WITHIN THE COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

by Johann Frank



### Major General

#### Dr. phil. Johann Frank

(Austrian Armed Forces)  
has been the Director of the Cabinet of the EU Military Committee during the Austrian Chairmanship from 2022 until 2025. Previously, he gathered experience in different international and national assignments with focus on military policy and academics amongst other as Austrian Defence Policy Director.

The period from 2022 to 2025 under the Austrian Chairmanship of General Robert Brieger has been a transformative time for the European Union's approach to security and defence. Amidst the return of conventional war to Europe, steadily intensifying global and regional geopolitical tensions, and emerging hybrid threats, the EU Military Committee has played a pivotal role in shaping the Union's military responses. As the highest military body within the EU Council structure, the EU Military Committee's (EUMC) strategic guidance and operational oversight has become increasingly critical in addressing the Union's security needs in a rapidly changing world. While there has been significant progress with regard to strengthening the military voice in EU policy making, the complex European "ecosystem" remains an enduring challenge. Regarding the acceptance especially of unfettered Military Advice progress has been made thanks to efforts on all levels and EUMC can build on it in the coming period. Nevertheless, the task of shaping the role and relevance of the EUMC will remain an enduring challenge for the incoming Irish Chairmanship.

Despite all the remaining room for improvement, the EUMC has been central in reassessing and adapting the Union's defence posture to respond not only to conventional threats at its eastern borders, but also to cyber warfare, disinformation campaigns, regional conflicts and maritime security. Overall, the agenda of the EUMC has broadened significantly.

Today, it includes not only traditional topics like operations and capability development but also subjects like space and maritime security, artificial intelligence, disruptive technologies or civil-military crisis preparedness. The broadening of the EUMC agenda has significantly challenged the flexibility and working methods of the Cabinet. Thanks to the high level of staff expertise and a proactive outreach policy to all relevant EU institutions, the Cabinet has successfully accomplished all of these tasks.

Some of the main achievements can be condensed into ten "highlights" or "first-ever activities":

- Establishment of the EU training mission for Ukraine with more than 74,000 trained Ukrainian soldiers as the – so far – biggest military mission of the EU.
- Activation of Operation ASPIDES as the first-ever maritime operation in a non-permissive environment.
- Declaration of the full operational capability of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC). This swiftly deployable force consists of up to 5,000 troops and is composed of modified EU Battlegroups with pre-identified national modules in all dimensions to respond to imminent threats outside EU territory.
- Initiation of a process to expand military capability planning beyond traditional crisis management by including territorial defence.
- Establishment of structured relationships with the new political leadership

in Brussels (e.g. with the President of the EU Council and the new Commissioner on Defence and Space).

- Intensification of EUMC Strategic Communication efforts by establishing the “Military Forum” and additional channels.
- Review of EUMC internal working documents and procedures including documentation of the weekly EUMC meetings by distributing Key Take-Aways to all relevant stakeholders in Brussels.
- Broadening the scope of presentations and speakers in the EUMC (e.g. Under-secretary of UN Peacekeeping, Military Advisor of the UN, third Parties or Chair of the Defence Committee of the European Parliament).
- Organisation of Chiefs of Defence meetings in the capitals of the Presidency countries (Spain, Seville and Hungary, Budapest).
- Launch of first-ever EU-led military exercises including Distinguished



Photo: Austrian Armed Forces

Visitor Days for all EU stakeholders in the respective countries (Spain, Germany or Hungary).

In conclusion, the EU Military Committee has played a crucial and evolving role in the years 2022 to 2025. Through its leadership within the CSDP framework, the EUMC has not only addressed immediate military needs in response to global crises but also laid the basis for a stronger, more autonomous

European defence posture. As the EU continues to confront a multipolar world, marked by instability and unpredictability, the strategic vision and military expertise of the EUMC will remain essential to ensuring peace, security and the protection of European values and interests. While the EUMC has achieved a lot of tangible progress, additional strategic steps to create a real Union of Defence. 





