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# European Air Transport Command

## Transition from ATC to EATC

To combat worldwide crises and conflicts means for the European armed forces to be capable of transporting personnel and materiel quickly and in large numbers. The demand for air transport associated with that and the necessity to develop synergies in an European approach have, at an early stage already, led to the resolution to build up a European air transport command.

The security and protection of the citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany require a comprehensively designed security policy where armed missions of the Bundeswehr conjointly with allies and partners have meanwhile become an integral part of security provision. The spectrum for the employment of German armed forces encompasses peacekeeping, stabilizing, and peace enforcing operations as well as tasks within the scope of national crisis prevention, such as the evacuation of German citizens from emergency situations as well as humanitarian missions. An essential prerequisite for the discharge of these tasks is the strategic, operational, and tactical mobility of the forces and means employed. With regard to the quick and worldwide response capability of the armed forces, the military air transport is being attached particular importance. The military air transport is a joint task of all Services. In the Bundeswehr (Federal Armed Forces) the Luftwaffe (Air Force) provides the forces for the strategic air transport of personnel and materiel to distant areas of operation, for in-flight refueling as well as for the tactical and operational air transport of personnel and materiel inside the area of operations, including the support of military rescue and evacuation operations. Tactical air transport for the support of operations in the deployment area as well as the demand-related support of Special Forces in the joint and combined operation pool gains increasingly in importance in especially the current missions. The tasks of the Luftwaffe also comprise the worldwide transport of public figures of the political and parliamentary domain as well as the strategic and operational air transport of wounded, injured and sick personnel (MedEvac).



Commissioning of the EATC.

Photos/Grafics: EATC, Authors, Report-Verlag

### Air Transport Command

The necessity for a central management of the missions of the air transport forces was already realized after the first relief flights of the Luftwaffe to Africa in 1960. Based on the experiences gathered in these first missions, a command authority for the central management of air transport forces was set up in Köln-Wahn in 1961. Assigned to this command were the Air Transport Wing, the air rescue control agencies as well as the Special Air Mission Wing of the Federal Ministry of Defence, which were initially placed only under technical control. The administrative control of the air transport units remained in the responsibility of the air force divisions. Additional experiences gained in the missions led, in 1971, to a consolidation of the administrative and technical control of the air transport forces of the Luftwaffe in an air transport command at the Münster garrison.

Since that time, the Air Transport Command has been performing the technical task “air

transport” for the Luftwaffe and was thus the only remaining technical division of the Luftwaffe. It was in charge of both the administrative and technical control of the three air transport wings (ATW) – 61<sup>st</sup> ATW Penzing, 62<sup>nd</sup> ATW Wunstorf, and 63<sup>rd</sup> ATW Hohn – as well as of the Special Air Mission Wing of the Federal Ministry of Defence. In pilot function for the Bundeswehr and in a special function for the political and parliamentary domain, it was also responsible for the planning, control, execution, and evaluation of medium and long haul air transport missions. Qualified staff from a central command post effected the worldwide management of all air transport missions of the Luftwaffe around the clock on every day in the year. The Search and Rescue (SAR) Service of the Bundeswehr is an establishment of the armed forces for providing support in operations. It is simultaneously part of the national Search and Rescue Service of the Federal Republic of Germany. The SAR Service of the Bundeswehr was placed under the control of the Air Transport Command. For the manage-

## Contribution by France



TRANSALL C-160



Lockheed Martin C-130 HERCULES



Airbus Military CN235



Airbus A310



Airbus A340

ment and control of the missions of the assigned forces and means within the scope of the military Search and Rescue Service and for the accomplishment of functions to be performed within the scope of the sovereign, national task for the civilian aviation, the Air Transport Command has operated a SAR control station at the Muenster garrison which was also permanently manned.

### Solving of Tasks in European Combine

With the end of the East-West confrontation, the security policy was increasingly geared to the management of international conflicts and asymmetric threats. Against the background of the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 it became necessary to take the fight against international terrorism into consideration in the reorientation of the security and defence policy of the Federal Republic of Germany. An effective engagement in the fight against international terrorism is only possible in combine with partners, since in this way different capabilities of individual nations can be merged into one joint entirety and synergetic effects be achieved in addition to burden sharing.

