



BISON COUNTER 2021

Bison Counter is a periodically organised multinational live exercise bringing together Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) teams and capabilities from European countries as well as the US. The exercise's objectives are to exchange and train technical skills, to integrate and use available technical enablers at a tactical level and to implement the full C-IED operational cycle with a view to improving interoperability and resilience among European and Allied C-IED capabilities in their fight against a constantly evolving IED threat, both in military and counter-terrorism operations. Bison Counter is today the largest and most relevant EU exercise of the C-IED community.

After 2013 (The Netherlands) and 2016 (Sweden), the third edition of Bison Counter takes place from 11 October - 6 November 2021 in Sardinia, Italy.

A total of some 650 military staff from 10 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden), as well as Norway and the United States will participate in this exercise hosted by the Italian Armed Forces.



As in previous editions, the European Defence Agency (EDA) is closely involved in the organisation and running of Bison Counter 21 which integrates EDA projects such as the Joint Deployable Exploitation and Analysis Laboratory (JDEAL), the European Center for Manual Neutralisation Capabilities (ECMAN) and the Military Search Capability Building (MSCB).

It can also count on the support of NATO's C-IED Center of Excellence.



Bison Counter 21 will gather dedicated teams specialised in the following enabler capabilities:

- Military Search
- Military Working Dogs
- Combat Engineering
- Route Clearance
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (EOD/IEDD)
- EOD Divers
- EOD Manual Neutralization Techniques (MNT) Teams

- Weapons Intelligence Teams (WIT)
- Level 2 Technical Exploitation, fully manned and operational laboratory
- Combined Joint Task Force Headquarters.

The aim is to develop common processes, techniques, procedures and interoperability requirements. Lessons learned from previous Bison Counter editions will also be raised and included in the operational part. In the same vein, the exercise will also serve as an experimentation and testing ground for new IED related assets, equipment and technologies.

Exercise scenario

As one of the key objectives of Bison Counter is to increase responsiveness and operational readiness for EU crises management, the exercise scenario is built up on a Crisis Management Operation (CMO) and spread around different locations in order to meet the specific requirements of the different technical domains. The geographical dispersion also allows to replicate the real-life challenges that operations have to face in terms of Command and Control and Reporting, the handling and transportation of evidence collected from IED incidents, as well as their exploitation.

The exercise is organized in a way that allow for adequate Force Integration and Battle Staff Training before the start of the main phase of the Command Post and Field Exercise, which enhances the conditions for the sharing of information, lessons learned and best practice among multinational teams, bridging gaps and establishing the close human ties needed to foster meaningful cooperation among Member States – an interconnected federation of EU experts in the field of C-IED.

More exercises to come

It is the ambition of EDA's participating Member States to pursue the series of Bison Counter exercises beyond the 2021 edition, in a structured, comprehensive and coherent manner. An important step in that direction will be the upcoming launch, by 13 Member States, of a new EDA project already approved by EDA's Steering Board in November 2019, which foresees at least three additional editions of Bison Counter in 2023, 2025 and 2027.

The project will also establish a permanent Expert Team in charge of the planning of the exercises and its subsidiary activities, both at the conceptual and technical level, which will allow for the implementation of a consolidated Lessons Learned cycle, essential for moving towards an adequate harmonisation of capabilities and increased interoperability.

Another ambition of the project is to seek inter-agency cooperation among all relevant C-IED stakeholders in the EU, including national and multinational Centres of Excellence, law enforcement and Industry.

Background

The threat posed by IED is high in many theatres of operations and a constant challenge for any Crisis Management operation. It represents a significant restriction for the freedom of manoeuvre, the security of the population and the protection of forces. In order to be able to face the IED threat, Member States' Armed Forces and C-IED actors not only need to have the required highly technical skills and capabilities, but also the ability to interoperate smoothly and efficiently when operating in joint missions and operations. Bison Counter exercises are unique opportunities to test, train and improve this interoperability in a realistic combined environment (land, air & maritime) using the full spectrum of military operations.

TABLE: Teams involved in the Bison Counter 21 exercise

TEAM	QUANTITY
Dog teams (K9)	11 (27 dogs)
Intermediate/Advanced Search teams	3
Combat Engineer Platoons	2
Route Clearance Coy	1
Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) & Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD) teams	10
Under Water EOD teams	3
IEDD Manual Neutralization Technique (MNT) teams	6
Weapons Intelligence Teams (WIT)	9
Level 2 Technical Exploitation Lab	1
C-IED TF Command Post	1
Unmanned aerial systems (UAS) for intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance (ISR)	2