

The Origins

The Eurocorps' creation can be considered as the result of the Elysée Treaty signed on January 22nd, 1963 by the French President, Général de Gaulle, and the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. In this treaty aiming at strengthening the French-German relationship both countries committed themselves to cooperate in the field of defence. Apart from a closer political relationship, both countries planned personnel exchanges between their respective armed forces and cooperation in the field of defence industry.



In 1987, President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl decided to intensify the military cooperation between France and Germany: they announced the setup of the French-German Security and Defence Council that allowed the creation of the French-German Brigade, operational since 1991.

On October 14th, 1991, both heads of state and government informed the chairman of the Council of Europe, in a common letter, of their intention to reinforce this military cooperation. Thus they laid the foundations of a European army corps in which the other WEU members could participate. On the occasion of the La Rochelle summit on May 22nd, 1992, François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl took the official decision of creating the Eurocorps, simultaneously with the adoption of the common report of the French and German Defence Ministers. A few weeks later, as early as July 1st, a temporary staff installed itself in Strasbourg in order to set up the Eurocorps staff.

Missions and relationships



The Petersberg Declaration dated June 19th, 1992 defines the WEU's role as a EU defence component (Petersberg missions). Based on this orientation, the Eurocorps Member States decided on May 19th, 1993 in Rome to put the Eurocorps at the WEU's

disposal.

On January 21st, 1993, the SACEUR Agreement defined the Eurocorps' conditions of employment in a NATO framework.

This agreement points out:

- the Eurocorps' missions in a NATO framework,
- the competences for planning commitments,
- the Eurocorps' assignment under a NATO command-in-chief,

the responsibilities of and the relationship between the NATO Commander-in-Chief and the Eurocorps Commander in peacetime.

A

full

success

The French-German initiative rapidly interested other countries, notably Belgium. By integrating forces into an army corps, it participated in the construction of the European defence and security identity nevertheless keeping a role within NATO. Belgium's accession was approved on June 25th, 1993 by the Belgian government.

The official creation of the Eurocorps took place on October 1st, 1993 as Lieutenant-General Helmut Willmann took up the position of first Commanding General. The official ceremony took place in Strasbourg on November 5th, 1995 in the presence of the ministers of defence of the three participating countries (Germany, France, Belgium).

Spain officially joined the Eurocorps on July 1st, 1994.

Eurocorps soldiers participated in the Bastille Day parade on the Champs Elysées on July 14th, 1994. This event was a symbol for the Eurocorps and Europe's history.

[\(Link to video Early days of Eurocorps\)](#)

Luxembourg officially joined the Eurocorps on May 7th, 1996.

Exercises and operations



Since 1993 the Eurocorps participated in numerous exercises with the aim of reinforcing its operational capability.

The first real Eurocorps commitment started in 1998: approximately 470 servicemembers of the Eurocorps HQ left Strasbourg heading

for Bosnia-Herzegovina in 4 successive contingents in order to reinforce the **SFOR HQ**. The Eurocorps soldiers represented approximately 37% of the Force's HQ.

On January 28th, 2000, less than two years later, the NATO Council decided that the Eurocorps HQ should form the core of the **KFOR HQ in Kosovo**. From March to October 2000, approximately 350 Eurocorps soldiers formed the core of the KFOR III HQs in Pristina and Skopje. The end of the KFOR III mission was celebrated during an official ceremony in Strasbourg on October 17th, 2000. The ministers of defence of the Member States or their

representatives, Dr. Kouchner - special representative of the UN Secretariat General in Kosovo - and the civil and military authorities of Strasbourg were present. A year later, the Eurocorps HQ tested its newly adopted structure during the exercise Cobra 01 in the South of Spain. Several political and military institutions followed the exercise with great interest.



Restructuring of the Eurocorps

Meanwhile, important decisions were taken about the European Security and Defence Policy. These decisions had several consequences concerning the Eurocorps' role and structure. On May 29th, 1999, during the French-German summit of Toulouse, France and Germany suggested to put the Eurocorps as an intervention force at the EU's disposal in case of crisis.

This proposal was submitted to the other Member States that accepted it. It was then officially suggested to the EU at the Cologne summit, on June 3rd and 4th, 1999. During this summit Europe also decided to reinforce its intervention capabilities and to put reaction forces into place in case of crisis. The decision was confirmed and developed during the EU summit of Helsinki in December 1999. In November, in Luxembourg, the Eurocorps Member States defined the transformation modalities of this multinational unit into a rapid reaction corps at the disposal of the EU and NATO. The preparation of this transformation took a long time and started on June 5th, 2001. As early as April 2001, the member nations proposed the HQ as one of the "Deployable High Readiness Force Headquarters".

In 2002, NATO evaluated the HQ's general capabilities and its operational capability in several steps. The exercise Common Effort was an important part of the process at the end of which the HQ obtained its certification as **Rapid Reaction Force HQ**.

The Eurocorps opens its doors

One of the criteria for the certification as a High Readiness Force (Land) Headquarters was that the headquarters should be open for all NATO member nations. Spain, at that time, had the presidency of the Common Committee and invited the NATO members as well as the member nations of the European Union to integrate personnel or to send a liaison officer to the HQ Eurocorps. This is why the Framework Nations signed a new technical agreement with SACEUR on September 3rd, 2002. The NATO member nations Greece (03/09/2002), Poland (07/01/2003) and Turkey (03/09/2002) integrated personnel into the HQ Eurocorps Staff.

On February 25th, 2003, a technical agreement was signed with the European member nation Austria. Immediately afterwards an Austrian officer joined the Staff.

Under NATO's flag



In the beginning of the year 2004 HQ Eurocorps was tasked by the North Atlantic Council to take the lead of the NATO mission **ISAF in Afghanistan**. From August 2004 to February 2005, approximately 450 Eurocorps soldiers formed the core of the ISAF HQ in Kabul, with a major responsibility within this integrating step of the reconstruction and development process of Afghanistan. The sixth ISAF mandate was given to a European staff, HQ Eurocorps, a prototype of a potential European defence. 8000 soldiers (as of 17-Jan-2005), sailors and airmen made up ISAF, with contributions from 36 nations. March 16th 2005 the end of the ISAF VI mission was celebrated during an official ceremony in Strasbourg.

Meanwhile the North Atlantic Council earmarked HQ Eurocorps to lead the Land Component Command of the **NATO Response Force 7** (NRF7) from July 1st 2006 to December 31st 2006. Intensive training and preparations took HQ Eurocorps to the training areas of Bitche (France) and Wildflecken (Germany). In June 2006 the successful operational capability test took place during the NATO exercise “ Steadfast Jaguar” on the Cape Verde Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, followed by a six month stand-by period.