One of the most important functions of the EU Military Committee (EUMC) is to provide the Political and Security Committee (PSC) with advice and recommendations on all military matters within the EU. In addition, the EUMC has a significant role to play in EU capability planning and development in respect to the recently launched EU Defence initiatives.

In November 2016, the European Council welcomed the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence, a follow-up to the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) on foreign and security policy. Drawing on this Plan, the Council adopted Conclusions which set a new EU level of ambition (LoA) on security and defence. It then became the task of the EUMC to provide the political level with realistic feedback as to what extent the EU LoA could be met, while promoting actions aimed at aligning EU military requirements with the political goal.

The EUMC was tasked by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) to start the process to review the EU Headline Goal process (HLGP) towards achieving the goals set at the political level. In the autumn of 2018, the PSC noted the EUMC agreement to further develop the HLGP into a continuous 4-year cyclic military capability planning process, aligned in time and technical content with the NATO Defence Planning Process. It begins with the review of the Requirements Catalogue, a product providing a detailed list of the military capability requirements that the EU will need, and culminates with the approval of the so-called Progress Catalogue, a final product of the HLGP which identifies the EU’s shortfalls in terms of quantifiable and qualitative military capabilities.

The HLGP process was finalised when the Council approved the Progress Catalogue in June 2018. The overall conclusion of the Progress Catalogue 2018 was that the EU had to develop a number of military capabilities in order to fulfil the EU CSDP military Level of Ambition. Accordingly, the EUMC proposed a phased approach towards the achievement of the EU CSDP Military LoA, highlighting through the Progress Catalogue 2018 a number of High Impact Capability Goals (HICG) to be achieved within a short -6 years- and a medium -12 years- time horizon, in order to overcome the highlighted deficiencies.

PESCO project proposals are assessed against HICGs in order to grant further coherence and compliance to the binding commitments with particular reference to availability, deployability, interoperability and readiness of forces. It should be highlighted that the new HLGP commenced at the beginning of 2019 and we are looking forward to seeing the Progress Catalogue 2020 as an intermediate result already next year.

The 4-year Headline Goal cycle also enables a smooth synchronisation with the two-year CARD process, fostering synergies and enhancing coherence among EU defence initiatives. Therefore, from purely military perspective, the Headline Goal process is fundamental when translating EU’s political level of ambition into military capabilities and deriving related shortfalls. It is, thus, of paramount relevance of also considering the results of this process, in particular the High Impact Capability Goals, when assessing future EU capability development initiatives.

The EUMC remains fully committed to contribute to meeting those challenges. Not by chance, EU military capability planning and development is a subject high on our agenda and will be discussed in the upcoming EUMC at CHoDs level.
EUTM RCA is, along with EUTM MALI and EUTM SOMALIA, one of three non-executive military missions deployed under the EU’s Common Defense and Security Policy. EUTM RCA stands out from other EU missions on account of its volatile although not degraded security environment. For instance, Central African Republic does not suffer from any terrorist threat. Nevertheless, this mission takes place in a complex political context in which actors from all around the world are represented (e.g. the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States). Moreover, four out of five of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the USA, RUSSIA, CHINA and FRANCE) are active in the country.

In this context, the mission aims at rebuilding strong, autonomous and democratically responsible Central African security forces. This goal goes through the implementation of the Defence National Plan (PND). The PND shall transform the current intervention army, centralised in the capital, into a garrison army deployed throughout the country. It remains a political choice, taken by the Central African President in 2017 to restore the State’s authority over the national territory, which is mainly held by armed groups. The rebuilding of the defence apparatus requires EUTM action at three different levels. Firstly, action is being taken regarding the training and upgrading of Central African Armed Forces (FACA). This is the mission of the Operational Training Pillar (OTP) which has already trained four (4) territorial infantry battalions (BIT) and an amphibious battalion. More recently the OTP pillar concluded the basic training (FETTA) of 1023 soldiers, from the 2018 induction which marked the first recruitment in seven (7) years.

Secondly, executive and specialists’ instruction and advanced training are also being delivered in order to recover FACA’s autonomy and core capabilities. This is the mission of the Education Pillar (EDP) in many different fields including signals, administration and project management. One example of this is through the training of FACA Non Commissioned Officers (NCO) and the impending opening of the NCO school (ENFSO) in BOUAR.

Lastly, the FACA general Staff (EMA) and the Defence ministry services are being supported through strategic level advise in terms of planning but also the teaching of staff and resources’ management, the main FACA weaknesses. This is the mission of the Strategic Advise Pillar (SAP). The presence of an interoperability cell as an integral part of this pillar, must be underlined. This cell aims to provide high-level advice to the authorities of the Internal Security Forces (ISF) and is expected to be the cornerstone on which a European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) will soon be established. In order to reinforce these synergies the EUTM Mission Force Commander has been appointed as President TOUADERA’s advisor for Defence issues. This position underlines the confidence of the Central African authorities in the EUTM and it entitles the MFCdr to directly support his teams’ work at the highest state level.

