

## EUROMIL Wednesday Q&A series

Did the Strategic [Com]pass muster?



**General Robert Brieger, Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (EUMC)**

### **What has been for you the biggest success of the Compass so far?**

In the EU framework, having a strategic document addressing security and defence, with so many clear action items and deadlines, signed by all 27 Member States, was a success in itself. Bringing together so many different, although close, perspectives was not an easy task. But the worst mistake, now, would be to rest on one's laurels instead of implementing all action items within the deadlines. Member States have jointly and clearly stated that the EU must raise its ambitions in dealing with threats and challenges menacing its citizens and interests. Now, this commitment must be honoured by an implementation phase that shall see no compromises. To answer the question, I believe we shall never be complacent over the results we have achieved, until the whole project of a European Common Defence will see the light. We owe it to our citizens, we owe it to our partners, and to the whole International Community.

### **Rapid Deployment Capacity: a big step towards strategic autonomy and increased defence capabilities. What is the next step now? What is currently and will be the role of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and Eurocorps in the RDC?**

You mentioned different aspects of a common requirement: the EU must be capable to act, by either preventing or managing the crises that are affecting its interests and security. Either in cooperation with other security stakeholders, or in autonomy, when the support of partners may not be available, for whatever reason. The Rapid Deployment Capacity is a tool that will provide us with the necessary flexibility to act, in short-to-real time, demonstrating the credibility and efficiency of the EU, in terms of being a security provider and partner.

To employ such a powerful and scalable tool, we will, of course, need the personnel, the strategic enablers and the capacity to handle it. This includes the Command and Control instruments that shall be bundled in the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, a pragmatic asset for the EU to manage its own missions and operations. The discussion on how to enhance the current structure towards increased responsibilities is currently ongoing, including how to adapt already existing realities to match the new ambitions.

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**How would you like to see the Strategic Compass evolve and what do you wish to be the outcome of the closer defence cooperation between the Member States?**

The Strategic Compass has been conceived to pave the way for EU Security and Defence, for the next 10 years. Yet, it is not engraved in stone. Au contraire, it is supposed to set up some pillars and then be open for adaptations. In military terms, we say “learn as you fight”: while we move forward, we deal with an evolving security scenario, more and more demanding each day. This experience helps us to improve and move forward, adapting our course within the agreed route: the metaphor of the skipper of a sailing boat perfectly fits this concept. That said, our most urgent need, now, are responsible and wise leaders we can count on, across Member States, to pursue the project and speak with one single voice. The toughest challenge will be to overcome some national interests and implement all the cooperative initiatives listed by the Strategic Compass. As I often say, it will need some courage to take a small step back, as a single Member States, to make a huge leap forward, as a credible Union.