# EUMCWG

## MILESTONES DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS (MAY 2022–2025) AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

by Alberto Rutteri



**Rear Admiral  
Alberto Rutteri**

(Italian Navy)

has been appointing since the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2021 as Chairman of the European Union Military Committee Working Group, in Brussels (Belgium). Before that, he served as Deputy Military Advisor at the Italian Permanent Representation to the EU, always in Brussels, in support to the Italian PSC Ambassador and related political working groups.

### INTRODUCTION

The European Union Military Committee Working Group (EUMCWG) is a preparatory body of the Council, subordinated to the Chairman of the EUMC, dealing with policy, strategy, conceptual, operational, and exercise matters. Under the guidance of the EUMC, the WG had an intense activity during the subject period with around 115 documents finalised and agreed/approved then at EUMC level. Tasks dealt with very different topics ranging from missions and operations, exercises, Command and Control (C2) structures, military rapid response forces, space to working procedures, staffing, Communication and Information Systems (CIS), cyber and a number of others.

Some achievements merit to be focused for the military relevance.

### MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

#### CONCEPTUAL DOCUMENTS

An important milestone was the development made in March 2023 of the new “Military Rapid Response Concept” that covers all the possible Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military rapid response instruments, such as the Framework Nation’s approach, such as Article 44

of the EU Treaty, EU Battlegroup packages and EU Strategic Reserve. However, in particular the main option represented by the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) framework. The latter is meant as the modular and flexible tool of the EU Integrated Approach (IA) that enables to rapidly respond to imminent threats or quickly react to crises with a force of up to 5,000 troops in all domains and in a joint and combined manner including in non-permissive environments.

C2 was a sector where paramount steps were undertaken by the EUMC. The “EUMC In-depth analysis on possible follow-on options of the EU C2 structure for EU military missions and operations” approved in March 2023 – after intense discussions along 18 meetings - was a turning point on the consensus of the EU Member States (MS) in outlining the possible adaption of the military organisation within the European External Action Service (EEAS) in the CSDP framework in line with the ambitions set out in the Strategic Compass (SC). In this vein, the EUMC recommended the Political and Security Committee (PSC) to implement a phased approach through three distinct steps, starting with the functional separation of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) and Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), each with a single-hatted Director. Based on the evaluation of this first step to proceed –

as decided by the EU MS – on follow-on options, including the possibility to have a Director General above the mentioned single Directors EUMS and MPCC. However, this input is still pending on political guidance for its implementation.

In this context, the above vision was strictly connected to the primary objective of achieving the MPCC Full Operational Capability (FOC), as remarked by the EUMC through the “Military advice on DG EUMS Final Report on EU RDC FOC Assessment”<sup>1</sup>, in December 2024. It recommended the PSC to endorse the FOC with some limitations, implement the related mitigating measures and the necessity of ongoing efforts in 2025 and beyond.

A further significant conceptual target was reached in November 2024 with the “EU Military Framework for Security and Defence”, the first ever developed Military Capstone document, which describes from a conceptual point of view all EU Military Strategic Activities (MSA) performed within the EU IA, where CSDP is a central component. Structured on the “Ends-Ways-Means” approach, it outlines the “Ends” as the EU Level of Ambition (LoA), detailing the political objectives to be achieved. All represented by the 3 Strategic Priorities of the EU Global Strategy in line with the SC framework where the CSDP Military LoA



Photo: Author

plays a key role in fulfilling the overall EU LoA. “Ways” consist of the Military Lines of Effort (LoE) which representing the ampler conceptual approach, are operationalised by the related MSA necessary to reach those objectives. “Means” are the resources in terms of knowledge, personnel, material and fund that enable the MSA to be carried out. Finally, EU Regions of Interest (RoI) are defined geographically, with the most likely and demanding scenarios and the possible MSA to be conducted to defend EU interests. This document is used as a common basis for any future military

input towards the political level and EU institutions, in particular now in view of the new developments of the security and defence framework and subsequent political guidance.

## OPERATIONAL DOCUMENTS

On the operational side, two main military inputs were developed on the establishment and launch of the new EU CSDP Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA) in November 2022 and the EU Maritime Security Operation in the Red Sea (EUNAVFOR ASPIDES) in February 2024, followed by the related Strategic Reviews.

