

## Operational forces of WEU

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**Last updated:** 08/07/2016



## Operational forces of Western European Union

Article J.4(2) of the Maastricht Treaty of 7 February 1992 requested Western European Union (WEU) ‘to elaborate and implement decisions and actions of the [European] Union which have defence implications’. The aim was for the European Union (EU) to have at its disposal, through WEU, a defence arm which would give it an intervention capability and the means of exerting military coercion. At the same time, EU Member States which were members of WEU also needed to step up the European contribution to solidarity within the Atlantic Alliance, better known as the European pillar of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (see Declaration No 30 annexed to the EU Treaty).

Previously, European forces were national units which could be trained to operate in unison, with the help of multinational manoeuvres and exercises, harmonised NATO regulations and policies of interoperability and standardisation.

Endeavours had also been made within WEU itself in the area of operational military and police cooperation, such as the concerted actions in the Gulf (1988–1990), the WEU-coordinated operations in connection with the Yugoslav conflict (1992–1996), police training in Albania (1997–2001) and joint action on mine clearance in Croatia (1992–2001). Cooperation also took the form of surveillance and planning instruments such as the establishment of a Satellite Centre on 27 June 1991 and the setting up of a WEU Planning Cell which became operational on 1 October 1992.

When the Treaty of Maastricht was being negotiated and preparations were under way for the Rome NATO summit of November 2001, two proposals were tabled. The first, from Italy and the UK, formed the basis of the agreement within the Alliance on the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI). It was based on creating a European reaction force developed by WEU Member States to respond to threats outside the NATO area or to carry out peace-keeping operations. At the same time, France and Germany announced the development of a Franco-German brigade with a view to converting it eventually into an army corps, to be joined by units from other WEU Member States to form the nucleus of a European corps.

These initiatives, which were taken during October 1991, foreshadowed the introduction of the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF), i.e. the flexible forces and capabilities which could be seconded from the NATO structure for specific missions (see below). Existing forces made available to WEU were also defined (forces ‘answerable’ to WEU or FAWEU). The overall idea was that multinational units should be able to wear ‘several hats’ according to which organisation was chosen to be in charge of them in the field, with the forces being made available to WEU or NATO in the event of a crisis and after the national authorities had given their political agreement.

### **Forces answerable to WEU (FAWEU)**

With the Treaty of Maastricht and the WEU Council meeting held at Schloss Petersberg, Bonn, on 19 June 1992, the Member States declared that they were prepared to second military units from the whole range of their conventional forces to WEU.

Military units from WEU Member States, acting under WEU authority, could be used for a number of ‘Petersberg’ tasks, that is to say humanitarian or rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making (the Petersberg tasks). Units would come from forces belonging to the WEU Member States, including forces with NATO tasks — in that event, after consulting NATO — and would be organised on a multinational basis, with personnel from more than one branch of the armed forces.

The WEU Member States also decided to set up and organise the training of appropriate capabilities to enable WEU military units to be deployed by land, sea or air in order to carry out these tasks.

From the Petersberg Council onwards, the forces were gradually designated: the European Corps (or Eurocorps), the UK/NL Amphibious Force, and then the multinational division (Centre) <sup>(1)</sup>. The same

applied to the Franco-British joint European Air Group (EAG) created by the Chartres Agreement of 18 November 1994 and later opened up to other countries, and also Eurofor or Euomarfor (1995), the Staff of the first German-Dutch corps (1997) and the Spanish-Italian amphibious force (1997).

At the time, the main multinational unit which could be seconded to WEU was the European army corps whose establishment was announced by France and Germany on 16 October 1991. The European Corps (created on 22 May 1992 by decision of the La Rochelle summit) was opened to other contributor countries — Belgium on 25 June 1993, Spain on 1 July 1994 and Luxembourg on 7 May 1996 — as soon as the founder member countries agreed that the force could also be seconded for NATO tasks (through the agreement on their use reached with NATO's SACEUR on 21 January 1993). With its headquarters in Strasbourg operational since 5 November 1993 and armed, mechanised forces designed for heavy combat, Eurocorps is basically a land force.

Despite not being involved in the field in the Petersberg missions under the WEU banner or in crisis-management tasks as part of NATO (except as a headquarters for KFOR in Kosovo, SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and ISAF in Afghanistan), Eurocorps is seen by analysts as the beginnings of a European army, with a planning structure, a decision-making capability and the capacity to take action.

NATO's multinational airmobile and airborne (Centre) division consisting of Belgian, British, Dutch and German units was also put forward as a unit to be seconded to WEU at the WEU Council of Ministers in Rome on 19 May 1993 (the question of the UK/NL Amphibious Force was raised at the same time). Eurofor and Euomarfor, the establishment of which was announced at the Lisbon Council of 15 May 1995, were respectively a European rapid deployment land force and a pre-structured but non-permanent European multinational maritime force also equipped with amphibious capabilities. France, Italy, Portugal and Spain were the countries that comprised the two forces involved in what were called 'southern operations'.

Since the WEU Marseille summit of 13 November 2000 and the incorporation of certain WEU functions into the EU, the FAWEU have become multinational forces seconded to NATO and the EU (European security and defence policy, ESDP). They are sometimes opened up to new participating Member States and they have embarked on a process of greater flexibility, interoperability and heightened responsiveness.

### **The Combined Joint Task Forces**

The concept of the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) was adopted at the NATO summit of January 1994. It meant that WEU could use not only the forces and resources of the European allies (FAWEU) but also the collective facilities of the Atlantic Alliance, such as communications systems, command structures, integrated tools and defence staff capabilities in know-how and planning. All these factors were supposed to strengthen the European pillar in the Alliance and support European missions under indirect NATO control. Because of political and diplomatic tension, uncertainties surrounding the project and the degree of political and strategic autonomy enjoyed by the European nations in the 1990s — the debate between Europeanists and Atlanticists — the agreement was not finalised until the end of 2003, in the framework, this time, of EU–NATO relations (referred to as the Berlin Plus declaration).

(December 2009)

(1) In German territory