

“Personnel Recovery: Risks & Mitigations” conference
Keynote Speech
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(Check against delivery)

Generals, Admirals,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I am pleased to welcome you to the Personnel Recovery Conference jointly organised by the Italian Air Force and the European Defence Agency.
- I should express my gratitude to the Italian Air Force - and in particular to General Antonio Conserva - for hosting this event in Florence.
- Thanks to all of you attending this conference and joining our efforts to raise awareness of the significance of Personnel Recovery in saving lives.
- Indeed, the variety of attendees reflects the importance of the subject and the willingness not just to tackle the diverse risks that exist but also to contribute to realising the full potential of the Personnel Recovery domain.
- I do not need to tell you that the security environment in Europe and in the world is becoming increasingly uncertain, complex and fragile. You know this all too well.
- To live up to the expectations of the European citizens, an ambitious package to reinforce European security and defence policy was launched last year, and of course I refer to the EU Global Strategy, the European Defence Action Plan and the EU/NATO Joint Declaration.

- This package was endorsed by the European Council in December 2016, based on three key interlinked elements:
 - The implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the field of security and defence, with a new level of ambition and concrete set of actions to fulfil it. To this end, this year has seen the agreement of Defence Ministers in March to launch the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), a new, transparent and Member States-driven process, which will contribute to overcome capability shortfalls through enhanced information-sharing and cooperation in an EDA framework. And few weeks ago we witnessed the launch by defence ministers of an ambitious and inclusive Permanent Structured Cooperation in defence (PESCO), which could result in a real qualitative leap in European defence cooperation. EDA will certainly play an important role in its implementation, in accordance with the already existing Treaty's provisions
 - The second element is the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), which led to the presentation in June of this year by the European Commission of the European Defence Fund, with new financial tools to support capability development and defence cooperation in support of European defence industry and technological innovation in two so-called windows: the research window and the capability window. EDA again plays already an important role both upstream and downstream
 - The third interlinked element is the common set of 42 proposals for strengthening EU-NATO cooperation, based on the Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw in July 2016, and endorsed by both EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016. And all of us, EEAS, CION, EDA and the Member States, are working hard on the implementation of those proposals. It is expected that today the respective EU and NATO Councils will endorse 24 additional proposals thus raising even more the ambitions for closer EU and NATO cooperation.
- These together is the EU's response to ensure coherence and consistency between Intergovernmental and Community actions within EU. Also to ensure coherence between

EU and NATO on the basis of the single set of forces.

- EDA is in the centre of all these three important initiatives which set EU's level of ambition. This adds credits to the Agency but at the same time high responsibility to deliver towards its Member States.
- And this because the key success factor in all these initiatives is the timely and effective availability of capabilities where EDA, in support of the Member States, has a main responsibility.
- Indeed, EDA is well placed to support Member States to improve their capabilities and to tackle challenges and risks, including in the domain of Personnel Recovery.
- It is in this context that since 2007 the Agency, along with its Member States, has been working to address identified shortfalls over the full spectrum of Personnel Recovery; from the cultural and conceptual context to training aspects, and to the development of advanced technologies and tools.
- Taking into account the volatile situation in the theatres of operations, land, sea and air, the increasing number of emerging hybrid and asymmetrical threats, as well as the complexity of armed conflicts, it is evident that any CSDP military operation or civilian mission carries the risk of deployed personnel being trapped, isolated, captured or maltreated by enemy forces. Without any doubt, Personnel Recovery is an indispensable component of CSDP operations and missions.
- In this two-day conference you will have the opportunity to enhance your knowledge in the different aspects of Personnel Recovery with a particular focus on the identified risks in planning, organising and executing Personnel Recovery, but also how these challenges can be better and more efficiently mitigated or addressed.
- Along with the Italian Air Force, we are aiming at inducing strategic thinking based on national, EU and wider international perspectives in three primary questions of the conference:

- What needs to be done separately and what can be done together?
 - What can we do if things go wrong, or not as we planned?
 - How do we react?
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- As you can see from the agenda, we are keen on sharing the views and best practices from a variety of stakeholders ranging from EU Member States and EU institutions to international entities and organisations, as well as other like-minded countries which have a deep interest in optimising further Personnel Recovery.

