

Chairman's Newsletter

EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE



Gen. Claudio Graziano

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Since its earliest releases, the traditional objective of Chairman’s newsletter has been to convey some important messages to the wide military community serving the European Union, providing updates and other relevant information on our activities around the globe. In this sense, it represents an internal communication tool, among the EU Military Committee, the EUMS, HQs, Missions and Operations, available also online to the wider public.

While our lifestyle has surprisingly and drastically changed, over the last couple of months, the emergency we are facing today doesn’t change but actually reinforces the need to maintain our communication channels open. Among them, our newsletter must remain a traditional appointment, a symbol of a real community of military personnel, who share more than just a blue shoulder patch.

The Coronavirus outbreak harshly hit Europe at the end of February, demanding the implementation of unprecedented measures of confinement and restrictions to our freedom of movement, although key to contain the spread of the virus. At different degree of gravity, all European countries (and the rest of the world) have found themselves in the need to deal with this historical emergency, affecting in depth our lifestyles.

At EU level, we promptly reacted to ensure our duty of care towards our staff, both in Brussels, in delegations, but moreover in Operations and Missions, with a series of guidelines aiming at striking a balance between operational continuity and safety for our personnel, which remains on top of our priorities. In fact, the welfare of our men and women, our most valuable strength, must be guaranteed at all costs. No mission or operation could be foreseeable, without their commitment. In this context, I heartily convey my personal thought to all of you, far away from your families and, due to the travel restrictions, unable to reach your loved ones, with the hope you will be in the condition to join them soon.

At the time of release of this Newsletter, in fact, we are already witnessing important, positive results of the measures taken by different governments and institutions, like us in the EU, to manage the impact of the crisis on our activities, while we can already see an improved stage of crisis management cautiously approaching.

Having said that, to shed some light and be very pragmatic, opportunities to seize could be found also in this dramatic situation, like in any other crisis.

First of all, as I wrote to the Commanders of EU Operations, we have had the opportunity to confirm our commitment to the objectives and missions we were entrusted for, supporting peace and stability in different areas of the world, keeping on delivering and operating. The successful transition between “Sophia” and “Irinì”, the new operation in the Mediterranean Sea, was conducted in a challenging scenario, demonstrating the resilience of our decision making mechanisms and our staffs in uncharted circumstances. I regard to Operations, the Commanders and each one of the service members were able to showcase the highest values of duty, responsibility, honour and commitment for mission accomplishment. Something to be truly proud of. I strongly believe that this will greatly contribute in building confidence for the EU, by all our contributors and partners.

Furthermore, the crisis has once more confirmed how relevant, valuable and sometime irreplaceable is the role of the military tool in emergencies, supporting civilian institutions and governments, across different domains (security, transportation, medical), dealing with the crisis.

And one last note: when we will eventually be able to look back at these moments with a critical eye, I am sure that we will draw some important, vital lessons learned, for us to be better prepared in the unfortunate case of a new, similar situation.

A learning process we have actually already started, highlighting - for instance - the need to remain a credible force by applying the flexibility and pragmatism necessary to adapt our mandate in time of crisis, sometime recurring to unconventional problem solving, as the situations mandate. Or the crucial requirement to have proper coordination and centralized contingency plans in place, supported by suitable capabilities and a properly crafted, robust strategic communication.

We have a lot of work ahead of us all. Let’s stay committed.

And, as always, united, strong, and safe!



