



EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

PRESS RELEASE

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DEFENCE MINISTERS LAUNCH EUROPEAN HELICOPTER TRAINING

Today EU Defence Ministers launched a European Helicopter Training Programme to increase in the short-term the availability of helicopters for crisis management operations. The Programme will start in 2010. It will consist of two life exercises per year, one focussing on individual training and one on interoperability and operational tactics. An annual symposium will take stock of lessons learned from operations and further shape the development of further exercises.

“This is another concrete result of the Agency’s work. The Helicopter Training Programme will deliver immediately more helicopter capabilities, which we all know in a continuous shortfall in deployed operations”, said Head of the Agency Javier Solana, who chaired the meeting.

European Ministers met in the Steering Board of the European Defence Agency on 17 November. A Letter of Intent on the European Air Transport Fleet (EATF) was signed by fourteen Ministers.¹ The EATF aims to address the critical European shortfalls in air transport by developing a wide range of innovative solutions, from pooling training, logistics or procurement to exchanging flight hours and making aircraft available.

“A new milestone for the EATF has been reached. I am in particular happy that 14 Ministers have signed the Letter of Intent. Now, we have to work hard on elaborating the details of the different forms of pooling and cooperation”, said Alexander Weis, EDA’s Chief Executive.

The Ministerial Steering Board approved two Political Declarations:

- On European Military Airworthiness Requirements – Ministers underlined the political importance of developing and implementing common European Military Airworthiness Requirements which will significantly reduce costs of air systems and speed up European aircraft programmes.
- On Level Playing Field for the European Defence Equipment Market – Ministers stressed that the creation of a Level Playing Field is a prerequisite for fair competition in an open and transparent European Defence Equipment Market. They tasked the Agency to develop with the participating Member States a common understanding of the scope of the factors hampering the Level Playing

¹ Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden

Field, to consider what mitigating actions are achievable and in what timeframe, and to develop a roadmap based on prioritisation of the issues to be addressed.

Furthermore, the Ministerial Steering Board approved the launch of a new Category A programme on Unmanned Maritime Systems - UMS. This programme will serve as an umbrella for several Category B R&T projects, with different groups of Member States contributing. It will connect R&T priority work on uninhabited naval systems, especially underwater systems, with the Maritime Mine Counter-Measures project, which is one of the twelve priorities under the EDA Capability Development Plan.

Ministers also launched the European Framework Cooperation for Security and Defence, which aims at a systematic synchronisation between R&T investment under the EDA umbrella and by the Commission - thus maximising complementarity of civilian security, space and defence-related research programmes. EDA has been tasked to set up, together with the Commission and the European Space Agency, the details of the coordination scheme and to develop proposals for possible subjects for this cooperation, situation awareness being one possible candidate.

The Steering Board approved the Agency's Work Programme 2010. Work will focus on implementation of the four EDA strategies, on concrete projects and on other policies and initiatives. The Agency will have a 2010 budget of € 31 million, including € 8.4 million operational budget for studies, and will recruit four new staff bringing the EDA staff total to 113. The budget was adopted by the General Affairs and External Relations Council in Defence Ministers formation.

Ministers were informed on the results of the Agency's collection of defence data for 2008 and on the assessment of the collective benchmarks for defence R&T and equipment procurement, which shows positive trends with regard to European collaboration. A dedicated brochure has been released.

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- Background information –

The European Defence Agency (EDA) was established by the Council on 12 July 2004. It is designed “to support the Council and the Member States in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the ESDP as it stands now and develops in the future”. More specifically, the Agency is ascribed four functions, relating to:

- a) defence capabilities development;
- b) armaments cooperation;
- c) the European defence technological and industrial base and defence equipment market;
- d) research and technology.

These functions all relate to improving Europe’s defence performance, by promoting coherence in place of fragmentation.

The EDA is an Agency of the European Union. High Representative Solana is Head of the Agency, chairman of the Steering Board, which acts under the Council’s authority and within the framework of guidelines issued by the Council.

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