In this political context, the number, intensity, scale, and duration of the missions of the Bundeswehr have steadily increased. This was accompanied by new military requirements in respect to equipment, materiel and training of the Bundeswehr for joint operations with our allies and partners. The tasks and functions of the Bundeswehr were newly defined and weighed on that basis and summarized in the 2003 Defence Policy Guidelines (DPG). The results found expression in the new Concept of the Bundeswehr and in the restructuring of the armed forces.

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### The Way to an EATC

In 1999, the former Federal Minister of Defence, Rudolf Scharping, suggested to his NATO colleagues to put the cooperation in the field of air transports on a common basis by the development of

a European Air Transport Command (EATC). The proposal resulted later in the declaration of the German-French Defence and Security Council of 30 November 1999 in which Germany and France corroborated the objective to set up an EATC step by step and in a suitable multinational scope in order to manage the available military means of transport conjointly and to achieve synergy effects by that. By implementing this political declaration of intent the seven nations (Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands) organized in the European Air Group (EAG) ordered that a European Airlift Study be conducted. Also ordered through the EAG in the total context of the cooperation in European air transport was the development of the "Technical Arrangement Air Transport, Air-to-Air Refueling and other Exchanges of Services" (TA ATARES) which was signed on 8 February 2001. The goal of the arrangement is the preferred cashless settlement of mutual support services to bridge capacity gaps. Partly existing agreements of similar tenor were successively transferred to the TA ATARES. The existence of this clearing system constitutes a basis for the subsequent integration steps in European air transports.

The European Airlift Study focused among other things on the identification of options to act and on procedures regarding the establishment of a permanent Airlift Coordination Cell and other mechanisms, respectively, with the goal of increasing the efficiency of European air transport capacities. It led to the clear result that presently existing deficits in the field of European air transports could be mitigated by expanded cooperation and coordination. In addition, the gain in efficiency was said to become larger as soon as the A400M nations have commissioned the unitary aircraft model and maximally standardized their procedures. Here, the sustainable confidence of all participating nations in the advantages of multinational cooperation approaches is the decisive prerequisite for the success: the intent and will for integration. This aspect, too, was devoted special attention within the scope of the probes of the Airlift Study, which developed an evolutionary approach over several stages of the integration. The creation of a joint and combined European establishment for an optimal use of present and future means of transport was stated as a key recommendation.

### European Airlift Coordination Cell

The key recommendation resulted in establishing the European Airlift Coordination Cell (EACC) at Eindhoven, The Netherlands in 2001. The primary task of the EACC was the coordination of air transport missions of the partner nations with the goal of optimizing the available resources. Competence and authority to issue directives vis-a-vis national commands were not provided for in this first phase. On that basis the EACC succeeded in achiev-



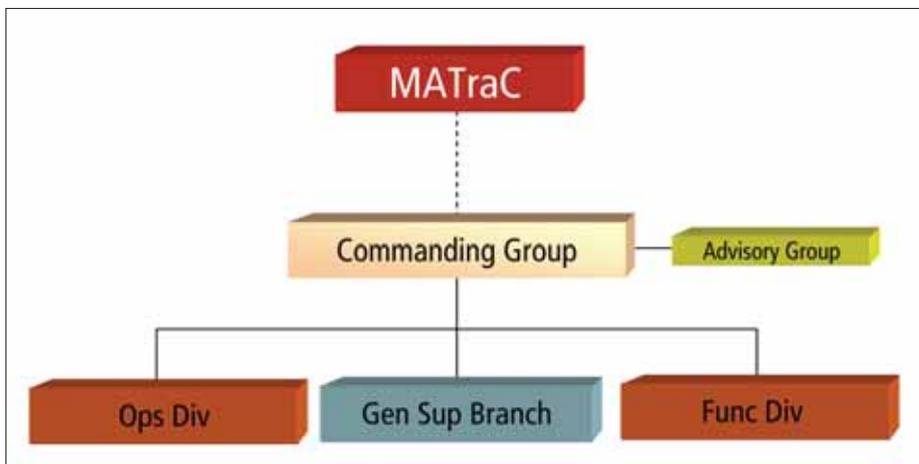
Overflight of an A400M at the Commissioning of the EATC on 1 September 2010.

ing a significant improvement in the utilization of resources after just a little over a year. The implementation of the coordination proposals produced efficiency gains in a magnitude, which, by calculation, clearly exceeded the expenditures for the operation of the EACC. The visible success of the EACC was thus determinant for the deepening of the integration in air transport.

