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Air Power Conference Hellenic Air Force

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Speaking notes DEAG

Title: An EAG perspective on future combined air operations

Introduction

- It is an honour for me to stand in front of you today in my role as the Director of The European Air Group and to share our perspective on the development of combined air operations in Europe.
- The security situation in and around Europe has changed significantly in recent years. Threats to our safety today are more diverse in nature and more direct than they have been for a long time.
- In order to be able to respond quickly and decisively to new threats, EAG Nations and their allies need to be able to execute combined operations as seamlessly as possible, without advanced warning or the need for preparatory multinational readiness exercises. This can only be achieved through developing and maintaining a high level of interoperability.
- The need for interoperability is increasing further with the introduction of new technologies and capabilities that rely on their ability to connect to networks in order to exchange data and information with other systems. It is also vital that our airmen and women are able to operate together in the information domain successfully.
- Interoperability is at the core of all combined air operations and few organizations are better equipped to promote it than the EAG.

The European Air Group

- The EAG is an independent organization, comprising the air forces of seven European nations.
- At the core of the EAG is its Permanent Staff in the EAG Headquarters at RAF High-Wycombe in the UK.
- In order to achieve its goals, the EAG develops products, such as technical arrangements, SOPs and manuals, and organizes activities such as exercises, courses, seminars and workshops.
- The EAG focusses on achieving short to medium term interoperability improvements at the tactical and operational levels. Examples of its output are the European Typhoon Interoperability Project, annual VOLCANEX Force Protection exercises and the Advanced Aviation Medicine Course.

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- The EAG is currently working on some 20 different projects in four different domains of air power: Air Operations, Force Protection, Logistics and CIS/Cyber.
- The main strength of the EAG is its compact and flexible organization. Taking decisions by simple majority, the seven air chiefs of the EAG air forces can easily redirect the work of the EAG to adapt to changing circumstances, without extensive multilateral negotiations.

EAG 20th Anniversary

- This summer, it will be 20 years ago that the European Air Group was established to improve interoperability between its member nations in order to strengthen their capabilities in the pursuit of shared interests. The signing of the Inter-Governmental Agreement by France and the United Kingdom on 6 July 1998 – and the consecutive accession of Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Belgium – created an organization that is unique in its composition and in its ability to deliver concrete results.
- Since it was founded, the EAG has proven to be able to punch well above its weight, with remarkable achievements, such as establishing the foundations of the European Air Transport Command and the European Personnel Recovery Centre.
- The establishment of the European Air Transport Command in the Netherlands can for a large part be attributed to the EAG as it is the direct result of the execution of a number of EAG projects, such as the European Airlift Study, development of the ATARES Technical Arrangement and the establishment of the European Airlift Coordination Cell, the last of which formed the basis of the EATC.
- The establishment of the European Personnel Recovery Centre in Poggio Renatico, Italy, was the result of a decision of the EAG Steering Group in 2013 that was based on a preliminary EAG study and subsequent activities.

4th-5th generation interoperability

- And now, the EAG is once again creating strategic effects by leading the way for the development of multinational interoperability between 4th and 5th generation weapon systems within the European theatre.
- Mainly driven by information technologies, military operations are increasingly becoming information-centric, with sensors, effectors and command-and-control nodes connected through redundant networks that gather and share vast amounts of data. The information that can be extracted from this data can significantly improve situational awareness and greatly increase the quality, precision and speed of military decision making.
- The advent of so called 5th generation fighters marks the shift that Airpower is making from Air Superiority to Information Superiority.
- In the coming years, 5th generation fighters are being introduced into the air forces of several European Air Group (EAG) nations. Compared to existing platforms, these aircraft will bring radical advances in sensor technology, precision, information processing power, communication capabilities and stealth. Making optimal use of these capabilities will not only change the role of

the jet fighter in joint combined operations, but their integration with existing technologies in a multinational environment will also present numerous challenges in the area of interoperability for EAG nations and their allies.

- And addressing these challenges is of fundamental importance to our collective security. With 4th generation fighters still making up some 80% of our combined air forces in ten years' time, we need an optimum and efficient combination of 4th and 5th gen systems to be able to win future combined air operations.

Combined Air Interoperability Programme

- In order to engage the challenges, that result from integrating 5th gen fighters into our existing air forces, the EAG has developed a multiyear programme that is aimed at creating the optimum conditions for future multinational training, exercises and operations.
- The EAG's Combined Air Interoperability Programme identifies 16 individual challenges that have to be resolved as much as possible to achieve this objective.
- These challenges address a broad variety of topics, such as 4th – 5th Gen connectivity, Red Forces capabilities, Operational Training Infrastructure, synthetic training networking, standardized facility requirements, common terminology and common operating procedures.
- After the programme was endorsed by the EAG Steering Group in July of last year, these challenges are now being developed into separate projects, about half of which are already being executed as we speak.
- The EAG Combined Air Interoperability Programme is attracting the attention of a wide variety of nations and organizations at senior levels, thereby extending and strengthening the EAG network and increasing its impact.

Challenges for Europe

- 5th Generation integration isn't just presenting new challenges to the EAG nations, it is also presenting new challenges for European air forces as a whole.
- Looking at the European air forces of today, we see big differences in the capabilities and technologies they use. Some of the fighters that are in our inventories – like the F-16, Mirage 2000 and Tornado – were developed in the sixties and seventies, while later generations – such as the Rafale and Eurofighter Typhoon – entered service much more recently. And now, the first nations are starting to use the F-35, thereby entering the information age, while others may not start to introduce 5th Generation weapon systems for another 10 or 20 years.
- This lack of synchronization of capability development programmes presents a major challenge for interoperability between European air forces as a whole.
- This problem is aggravated by the fact that most of us are developing our own visions of the future, that are not necessarily aligned with those of our allies.

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- The interoperability gap that results from a lack of harmonization and synchronization between our national capability development plans is more serious than we may realize. In order to be successful in information centric operations, we need to be able to connect all of the necessary systems together. In the future, if you cannot plug into the network, you don't get to play.

Closing the interoperability gap

- So how can we close this interoperability gap?
- The first step is to understand that interoperability is not the final step in capability development, but should be the first consideration.
- If we really take future combined air operations seriously, 'interoperability' should be the first requirement when we start developing our future capabilities. And more important than just writing it down, we should even be willing to prioritize it over our national interests.

The way ahead

- With its Combined Air Interoperability Programme, the EAG is playing its part in integrating new technologies into combined air operations. But it cannot be successful by doing this alone.
- Interoperability between 4th and 5th generation is not the exclusive domain of the EAG, and the EAG is not the only organization that is working on integration.
- By cooperating and coordinating with other organizations, such as HQ AIRCOM, JAPCC, TLP, EDA and USAFE, the EAG is identifying related initiatives, creating synergies and avoiding duplications. But more importantly, this enables us to not only improve interoperability between the seven EAG nations, but maybe even more importantly, to contribute to the future of European air power and European security.

Thank you for your attention