The works on EUMAM UA were characterized by difficult discussions due to different points of view among some EU MS on the C2 structure, which even prevented the EUMC to have a common position in the initial phase on the Crisis Management Concept. Further in-depth negotiations, within a political agreement, allowed proceeding ahead with the compromise of the MPCC, as the C2 structure at the military strategic level, and two subordinated commands managed by two different EU MS, one more



Photo: Author





Photo: Gyorgy Szendrei

focussed on specialized training. All EU MS were allowed to provide national modules on own soil or to support the mentioned commands. In the end, it is a story of success as EUMAM UA represents the main training stakeholder in support of UA with about 72,800 units trained at March 2025.

In relation to EUNAVFOR ASPIDES, the first ever CSDP Operation conducted in a hostile environment, the works were developed within a very tight timeframe.

The planning was highly synchronised, forcing the EUMC to provide its input within one month due to the persistent threat of the Houthis, in Yemen, affecting the freedom of navigation primarily in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Discussions were intense but with the overall aim of launching the Operation as soon as possible. Particular attention was posed on aligning the text to the “EU Policy for the use of force”, addressing attacks or imminent attacks to EU forces but avoid-

ing any possible preventive strike against adversary targets. The C2 structure was solved with the offer of a new EU OHQ by an EU MS.

## PROCEDURAL DOCUMENTS

The works done in 2024 enabled the revision of the “EUMC Aide Memoire” and the development of the “EUMC Code of Practice” and the “Standardised Procedures for the EUMCWG and the EUMCWG/HTF”, the main procedural documents regulating the conduct of routine day-to-day business of the EUMC and the WGs.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES


Political decisions derived by a fresh approach aimed at enhancing the CSDP, particularly in Defence, but also going beyond this framework, should also guide future military work strands. The volatile security scenario requires an effective EU Defence, from all perspective, such as industrial, technological and policy. 



Photo: Author



# EUMCWG/HTF

## MILESTONES DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS (MAY 2022–2025) AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

by Franck Scher

### INTRODUCTION

The European Union Military Committee Working Group/Headline Goal Task Force (EUMCWG/HTF) is a preparatory body of the Council, subordinated to the European Union Military Committee (EUMC), dealing with capability development, defence planning, technical requirements and training and education matters. Against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a major disruption of the security situation of the Euro-Atlantic area, the Strategic Compass from March 2022 has given a new impetus to Security and Defence, paving the way for concrete actions. Until May 2025 and under the guidance of the EUMC, the HTF has provided a new assessment of the EU's military level of ambition, evaluated progress, approved new projects under the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and revised all policy documents related to training and education.

### MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

#### CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT AND DEFENSE PLANNING HEADLINE GOAL PROCESS (HLGP)

Against the backdrop of the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Strategic Compass depicted a new security context with a higher level of threats in all domains and called upon a revision of the capability planning and development processes. Consequently, the HTF revised the five illustrative scenarios<sup>1</sup> and agreed on a new Requirements Catalogue in November 2023. In parallel, Member States (MS) were invited to declare their capabilities potentially available for the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and in 2024, the HTF agreed on a new Force Catalogue. While the strength of declared capabilities has slightly increased from the last declaration, the level of requirements remains high, especially in the field of air and missile defence systems and strategic enablers (C2 structures, Communication and Information System (CIS), strategic airlift, space, cyber...). Finally, in October 2024, the HTF agreed on a new Progress Catalogue, which shows that the EU is able to fulfil its level of ambition with some lim-



#### Colonel

#### Franck Scher

(French Army)

has served as Chairman of the European Union Military Committee Working Group – Headline Goal Taskforce since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024. Prior to that, he was a military adviser at the French General Direction of Armament in Paris, and from 2017 to 2020, he headed the capability cell of the French Military Representation to the European Union in Brussels.

<sup>1</sup> Peace enforcement, rescue and evacuation, support to stabilisation and capacity building, conflict prevention, support to humanitarian assistance and disaster relieve.



Photo: Author

## EUMCWG/HTF 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of 2024

itations and weaknesses, calling for a swift development of some key capabilities in order to be able to conduct autonomously the expected operations and missions. The shortfalls are summarised in the following nine high impact capability goals: air and missile defence, air combat platforms, strategic transport, cyber, space, joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, electronic warfare, integrated C2, readiness.

