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Eurocorps' history

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Chronology of events

Barracks

The creation of the EUROCORPS can be seen as a logical consequence of the **Elysée Treaty** signed on January 22, 1963 (by *President de Gaulle* and *Chancellor Adenauer*). With this treaty, aimed at enhancing reconciliation between France and Germany, the two countries committed themselves to collaborate in the field of defence. Besides closer political consultation between the two countries, this also led to exchanges of personnel of the respective armed forces and co-operation in the defence industry.

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24 years later, in 1987, *President Mitterrand* and *Chancellor Kohl* decided to further improve military co-operation between France and Germany. They announced the creation of the French-German Security and Defence Council leading to the creation of the **French-German Brigade** in 1989. This major unit, comprising French and German units, has been operational since October 1991.

On October 14, 1991, both heads of states informed the President of the European Council in a joint letter that they intended to further increase their military co-operation. This process was the basis for a Corps that would also be open to other WEU member states. On May 22, 1992, during the **La Rochelle Summit** the Joint Report of the French and German Defence Ministers was endorsed and *François Mitterrand* and *Helmut Kohl* formally founded the EUROCORPS. A few weeks later, on July 1, 1992, an implementation team arrived in Strasbourg to build up the Eurocorps Headquarters.

Tasks & relationship

On June 19, 1992, the **Petersberg Declaration** of the Western European Union defined the WEU's role as the defence arm of the European Union and set the different tasks (or "Petersberg missions") that could be carried out under WEU authority (nowadays: EU authority). One year later in Rome, on May 19, 1993, the member states decided to make the Eurocorps available to the WEU.

On January 21, 1993, the **SACEUR Agreement** defined the relationship between NATO and the Eurocorps. This agreement specifies possible Eurocorps missions within NATO, competencies for contingency planning, the commitment of the Eurocorps under NATO command as well as the relations between NATO commanders and the Commander Eurocorps in peacetime.



A success story

The Franco-German initiative quickly aroused the interest of other countries. This was particularly true for Belgium that wanted to integrate its forces into an army corps. It was looking for a way to demonstrate its willingness to contribute to the construction of a European defence and security identity, while at the same time preserving its role within NATO. Since the Eurocorps offered such a solution, Belgium joined on June 25th, 1993.

The first Commanding General of the Eurocorps, *Generalleutnant Helmut Willmann*, assumed his appointment on October 1, 1993. The inaugural ceremony was held in Strasbourg on November 5, 1993 and was co-chaired by the defence ministers of the first three participating countries (France, Germany and Belgium).

Spain joined the Eurocorps on July 1, 1994, becoming the fourth member.

A symbolic moment for Eurocorps and European history was the participation of the Eurocorps in the French National Day military parade on 14th July 1994 when Eurocorps soldiers marched down the Champs Elysées in the centre of Paris. One week later the Eurocorps paraded in Brussels for the Belgian National Day.

Luxembourg joined the Eurocorps on May 7, 1996, as the fifth Member State.

Exercises and operations



Since 1993, several exercises were conducted to strengthen the readiness and operational capability of the Eurocorps. Several NATO exercises brought the Eurocorps closer to NATO. The first real mission started in 1998 when some 470 personnel from HQ Eurocorps reinforced the **SFOR Headquarters** in Bosnia-Herzegovina in four consecutive contingents. They made up to almost 37% of this NATO HQ.

On January 28, 2000, less than two years later, the North Atlantic Council entrusted HQ Eurocorps and its Commander with the mission of building the core of the **KFOR Headquarters** in Kosovo. From March to October 2000, 350 Eurocorps soldiers formed the nucleus of the KFOR-3 headquarters in Pristina and Skopje. On its return, the achievements of HQ Eurocorps' in KFOR were

acknowledged at a formal ceremony in Strasbourg (October 17), attended by the Ministers of Defence of the member states or their representatives, Dr. Kouchner Special Representative of the (UN) Secretary General in Kosovo, and Strasbourg authorities. One year later, HQ Eurocorps controlled its newly adopted structure during the COBRA 01 exercise, observed with great interest by political and military institutions.

Restructuring the Eurocorps

In the meantime important decisions had been taken on the European Security and Defence Policy. These decisions have affected the role and structure of the Eurocorps. On May 29, 1999, at the French-German Summit in Toulouse, it was proposed to place the Eurocorps at the disposal of the European Union for crisis response operations. This was accepted by the other member states and formally announced at the European Union (EU) Summit in Cologne (3-4 June 1999). At this Summit, the EU decided to strengthen its capabilities and to set a crisis response force. This was confirmed during the Helsinki EU Summit (December 1999). Around the same time, at a meeting in Luxembourg, Eurocorps member states decided to transform the Eurocorps into a Rapid Reaction Corps available to both the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance. After detailed studies the present transformation started on 5th June 2001. No later than April 2001, the member states of the Eurocorps had offered the corps to NATO as a "NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Headquarters."



In 2002, NATO inspected the headquarters' new capabilities and operational readiness in several phases. The exercise Common effort was the decisive milestone within this process. At its end, Eurocorps was recommended to be certified as a NATO high readiness force.

The Eurocorps opens its doors

One criterion for the certification as a High Readiness Force (Land) Headquarters imposed that the headquarters should be open for all NATO member nations. Spain, at that time the nation having the presidency of the common committee, invited the NATO members and also the member nations of the European Union to integrate personnel or to send a liaison officer to HQ Eurocorps. Therefore the framework nations signed a new technical agreement with SACEUR on September 03, 2002. The NATO member nations: Greece (since 09.03.2002), Poland (since 01.07.2003) and Turkey (since 09.03.2002) integrated personnel in the Staff of HQ Eurocorps. Canada integrated personnel in the Staff of HQ Eurocorps in July 2003. On February 25, 2003 a technical agreement was signed with the European member nations, Austria and Finland. Immediately afterwards an Austrian and a Finnish officer integrated the Staff. On April 1, 2003 an Italian liaison officer arrived at HQ Eurocorps and joined his British and Dutch colleagues.