

Brussels, 7 October 2011

EU: FACTSHEET ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE FOR LIBYA

From the start of the crisis in Libya, the EU military staff contributed to the EU's assistance to the civilian population.

Evacuation of EU citizens

The EU was involved in the evacuation of EU citizens from Libya. In total there were about 7,500 EU citizens in Libya of which 6,500 asked to be evacuated. The EU has an established coordination mechanism for this, in which the Consular Unit of the Situation Centre has contact with their colleagues in EU capitals. In that way they established the location and number of citizens for evacuation. Secondly, the Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission (ECHO) has contact with all Humanitarian Assistance Agencies in the region. The third player is the EU Military Staff, which has contact with all the Ministries of Defence of the Member States and thus can coordinate the use of military means. The nucleus of the evacuation by military personnel became the Non Combatant Evacuation Coordination Group. This group worked from Malta and coordinated military means on the ground. Through a liaison team from the EU Military Staff, information available in Brussels could be used by the personnel on the ground. In total 4,400 EU citizens were evacuated from Libya by military means.

Evacuation of refugees from Tunisia

Soon after the start of the crisis, there was a flow of refugees from Libya over the border to Tunisia. Initially, when insufficient civilian means were available, the EU Military Staff, on request and under the overall coordination of DG ECHO, coordinated the use of military aircraft from Member States for the evacuation of refugees from Tunisia to their home countries. The military aircraft were mainly provided by Belgium. Through this mechanism, civilian planes were also leased by other Member States for the same purpose.

Preparation for military support to Humanitarian Assistance in Libya

On 1 April 2011 the EU Council approved the launch of operation EUFOR LIBYA for military support and security to Humanitarian Assistance in Libya. An Operational Headquarters was activated in Rome. Military support and security would only be given on the request of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Headquarters prepared all possible scenarios as foreseen by OCHA as the crisis evolved. The most important were to clear, repair and run an airport or a port and to ensure bulk fuel distribution. Evacuation and delivery of food and water were also pre-planned. The EU was the only international body ready to deliver military support to humanitarian assistance on the ground in Libya. In the event, OCHA did not make a request.