The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and do not represent the official position of the European Union Military Committee or the single Member States’ Chiefs of Defence

LATEST EVENTS



Zagreb, 4-5 March: Informal Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) Defence



Brussels, 6 April: Video conference of EU Defence Ministers

“Let’s use the pandemic to enhance EU defence”

by Dr. Daniel Fiott, Defence Analyst, EU Institute for Security Studies

The global pandemic known as ‘COVID-19’ is set to greatly alter EU security and defence – perhaps in more ways than we can see today. One obvious change is that, in the struggle against the virus, Europe’s armed forces are today much closer to citizens and the contribution of Europe’s militaries to the public health crisis has proven indispensable. As the Chairman of the EU Military Committee rightly stated during the informal defence ministerial on 6 April (the first conducted by videoconference), Europe’s armed forces have performed to an exceptionally high standard during the pandemic. Military and civilian personnel deployed on CSDP missions and operations are also serving the Union during exceptional times, even putting themselves at risk of contracting the virus. One can only hope that moving forward after the pandemic, the role Europe’s armed forces have played in transporting patients, delivering medical supplies and setting up mobile hospitals is not forgotten.

The EU has had to mobilise a wide range of tools to manage COVID-19 including economic and monetary measures, investment in research for testing and vaccinations, the repatriation of EU citizens, development aid and more. While the immediate focus will be on the European economy, in time the Union could be expected to deploy the full range of its security and defence toolbox. In many ways this is already happening, as can be seen by the decision of HR/VP Borrell in mid-April to establish a task force for military coordination efforts.

We should expect that as the virus spreads through Africa, the EU will be called upon through CSDP to provide assistance such as medical airlifts, provision of field hospitals, information exchange and more. If, as many expect, the pandemic leads to an aggravation and worsening of existing conflicts then extra demands on the EU’s crisis management response could be required. We also do not know how many waves of the virus will emerge, meaning an EU response may be needed over multiple months and years.

In many respects, the EU is uniquely suited to dealing with the types of crisis and conflicts that may worsen or emerge due to the pandemic. Through the CSDP, the Union has been established as an integrated toolbox that brings together military, civilian, development, diplomatic and humanitarian approaches to complex crises. The EU has a unique mandate for and experience in (now more than 20 years) deploying an integrated approach to crises. The danger now, of course, is that as defence budgets come under pressure in many EU countries the resources needed to deal with COVID-19 beyond European shores could dry up. If we are serious about the essential role played by Europe’s armed forces during the pandemic, then we need to make sure



Dr. Daniel Fiott, Defence

they are well-equipped and re-sourced in the future. In short, let us not wash our hands of the armed forces as budgets tighten.

To be more optimistic, however, we should take comfort from the fact that the EU has already put in place a range of mechanisms to enhance European defence cooperation. The beauty of tools like Permanent Structured Cooperation, the European Defence Fund, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence is that they are precisely designed to offer EU member states an opportunity to spend, plan and act together in defence – and to be more effective and autonomous when doing so. In this sense, while there is a need to think about how EU security and defence can respond to global health crises such as pandemics, it is worth asking whether there is a need to “reinvent the wheel” for defence cooperation. As the old saying goes, “never waste a crisis”. The EU already has the tools in place to advance its security and defence – now let’s use them!

News from our Operations & Missions



EUFOR ALTHEA

April 2020, EUFOR and Camp Butmir adapt to life during COVID-19. “We are learning more every day in a rapidly developing set of circumstances, where we do not know exactly where we will be next week,” said Major General Reinhard Trischak, Commander of EUFOR, on 7 April 2020 at Camp Butmir. The global situation regarding the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve rapidly. The medical community’s understanding of the virus also advances at pace and, consequently, so does the guidance issued by World Health Organisation. Procedures and policies change and evolve to fit the situation; EUFOR and Camp Butmir has also moved forward, adapting to the situation. EUFOR Headquarters staff have been working hard to put in place the right measures, and reasonable measures, to cover a range of issues including isolation and quarantine.