 - This gives me the chance to underline that, while we are seeking to harmonise our procedures, to complement our actions and activities and to avoid duplications in this regard, we need in parallel to foster a shared Personnel Recovery culture and apply standardised practices at the extent possible.

 - It is also my view that the uniqueness of this conference lies in the fact that we will receive first-hand accounts from people who have been isolated in the theatre of operations and that they share with us the difficulties they faced and how they managed to overcome them.

 - Their story will be complemented with the testimony of the concerns and the feelings of the relatives and members of their families while “waiting at home” for them to return safely.

 - Given this specific part of the agenda, let me stress that in the cases that our personnel is isolated, then this could have an adverse impact not only for the operation’s security but also to the troops’ morale as well as to the public’s support and for relatives.
 - It is thus imperative to ensure the effective and quick recovery as well as the smooth reintegration of our personnel when in distress.

 - The European Union pays significant attention in saving the lives of its deployed personnel in operations and missions and therefore is ready to combine all possible diplomatic, civil and military options for ensuring their safe rescue.

 - Let me reassure you that we, at the European Defence Agency, will continue doing

our best to keep Personnel Recovery high on the Agenda of the Ministries of Defence, as we want to convey the right signal both to our political masters, to the European citizens as well as to every single soldier or civilian on the ground involved in missions and operations, on the significance of Personnel Recovery.

- EDA acknowledges its responsibility to ensure that robust, effective and synchronised Personnel Recovery capabilities and technologies are in place and available, as an integral part of any military operation.

- Despite the fact that tomorrow you will have the opportunity to be briefed in detail on the work and the products of the Agency in the field of Personnel Recovery, allow me to highlight some key achievements:

- It has been more than ten years since the Agency's Project Team Personnel Recovery began working in support of the EU Member States to be able to effect Personnel Recovery in the most efficient and effective manner
- With the active participation of fourteen EU Member States, the Project Team has managed to deliver a number of tangible results and valuable studies. Part of these achievements have been accomplished with the support of the EUMS.
- At this stage allow me to commend the members of the Project Team for their outstanding work and efforts to enhance Personnel Recovery capabilities, improve interoperability and promote synergies.
- Evidently, any Crisis Management Operation could involve different Member States, third countries and other organisations of relevance. Given the complexity of these operations as well as the volatile spaces where they are deployed, there is a growing need for ensuring that the involved personnel at the strategic, operational and tactical level is educated and trained with common Personnel Recovery principles, practices and standards be it military or civilian.
- In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that EDA has managed in recent years to

gather in its Project Team meetings relevant stakeholders for Personnel Recovery of the EU community along with representatives from a broad spectrum of international actors such as the European Personnel Recovery Centre (EPRC), NATO, the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) and others. I should acknowledge the good cooperation with all these entities.

- We are aiming at fostering, with the support of relevant stakeholders, a shared Personnel Recovery culture, as we consider that this dimension, combined with the appropriate capabilities, is the basis for ensuring that an effective safety net will be in place for those in need in the theatre of operations.
- To address the diverse challenges in the domain of Personnel Recovery, EDA has developed a multi-dimensional approach which encompasses four interconnected layers. The first one concerns the conceptual aspects of Personnel Recovery, the second and third deal with Command and Control technologies and the equipment, while the last one focuses on training and educational aspects.

I will start with the conceptual aspects of Personnel Recovery.

