



## European cooperation on operational preparedness

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Relations internationales

**For SAG (2S) Patrick ALABERGÈRE, it is on the right track, even if there is still room for improvement in certain areas.**

As far as training is concerned, the American doctrine <sup>58</sup> has raised to the rank of sacred principle the famous "Train as you will fight" that the French Army has adopted by always seeking to train in conditions as close as possible to combat. Our current and future operational commitments with our European partners will require our soldiers to be prepared together before they can fight side by side to claim victory together.

European cooperation on operational readiness is therefore an absolute necessity if we are to achieve interoperability in combat. but fortunately this is already a reality with our closest allies, although there is still room for improvement.

This article will focus on the training aspect of operational readiness, without addressing the training aspect, which remains, despite everything, the first step to take before being able to train collectively.

### **The need to speak the same tactical language and enhance interoperability**

Training with our European allies has as its primary raison d'être the preparation of joint commitments in operations. Everything stems from this desire, since today our deployments are systematically carried out in the framework of multinational coalitions.

It is therefore essential, from peacetime onwards, to learn to work together. This is the essential prerequisite before committing to an operation in order to gain confidence in one's partner, without which no cooperation is viable.

The aim of cooperation in operational preparation is to achieve the highest possible standard of interoperability and then to make working together more fluid during an

operation, because victory, like the lives of our soldiers, depends on it.

This interoperability, which can be likened to the search for the "Holy Grail", can be defined by the ability of forces from different countries to intervene in a coordinated and effective manner. This requires knowledge of the partner's doctrine and procedures, which is refined during joint training.

They make it possible first of all to take stock of the differences, then to find and test the solutions envisaged to overcome them.

Interoperability cannot be decreed; it is built day by day through mutual knowledge and the practice of "training together" during joint exercises, which is the only way to make it grow.

It is based on three main pillars:

- . Equipment, always seeking the greatest possible compatibility in order to exchange, if possible in real time, operational information and intelligence for decision-making and therefore action. Compatibility in terms of equipment can also lead to significant gains in terms of maintenance and logistical support ;

- . Common or, at the very least, compatible doctrines and procedures, without which it is not possible to understand the manoeuvre envisaged;

- . Military personnel speaking the same tactical language (and if possible the same language), which makes it possible to work together to carry out the same mission. This dimension is essential because no technological development will replace prior knowledge and understanding of the partner's working methods and tactical thinking.

This construction needs time to solidify, it can only be worked on through extensive cooperation during regular exercises. It requires will and perseverance to move forward, to erase our differences, even our differences.

All our recent commitments with our European partners within multinational coalitions have been made possible by the existence of genuine cooperation in the area of operational preparation, which must be considered as one of the keys to success in operations. It is essential to ensure, for example, that tomorrow we will be able to provide fire or engineering support for our ally or to provide all or part of its logistical support.

Of course, training together means learning to understand each other and to work together for a single objective: to succeed in the mission. But it also means sharing operational experience, creating a brotherhood of arms by establishing and developing relationships between units, between leaders and between soldiers, which will be invaluable during a joint commitment under the European or other flag.

**Fortunately, this is already a reality for the French Army.**

Like all European soldiers, French soldiers have long since integrated this need for European cooperation in training. In order to make progress in this area, the will and initiative of the military leaders of the various countries is enough, with the backing of their political authorities of course. But this is an aspect of the construction of a Defence Europe where it is not necessary to agree on a common strategic vision in order to move forward.

European soldiers already know how to train together, they demonstrate this regularly and I am not worried about their ability to fight a common enemy together, if the political will exists.

This cooperation takes place in various frameworks: France's multilateral commitments within the European Union, through bilateral agreements with the Germans for the Franco-German Brigade, for which training and interoperability are daily, or with the British for the CJEF. <sup>59</sup>but also in the form of partnerships, for example with our Spanish, Italian and Belgian allies, to name but a few.

Thus training with our European partners concerns all levels and all operational functions. It takes the form of programming major annual exercises (Citadel Guibert, Colibri, etc.) and the twinning of large French units with their European counterparts according to their specific characteristics (11th parachute brigade and 9th marine infantry brigade with the British, 6th airborne brigade with the British, etc.).manages armoured units with the Spanish, 27th mountain infantry brigade with the Italians, particularly in the framework of the non-permanent staff of the Franco-Italian Alpine brigade, the 7th Armoured Brigade with the Belgians, the 4th air combat brigade with the Spanish FAMET). Moreover, during the training of the CRR-Fr <sup>60</sup>European partners are systematically invited to participate at brigade or even divisional level. It is in this work in coalition that the JRC-FR takes on its full meaning, as does the RRC-E <sup>61</sup> which is a headquarters where European cooperation on operational readiness is lived out on a daily basis.

Within the framework of bilateral agreements, the Chiefs of Staff of the Belgian and French armies signed an agreement in 2017 to strengthen ties in the areas of training and education. It resulted in particular in the setting up of joint training between the 1st Rifle Regiment (1st RTir) and the 12/13 Line Battalion of the Belgian Army, at the Centre d'entraînement aux actions en zone urbaine (CENZUB) in Sissone.

Furthermore, in the framework of the CAMO project <sup>62</sup> with the Belgian Army, officialized in November 2018, which goes well beyond the simple purchase of SCORPION equipment, it is also joint training and joint training in our centres that are planned.