## PERMANENT STRUCTURED COOPERATION (PESCO)

Each year, the HTF assesses the progress made by the PESCO Member States to fulfil the 20 more binding commitments based on their annual declaration through the National implementation plans. Spending is on a positive path, but Research & Technology (R&T) and collaborative spending need to progress.

In 2023, the HTF agreed on a new batch of 11 new PESCO projects, which brings the number of projects to 68 since the establishment of PESCO in 2017, while four are in closing phase and two already closed. Following the invitation for new projects in 2024, the Council Decision establishing the list of PESCO projects will be updated in May 2025 with a new wave of 11 projects.

## TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The HTF meets also in the format of the EU Military Training Group (EUMTG), which is a preparatory body dedicated to military training and education. During the last three years, in coordination with the EU Civil Training Group (EUCTG)<sup>2</sup>, the HTF contributed to revise all policy documents related to CSDP training. A joint EUCTG-EUMTG strategic guidance on CSDP training by end 2023 opened the path to revise the EU policy on CSDP training and its implementing guidelines for the EU policy on CSDP training in 2024 and to revise the Council Decision establishing the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).

The EUMTG has managed 22 military training disciplines, twelve of which are active. During this period, the EUMTG agreed on the Training Requirement Analysis (TRA) reports of three disciplines: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Chemical Bacteriological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN) Defence, Military Support to Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC). One discipline is on the verge to release its TRA report, but 10 disciplines are still missing due to a lack of leadership.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

As the Strategic Compass aims at strengthening the command and control structures, the CIS capabilities of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) must meet the requirements of an operation headquarters.


In this framework, the HTF agreed on the MPCC strategic CIS plan, which covers a large spectrum of assets, such as C2 information system, wide area network, day zero CIS, cybersecurity.

The HTF will monitor the implementation of these strands in order to equip the MPCC with all necessary C2 assets, making it the preferred command and control structure for EU operations.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

Due to the threat posed by Russia on the Eastern flank, the security of the Euro-Atlantic area remains the major concern of the Chiefs of Defence. This requires planning and developing more capabilities – together, faster and better. In this context, the current HLGP, which relies on scenario-based capability planning for crisis management operations, is not the right answer to the most urgent needs.

The HTF therefore agreed to complement the HLGP by collecting and aggregating Member States capability objectives, before this military perspective of capability needs is incorporated into the capability development plan within the European Defence Agency (EDA) framework.

This new strand of capability planning in complement to the HLGP will allow taking into account the capabilities necessary for the full spectrum of operations, including territorial defence, in capability planning and development. 

<sup>2</sup> A format of the Committee for civilian aspects of crisis management (CIVCOM).

# OBSERVATIONS ON EU MILITARY MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS

by Daniel Vazquez del Pozo

Throughout the last three years, the number of nine Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military missions and operations has remained unchanged, while they have evolved differently. Due to political instability, regional competition with other actors, and the mismatch between actual achievements and local expectations, two CSDP military missions in the Sahel had to be terminated: European Union Training Mission (EUTM) Mali and European Union Military Partnership Mission (EUMPM) Niger. On the other hand, the EU launched its first-ever kinetic operation in the Red Sea: European Union's Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Operation ASPIDES. In addition, a new innovative initiative started in the Gulf of Guinea – EU Security and Defence Initiative in support of West African countries of the Gulf of Guinea (EUSDI GoG).

It is worth noting that EU military missions and operations differ not only in terms of executive nature and tasks but also with regard to the current structure of command and control. Certainly, the first EU military operation, EUFOR ALTHEA, remains an exception since the continuity of the operation in the Balkans under the Berlin Plus agreement with NATO has a distinct political character.

However, EU CSDP missions and operations share a set of common points that deserve attention to improve the use of military force:

- The EU is the only international actor, which has all instruments of power at hand. If these instruments

are used coherently in a well-coordinated manner, the EU can exert real strategic influence. Therefore, its comparative advantage lies in the optimal embedding of military CSDP missions into the highly praised **EU integrated approach**. In this vein, complementarity and close coordination between the civilian and the military dimension of CSDP are the best ways to enhance synergies and are key to success. However, there is neither unified and shared situational awareness nor a single mission with a Head of Mission combining civil and military pillars.