Today, the mission has already contributed to the training of around 6000 FACA personnel. Its second mandate will end in September 2020. Eight EU member states and three partner nations are participating in the mission. The MFCdr continues to raise member states’ awareness of current events in Central Africa in order to further involve and increase the European scope of this demanding though thrilling mission.
EU NAVFOR Sophia

In the wider framework of training carried out by SOPHIA operation, more courses have been completed at Italian and Croatian facilities. The Italian Navy Training Centres in La Maddalena and Taranto provided the Libyan Coastguard and Navy students with different training modules, namely “Deck Officer Course”, “Mechanical Engineer Officer Course” and “Electrical Basic Engineer Officer Course” and “Stress Inoculation Training.” The Croatian Navy Training Center in Split (Croatia) has also provided the “Advance Ship’s Diver Course”. Since October 2016, Operation SOPHIA has been fully involved in training the Libyan Coastguard and Navy to improve security within the Libyan territorial waters and in Central Mediterranean. Upon conclusion of these courses, Operation Sophia has provided more than 550 training opportunities to Libyan Coastguard and Navy personnel.

EU NAVFOR Atalanta

On 1st October, Vice Admiral Antonio Martorell Lacave (Spanish Navy) officially handed over command of EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation ATALANTA to Major General Antonio Planells Palau (Spanish Marine Corps). In his six-month role as Operation Commander, one of Vice Admiral Martorell’s main endeavours was maintaining operational stability throughout the transfer of the EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Headquarters (OHQ) from Northwood in UK, to Rota in Spain. The OHQ was formerly located in Northwood for over ten years, and was previously under command of Major General Charlie Stickland (UK Royal Marines). Vice Admiral Martorell’s devoted service was crucial in preserving continuity over the course of this careful relocation. Under Vice Admiral Martorell’s command, Operation ATALANTA effectively deterred a piracy attack, releasing 23 Yemeni hostages within the first month of active operations in Spain.

EUFOR ALTHEA

On 31st October, members of the EUFOR Liaison and Observation Team houses in Foca and Novo Sarajevo donated blood at the Red Cross Clinic in Novo Sarajevo in order to help those in need within Bosnia and Herzegovina. “We wanted to offer our blood as there is always a demand for it and when people need, blood it is so important that they can get it” said Captain Jozef Krehlik, Slovakia’s contribution member to EUFOR’s mission. EUFOR maintains 17 LOT houses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are manned by 7 different troop contributing nations.
EUTM Mali
On 24th October, Brigadier General Christian Habersatter (commander of EUTM Mali) handed over Austrian-funded mine detectors to the FAMa.
These detectors are used for training the army. A course is currently taking place in Koulikoro. The metal detectors financed by Austria are already being used.

EUTM Somalia
On 10th October, the Somali Chief of Defence, Brigadier General Odowaa Yuussuf Raage, visited EUTM Somalia Headquarters at Mogadishu International Airport (MIA), after the closing ceremony of the 4th Light Infantry Course. The Somali General was welcomed by Mission Force Commander, Brigadier General Antonello De Sio, who was expressed his gratitude to receive this important visit in the Mission Headquarters. After an Office Call with the Mission Force Commander, BG Odowaa received a briefing about the objectives, the achievements and the challenges of the Mission. During the meeting the highest authority expressed words of grateful for the professionalism and the excellent work done, highlighting the important of the advisory, mentoring and training activities performed by the EUTM-S personnel.

EUTM RCA
On 21st October, President Faustin-Archange Touadera, the supreme leader of the Central African Armies, came in person to preside over the ceremony held in Bouar, in the Nana Mambéré, and marking the completing 1of 2 weeks of basic continuing. Even if this is only a stage in their military life, this ceremony is for them a result. In a few days, they will be assigned to operational units in Bangui or in the provinces to contribute to security and thus participate in the stabilisation of the country.
Mini EUMC Away day

On 10th October, the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) had a Mini Away day event organized under Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in Brussels. In the occasion, General Graziano delivered his opening remarks on a topic chosen as a military priority by the Finnish Presidency - Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in Defence. The Russia’s military posture in the Artic was also addressed in a following dedicated session.

EU-UN Senior Official Workshop on Humanitarian Civilian – Military Coordination

On 1st October, the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC), General Claudio Graziano, addressed the EU-UN Senior Official Workshop on Humanitarian Civilian – Military coordination. The event was organized by DG ECHO in the context of the 2019-2021 UN-EU partnership priorities on peace operations and crisis management and gathered senior military officials and experts from EU, UN and NGOs to discuss ways to strengthen CMCoord and its linkages with IHL and PoC in the Sahel.

Farewell to the IE MILREP

In October, the Chairman, General Claudio Graziano, bid farewell to the IE MILREP at the EU Military committee.

"Today, as EUMC, we bid farewell to our friend and colleague, Brigadier General Philip Brennan, Ireland Military Representative to EU. On behalf of the whole Committee, thank you Philip, for the strong commitment and dedication you have provided to EU initiatives" General Graziano said.

Meeting with the Vietnamise Minister of Defence

On 16th October, the Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC), General Claudio Graziano met with the Hanoi delegation, led by Gen Ngo Xuan Lich, Minister of Defence of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This was a precious occasion to discuss issues of common interest in the field of Security and Defence. "The EU Military Committee welcomes the signature of the Framework Partnership Agreement between EU and Vietnam, and looks forward to support the pragmatic implementation in the context of CSDP Security and Defence dimension" General Graziano said.