As part of this dynamic, the Land Forces Command (LFC) has doubled its exercises outside France in 2017, making it possible to significantly increase its training capacities without being penalized by means unavailable here, since they are already deployed in operation. Thus the 11th Parachute Brigade regularly rubs shoulders with the Air Assault Brigade, notably at the Hohenfels camp in Germany for the exercise "The Air Assault Brigade". annual Swift Response. The 27th Mountain Infantry Brigade is constantly training with its transalpine twin.

But there is still room for improvement by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the revival of European defence.

With the momentum created by the revival of defence issues in Europe, the time has perhaps come to think a little further about the development of European military cooperation in the field of training. Some avenues do exist.

### Preparing the future in shared centres of excellence

Why not capitalise on the initiative that came into being in December 2017 in the framework of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PSC), where 17 projects will be launched.s, including the establishment of a training centre for the operational

preparation of military personnel for deployment in the framework of an EU mission. <sup>63</sup> It may be interesting to consider how to go further, going beyond the framework of preparation for missions under the aegis of the European Union alone, to offer generic training opportunities to European units.

For example, the possibility should be studied of developing, somewhere in Europe, with European funding, a manoeuvre and fire training centre enabling the equivalent of a GTIA to be engaged. <sup>64</sup> on the model of the BATUS <sup>65</sup> used by the British in Canada. It would thus be accessible at a lower cost to European armies, which could not move the equipment needed to train a regiment on the other side of the Atlantic as much as they needed. At a time when ecological and regional planning constraints are important and require each army to defend its training areas, it would no doubt be wise to share some training infrastructures even more. For they are more than ever essential for reaching the operational level required to be able to engage in combat ready.

Everyone is looking for the same training capacities for their units, without necessarily having the financial and human resources to have their own.

Thus for combat training in urban areas, France and Germany have each developed their own centres. The French CENZUB opened about ten years ago on the Sissone camp, which enjoys a great international reputation since its instructors were sent to the United Arab Emirates to participate in the creation of the local urban combat centre. The Germans inaugurated their own in October 2017, called "Schnöggersburg", which will become the largest infrastructure of its kind in Europe, with a budget of 140 million euros.

Many European countries have thus developed specific infrastructures to conduct their training. This is notably the case for firing training in different configurations (in urban areas in Sissone with the Urban Area Firing Complex (CT ZUB) dedicated to this specific environment or the CETIA <sup>66</sup> OPERA in Canjuers to train a SGTIA <sup>67</sup>), for tactical training against an opposing force in order to evaluate a unit's ability to maneuver, to train for combat in mountainous, desert, tropical forest, underground, or simply to allow for the healing of units, etc..

Instead of spreading out, why not imagine developing, with European funding, centres of excellence in certain areas of training for the benefit of European nations that could benefit from these facilities and the recognised know-how of certain armies at the forefront of a particular field. They could thus conduct training by familiarising themselves with the "Combat Proven" tactical procedures in force in those centres of excellence, while at the same time improving their interoperability.

The organised pooling of these rare and expensive resources could be developed in formulas that remain to be imagined, in a "time and sharing" approach that could go as far as joint ownership in order to share the costs of construction, operation and even supervision.

Efforts should also be made to facilitate the access of these centres of excellence to interested European armies by drawing up agreements between countries to facilitate the movement of personnel. The aim should also be to facilitate access to the European armies concerned by drawing up agreements between countries to facilitate the movement of units and their stay and, in particular, to simplify customs formalities and the arrangements for reimbursing costs incurred between nations.

### **Cooperation in the field of simulation and instrumentalisation of training centres**

The other area of the future where European cooperation is essential to remain at the forefront of modern armies is that of training simulation.

It is essential to explore the avenues that are opening up with the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics at European level in order to provide centres of excellence with the most efficient and realistic tools in this field. The field of possibilities will undoubtedly be immense with AI in the development of combat simulation software automata to better model our commitments and allow more realistic training for our PCs. This effort must be made at the European level to free ourselves from the supervision of American industrialists in the world of simulation.

The same is true for the development of operational simulation tools allowing the use of training centres such as CENZUB or the French Combat Training Centre (CENTAC) which will be equipped with the CERBERE programme. <sup>68</sup>A system of instrumented simulation that will make it possible to monitor the clashes, coupled with an extraordinary educational tool. In particular, it allows for multimedia analysis after the action, by using videos of the fighting, as well as recordings of voice exchanges via the combatants' information and geolocation systems.

These are some examples of avenues to be explored to further develop European cooperation in operational preparedness. This is the price to be paid so that our European armies are up to the task of tomorrow's commitments and continue to lead the way in the construction of a European defence, while waiting for politicians to catch up one day, perhaps, to catch up?

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**58 Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 7-0, Training Units and Developing Leaders.**

**59 Combined Joint Expeditionary Force.**

**60 CRR-FR: Rapid Reaction Corps - France.**

**61 RRC-E: European Rapid Reaction Corps.**

**62 Motorized CApacity.**

**63 European Union Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC); - European Training Certification Centre for European Armies.**

**64 GTIA: Groupement Tactique InterArmes.**

**65 British Army Training Unit Suffield is a British Army unit located in the extensive training area at Canadian Forces Base Suffield, Alberta, Canada. BATUS is the largest armoured training centre in the British Army.**

**66 CETIA: Centre d'Entraînement au Tir InterArmes.**

**67 SGTIA: Sub-Groupement Tactique InterArmes.**

68 CERBERE: Training centres representative of the battle spaces and the return of engagements.

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