- Clear, measurable and achievable **political-strategic objectives** are always necessary. This must include options to terminate missions, with an exit strategy when necessary. "Strategic patience" should no longer be an option. Moreover, the tasks derived from the tactical and operational military objectives must effectively serve to achieve the desired end-state, linked to the interests of the EU and the well-being of its citizens. A lack of pragmatism and flexibility on the part of the EU, combined with the host nations' perception of the EU as asserting historical rights and superiority, has allowed competitors to present more appealing offers. Competitors have gradually replaced the EU as a preferred partner, which – in some cases – even led to the EU's de facto expulsion from the recipient country. In order to counter



**Colonel**

**Daniel Vazquez del Pozo**

(Spanish Army)

is an Artillery, senior staff officer and former tactical commander, operational planner and military instructor. Specialized in air defence, ISR and C2.

Head of the Strategic Operations Cell - Cabinet of the Chairman of the EU Military Committee.





Photo: OHQ EUNAVFOR ATALANTA

## Protecting a World Food Program vessel in February 2025

this trend the EU should pursue the “full cycle” approach of educate, train, equip and support, including accompaniment.

- **Flexible mandates and adequate autonomy for the Force Commanders** are of essence to swiftly adapt the operations and mission’s response to situational changes and host nations’ requirements. Sometimes, supporting better-suited security providers or coalitions could be an effective approach for a region or area of interest, like the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). The assumption of responsibilities by third countries affected by a regional crisis alleviates the burden on the EU military and facilitates local ownership.
- **Pervasive shortfalls** affect the performance, in particular in executive

operations. Despite the Member States’ (MS) declarations on their will to provide resources, deficiencies are likely to continue. A more humble approach would help to avoid frustration stemming from over-promising and under-delivering. In the absence of a deeper analysis of the MS’ reasons for disaffection, the following points may provide some clues.

- **Significant limitations** in terms of command and control structures (**C2**), especially in the decision-making process and with regard to the Communication and Information Systems (**CIS**), in addition to a lack of global logistics, could potentially leave the force helpless in urgent, complex or extreme situations.
- The political-military structure and the decision-making processes must

evolve as a precondition for swift adaptation to fast changing environments. The existing EU C2 capability is not suitable for multi-domain combat, in line with Data Centric and Zero Trust security approaches. Modern and interoperable CIS systems are urgently required. The absence of security agreements for the exchange of information, primarily with NATO, might not only have political reasons but also stem from a lack of technical reliability.

- Maritime operations and land mobile teams for special trainings imply the use of expensive assets and highly demanded personnel. Besides, the bureaucracy associated with the management of common funds for real life support and assistance measures with eligibility criteria leads to the frequent recourse to Quick

Impact Projects (**QIP**) and national donations under national lead, even if they are channelled through the EU. Therefore, the potential benefits of **expanding common costs** must be explored, to ensure that those providing soldiers are not the only ones to pay and to facilitate the provision of real life support to our partners.

- There is a clear need for stepping up **Strategic Communications** and better explain the rationale of the EU's engagement. This will improve acceptance and help counter disinformation, especially when conducted comprehensively at the regional level, back in the MS, and by the EU institutions in Brussels, in a true "Team Europe" effort.

Looking ahead to the future, it is more than ever difficult to predict how military CSDP missions and operations will evolve in the medium and long term. In any case, it appears that in the short run the support to **Ukraine will remain the top priority**. Nevertheless, the operational concept might greatly differ from the traditional training missions or law-enforcement operations and evolve towards a massive peacekeeping deployment. It is uncertain how the required consensus could be built, and serious doubts on




**Training course by EUTM Somalia**

the EU's actual ability to command such force still remain.

Nevertheless, apart from Ukraine other areas keep on posing a security risk to Europe, particularly in Africa and in the Middle East. Accordingly, a wider scope, namely the **"360 degrees" approach**, is necessary.