- This layer is crucial, as it enables different levels of stakeholders, the commanders and staff, the recovery forces and the isolated persons (“ISOPs”) to deepen their understanding based on the same fundamental principles and guidelines for Personnel Recovery according to their respective responsibilities, tasks and roles. This layer becomes vital since Member States may have different policies, priorities, capabilities and technologies. In 2011, EDA has contributed to this effort by supporting the development of the first EU “Concept for Personnel Recovery in Support of the CSDP”. Few months ago, the Agency, along with the Project Team Personnel Recovery and with the support of EPRC and other stakeholders, developed an updated and revised version of the Concept, which was sent to EUMS and it is now elaborated at the level of the European Union Military Committee Working Group. I am sure that the representative from EUMS will provide further information on this topic.

Let me now turn to the second and third layers which focus on technologies and

demonstrators.

- One of the most effective operational outputs of the Agency is called “PR FAS ATD” which stands for “Personnel Recovery Functional Area Service Advanced Technology Demonstrator”. In a nutshell, this demonstrator is an information management and command & control system designed to increase the efficiency of Personnel Recovery missions and operations. Tomorrow, you will have the opportunity to see a live demonstration of the tool and even test it. Let me highlight that this demonstrator is a software solution and has already been distributed to all Member States of the Agency as well as to other stakeholders upon their request.

- Additionally, one year ago, EDA delivered to its Member States an e-learning tool for Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Extraction called the SERE e-learning tool. It is expected that this tool will enable Member States to teach and train their staff before being deployed to Personnel Recovery missions, and will enhance the required harmonisation of SERE training among the Member States and the EU as a whole. Of note, this tool was developed based on the existing Swedish e-training tool. To be more accurate, instead of developing a new tool, EDA was authorised by the Swedish Armed Forces to translate the Swedish tool into English and to distribute to all the EU Member States without any additional cost.

Dear guests,

- The successful outcome of this constructive cooperation with the Swedish Armed Forces should be seen as a model of how pooling & sharing of assets and best practices can be implemented at a larger extent to save time, resources and, most of all, money. For those of you who are interested in the two tools that I have just described, you can find the respective information sheets in the exhibition area of this conference.

The final layer is related with the training aspects of Personnel Recovery.

- To address the need of the Member States to provide complete training of staff who will be manning a Personnel Recovery position at unit level, in a Personnel Recovery Coordination Cell or in a Joint Personnel Recovery Centre, EDA has developed a dedicated

project.

- This project was established in May 2013 within EDA under the lead of Sweden, and it so far includes eight contributing Member States (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands and Sweden). The success of the course is reflected by the fact that it initially has started with four Member States and within five years this number has doubled, while the course has been extended three times.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Coming to the end of my speech, let me highlight that the European Defence Agency's mission is to support the development of defence capabilities through cooperation among Member States; to stimulate defence Research and Technology and to act as a military interface to EU policies.

This mission applies perfectly to Personnel Recovery since it enables the Agency to address the wide spectrum of Personnel Recovery based on the expertise of its Member States in close link with civilian actors and relevant stakeholders.

My overall assessment is that we have managed to produce a substantial outcome in the field of Personnel Recovery, as indicated in my speech, ranging from the development of advanced technologies to conceptual and training aspects.

However still, there is a lot to be done, and as we are aware of this we are working in the right direction. We are also optimistic since we are not alone in this endeavor. However, we need to increase further our collaboration so we can enhance the interoperability of our Armed Forces' Personnel Recovery capabilities, to promote further synergies and to increase the number of trained personnel in this field.

Dear distinguished guests,

- I hope this conference will enable us to raise awareness of the significance of Personnel Recovery in saving lives. We need to reassure both our personnel and their relatives that safety is our primary concern and that we will do everything we can to ensure that no one will be left behind during his or her mission.

- In this context, I wish you all inspiring panel discussions, and I invite you to a fruitful and open debate.
- I couldn't conclude my speech without expressing my sincere gratitude to all the staff involved for their tremendous efforts to successfully organising this conference. Thanks to all of you.
- Let me also take this opportunity, as Christmas is approaching, to wish you a very Happy New Year and may all the isolated personnel be safely recovered and re-integrated in time to spend the Christmas period with their loved ones.

Thank you for your attention!