EU NAVFOR Atalanta

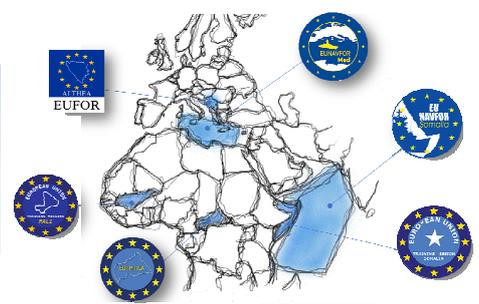
On 2 March, the German Deputy Chief of Defense, Vice Admiral Joachim Georg Rühle, visited the multinational Operation Headquarters (OHQ) of the European Union’s (EU) counter-piracy operation, in Rota, Spain. Operation Commander Major General Antonio Planells introduced Operation ATALANTA to Vice Admiral Rühle and then left the floor to his staff to provide detailed updates on recent events. “On the one hand, I would like to thank Germany for sending soldiers who are doing a really great and effective job here at OHQ Rota. On the other hand, I would like to thank Germany and the German Navy for continuously support this operation right from the beginning. We are looking forward to the German Maritime Patrol Reconnaissance Aircraft in March this year.



EU NAVFORMED Operation Irini

On 31 March, the European Union has stepped up its efforts to enforce the UN arms embargo on Libya, thereby contributing to the peace process in the country, through the launch of a new CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) military operation in the Mediterranean, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini. IRINI, (Greek for “peace”), will have as its core task the implementation of the UN arms embargo through the use of aerial, satellite and maritime assets. EUNAVFOR MED IRINI will also monitor and gather information on illicit exports from Libya of petroleum, crude oil and refined petroleum products and will contribute to the capacity building and training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy in law enforcement tasks at sea, as well as contribute to the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks through information gathering and patrolling by plane .

News from our Operations & Missions



EUTM Mali

On 2 April, EUTM Mali Mission Force Commander, Brigadier General João Boga Ribeiro, participated in a meeting with the Ministre de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants, General Ibrahima Dahirou Dembélé. During the meeting, EUTM Mali posture and support in the context of the COVID19 pandemic, was discussed. The MINISTER expressed his satisfaction for the work done by EUTM Mali and took the opportunity to present some of his expectations, regarding EUTM Mali, in the near future.



EUTM Somalia

On 02 March, at the AMISOM Hospital of Mogadishu, the “Orientation Day” was held to start the Mentoring medical program of the European Union Training Mission Somalia. Working groups of Somali National Army doctors will attend cycles of three months training period with the specialists of the AMISOM hospital, under the supervision of EUTM-Somalia personnel. This activity will allow the Somali military medics to perfect their methodologies and therefore be able to provide a more effective service. The project was born from the will to share and standardize medical protocols to give added value to Somali health care.



EUTM RCA

On 8 March, EUTM-RCA personnel wished the Central African Armed Forces FACA women in uniform, an excellent International Women's Day.

News from the Committee

Meeting with the newly appointed Vietnamese Defence Attaché

On 6th March, the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC), General Claudio Graziano, met with the newly appointed Vietnamese Defence Attaché, Senior Colonel Tran Tuan Anh .

On the occasion, the high Officials discussed issues of shared strategic interests, *“With the signed Framework Participation Agreement as a basis, we should now discuss how to make this agreement operational. The is ready to start discussing concrete cooperation”*, General Graziano underlined.



Meeting with the new EEAS Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs and Political Director

On 9th March, the Chairman of the EU Military Committee, General Claudio Graziano, met with the newly appointed EEAS Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs and Political Director, Enrique Mora Benavente .

This was a precious occasion for a very productive sharing of views. Welcoming Mr. Mora Benaventeand, General Graziano pointed up his enthusiasm to *“work together for a stronger EU Defence”*.



Farewell to EUNAVFOR MED Op. SOPHIA

On 31st March, the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC), General Claudio Graziano, paid farewell to EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA.

“I want to take this opportunity to heartily commend the staff and the crew who have provided the EU with an inestimable tool at the service of the International Community, proving its vital role as a security provider in the Mediterranean” General Graziano underlined, also mentioning *“the over 150 potential smugglers & traffickers arrested, about 3,000 events involving illegal weapons and over 300 activities of search and rescue conducted at sea.”*, as well as that *“Sophia successfully helped training almost 500 military personnel from the Libyan Navy and the Coast Guard”* .



Archive photo