At this particular moment, it is unclear how coping with the first priority issue in Ukraine might affect other efforts. The EU will have to allocate whatever is available to the different EU missions and operations. Within a single set of forces, there is strain and competition over highly valuable and in-demand assets and specialized personnel. This may support the trend for missions to reduce their footprint, as it was seen for the most recent EUSDI GoG. It is premature to say whether this model will be successful enough and can be extrapolated to other scenarios, as a shallow footprint may make it impossible to build up and then rely on a capable network. This is especially important in underdeveloped countries, where advice is required to identify gaps and to coordinate the support.

In consequence, a political-strategic debate to orientate CSDP military missions and operations is necessary. Priorities must be set, not only geographically but also with regard to military activities and their modalities. 



**Training activities by EUMAM UA**

Photo: MPCC



# NEWS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

## CHAIRMAN OF THE EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE VISITED AUSTRIA

General Robert Brieger briefed on new weapon systems and technologies supporting the development of military capability.

On 17 January, General Robert Brieger travelled to Austria for an official visit to deepen and strengthen EU cooperation on the security and defence domains.

The Chairman visited the high-tech compounds of GD European Land Systems Steyr GmbH where he received a presentation of new weapon systems and technologies – supporting military capability development. As part of its force modernisation program, Austria is bolstering its defence expenditures and investing in capability building to enhance both national and European defence potential.

During the visit, the Chairman met Klaudia Tanner, Austrian Minister of Defence and General Rudolf Striedinger, Austrian Chief of Defence to exchange



Photo: Austrian Armed Forces

views on the challenges and developments of the European security environment. They also discussed the Austrian Army Force Development Programme and its contribution to EU defence cooperation to enhance security and stability of EU citizens.

General Brieger attended the annual Austrian Defence Attaché Conference as

a guest lecturer where he contributed to the discussions with his insights on the EU's role in the complex and multipolar geostrategic landscape.

Later, he presented the EU's geopolitical challenges to Austrian military personnel as an invited guest speaker at the Day of Austrian Conscription Service.

## GENERAL BRIEGER ATTENDED MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

This year's Munich Security Conference took place from 14 to 16 February in Munich, Germany. The event is the world's leading forum for international security policy, established in 1963. It is held annually, providing a platform for diplomatic initiatives addressing the world's most pressing security concerns. The focus of this year's event was how to "build peace through dia-

logue", fostering trust and contributing to the peaceful resolution of crises and conflicts through sustained, curated and informal discussions within the international community.

The Chairman of the EUMC, General Robert Brieger, attended the event along with over 450 high-ranking officials and senior decision-makers from around the world. The Munich Security

Conference is a valuable opportunity for those present to engage in intensive debates and exchanges on the evolving strategic landscape.

The conference opened on Friday with remarks from the German Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, followed by sessions hosted by the outgoing Chairman of the Munich Security Conference Christoph Heusgen. Following a speech by



the Vice President of the United States of America, discussions centred around the future of the transatlantic partnership, the state of the international order as well as solutions for ongoing conflicts and crises.

The three-day talks addressed the current security challenges, including global governance, democratic resilience, climate security and many more.

The conference wrapped up on Sunday with discussions on the strategic foresight and Europe's global role. Jens Stoltenberg, former NATO Secretary General, succeeded Christoph Heusgen as the new Chair of the MSC.

In addition to the official agenda, General Brieger attended the Alpbach European Forum, roundtable talks and met with Admiral Stuart Munsch, the



Commander of Joint Force Command Naples, as part of regular co-operation

between the EU and NATO on defence matters.

## EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE AWAY DAYS IN WARSAW

Under the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Military Representatives of twenty-seven Member

States arrived in Warsaw on 11 March 2025. The European Union Military Committee's informal meeting, the

Away Days, was held in Poland upon the invitation of the Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, General Wiesław Kukula.

The discussions of the sessions centred around European Defence. The military implication of the continuous EU support to Ukraine was also addressed.

On the same day, Admirals and Generals visited the 1<sup>st</sup> Warsaw Armoured Brigade in Wesola, where the Polish high-tech military equipment was presented. Guests were also introduced to the "East Shield" multi-year programme, which will be implemented within 2024 and 2028. The programme is focused on preparing and strengthening the defence of the areas close to the northern and eastern flanks of the Polish border.



## EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE AWAY DAY IN BREDA



Photo: CEUMC Cabinet

On 7 April 2025, Military Representatives from twenty-seven EU Member States have been invited by the Military Representative of Poland, to attend an European Union Military Committee (EUMC) Away Day in Breda, the Netherlands. The event was organized under the Polish EU Council Presidency as an informal one-day session of the EUMC. The Generals and Admirals gathered in the “Maczek Memorial Breda” a his-

toric site commemorating Lieutenant General Stanisław Maczek.

During the sessions, the military high officials continued the discussions on European defence matters. A salient point of discussion was Military Mobility — an EU initiative to ensure swift and seamless movement of military personnel, materiel and systems, on short notice and at large scale, within and beyond the EU-soil. This capability plays a vital role in EUs security and defence enabling rapid deployment

and strategic flexibility which is essential for responding to any occurring crises.

The special venue of the meeting offered the Military Representatives the opportunity to learn about the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division. The memorial honours the soldiers that participated in the large-scale Allied manoeuvres – demonstrating “military mobility” in action back in 1944 – for the liberation of northern Belgium and the Netherlands during World War II.

## CHAIRMAN ATTENDED MILEX25 DISTINGUISHED VISITORS DAY

General Robert Brieger along with the Military Representatives and Political and Security Committee (PSC) Ambassadors, attended the Distinguished Visitors’ Day of European Union Crisis Management Military Exercise 2025 (MILEX25), in Pápa Air Base Hungary.

The MILEX25 was a strategic, operational and tactical level alert and deployment exercise aiming to test and enhance the effectiveness of the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) and

the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) under realistic conditions. As the EU’s premier military exercise, it was designed to enhance crisis management and rapid deployment capabilities while also serving the purpose of validating the EU’s military readiness.

During the training, the MPCC in Brussels and Eurocorps in Strasbourg are collaborating on crisis response planning. The MPCC, serving as the

Operational Headquarters (OHQ) in Brussels, oversees the deployment of the EU RDC - the key deliverable of the EU Strategic Compass, a formidable force up to 5,000 troops contributed by various EU Member States.

Eurocorps, acting as the Force Headquarters (FHQ), has established a command centre at Pápa Air Base, Hungary, ensuring seamless coordination between the MPCC in Brussels and the deployed units on the ground.





Photo: CEUMC Cabinet

The training scenario presented a complex strategic synchronization challenge, transitions from a standard training-area exercise to a strategic deployment operation, involving forces from across Europe training together in Hungary.

As the exercise brings together joint military forces from 13 Member

States, it significantly contributes to enhancing EU defence and military cooperation and bolsters interoperability at all levels.

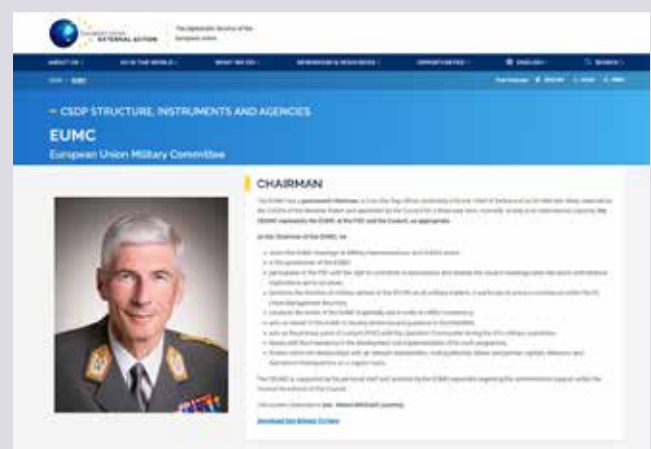
The MILEX25 also highlights a notable milestone by presenting the EU RDC in action. Testifying that EU has made a huge progress in becoming a credible security provider.

During the opening ceremony of the Distinguished Visitors Day, the Chairman has addressed the audience. In his speech, he highlighted the visible improvement in operational coordination and effectiveness, praising the dedication of the participating Member States in EU defence cooperation.

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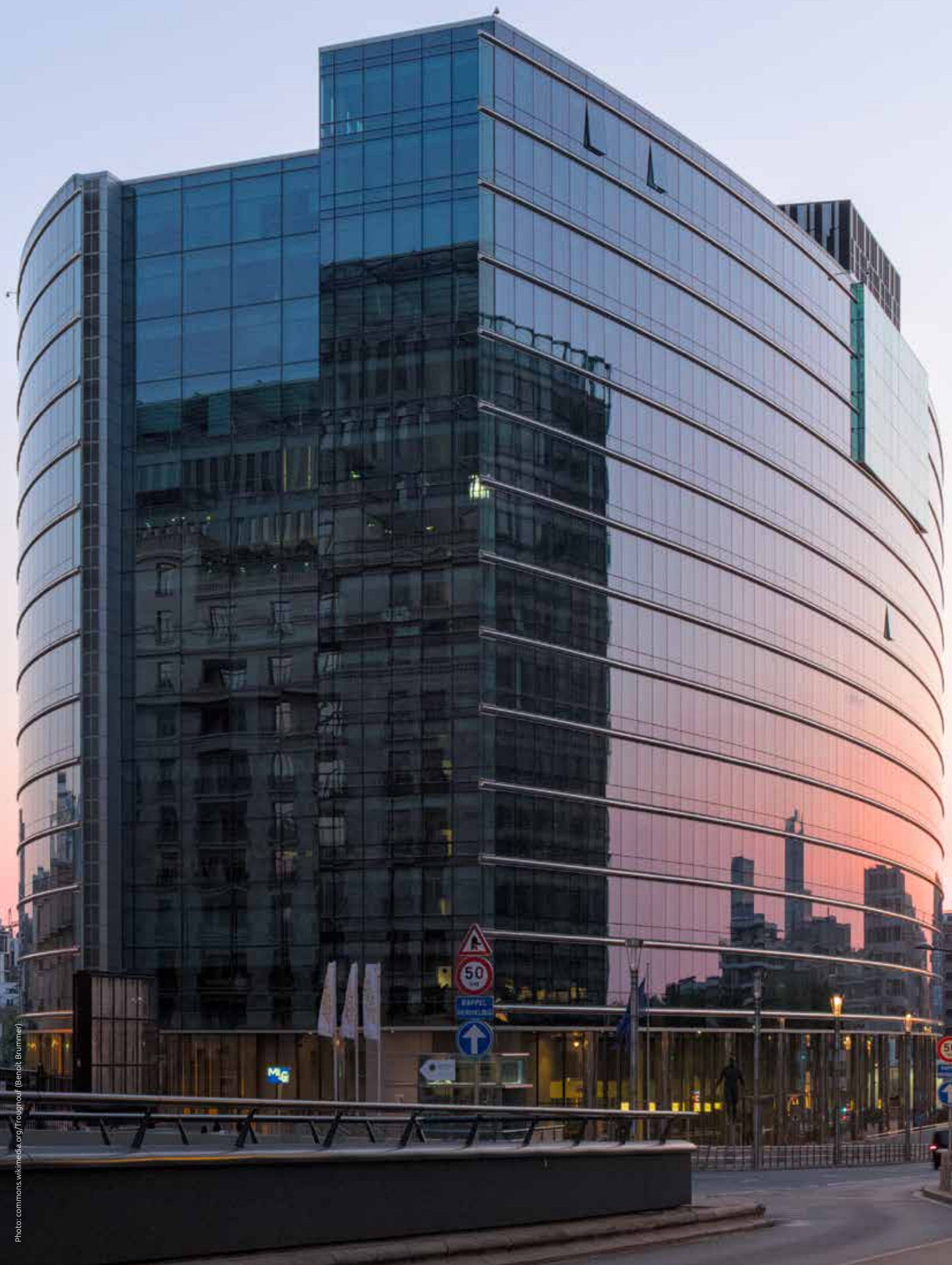




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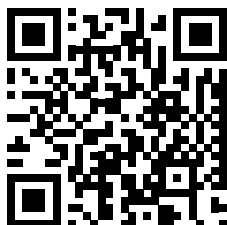
## EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE

Lex Building, Rue de la Loi 145, 1048 Bruxelles, BELGIUM  
[ceumc.secretariat@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:ceumc.secretariat@eeas.europa.eu)

[www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eumc\\_en](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eumc_en)  
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