#### European Airlift Center

In the field of planning it was intended to qualitatively expand the competence of the EACC vis-a-vis the national command authorities. The basic question in this context ad-

ressed the readiness and willingness of the partner nations to delegate the planning and contracting competence and to achieve with that a visible progress in direction of a continued integration on the declared way to a European Air Transport Command. Therefore, the transformation of the EACC to a "European Airlift Center (EAC)" with expanded planning authority and working capacity for the conceptual work was realized early on 1 July 2004. The EAC was now additionally tasked to also create the preconditions for a closer cooperation in the operation and in missions, respectively. The aspired "interoperability" comprised here the harmonization of regulations and procedures as well as the provision of mutual tech-



The Multinational Air Transport Committee (MATraC) consists of representatives of the nations who are entitled to vote, and it has the authority to issue directives to the EATC Commander.

nical support. Due to the use of the same flying systems (C-130/C-160/A310) there existed already respective forums for discussion and for the exchange of experiences. An adequate transparency was regarded as a chance allowing the EAC partner nations to also profit from this knowledge, and the known problems to be processed in a goal-oriented way, and the gathered experiences to be consolidated. According to the vision at that time, this potential was to be made particular use of in connection with the introduction of the Airbus A400M. The agreement to manufacture the common new European A400M transport aircraft was signed in Le Bourget, France in June 2001.

Whereas especially Germany and France envisaged a continuous integration into the European air transport from the very beginning, the other nations were initially rather reserved about that. The added value of the new functional area of responsibility of the EAC did not yield the anticipated degree of profit. This was probably the reason why not all of the EAC partner nations were ready to agree to the planned next onward step.

### Concept and Setup of the EATC

Germany and France initiated the concept phase of the EATC with the signing of a declaration of intent in April 2006. Belgium and The Netherlands followed suit at a later date. In that process, the evolutionary approach from the Airlift Study was taken up, advanced and constitutes now a centerpiece of the EATC concept. In this context the nations involved proposed that all tasks related to military air transports of personnel and materiel by means of aircraft be performed by the EATC. Helicopters were excluded from the considerations. This exception applies also to airlift tasks of great national importance such as military evacuation operations, air transports for special forces and special purpose flights for the transport of VIP's of the political and parliamentary domain. This limitation is not fixed for good though and can basically or by decision in individual cases be transferred to the responsibility of the EATC at any time. Belgium and The Netherlands have put the management of their political and parliamentary flight operations into the hands of the EATC from the very beginning already. The German aircraft planned for the field of air transports of injured, wounded, and sick personnel (medical evacuation) are managed from the EATC, but continue to be unrestrictedly subject to national use.

In its modular approach the EATC concept offers sufficient latitude for consideration of national structures and for allocation of competence associated with that. But in contrast to previous attempts and comparable multinational organizations, not the reluctant nations decide on the degree of integration, it is rather the EATC concept, which provides for modulari-

## Contribution by The Netherlands



Lockheed Martin C-130 HERCULES



McDonnell Douglas KDC-10



Gulfstream IV

## German Contribution



TRANSALL C-160



Airbus A310 MRTT

ty, allowing each of the partners the delegation of the respectively wanted competence to the EATC. The otherwise customary restriction to the smallest common denominator is thus avoided. On the contrary, the most ambitious partner determines the height of the “staff” and the EATC can consequently be set up in a way to enable it to fully meet the expectations of all partners. Accordingly, the number of personnel and the organization are based on an analysis of all potentially developing tasks as soon as even one partner only requests them. This approach permits thus a full delegation of national responsibilities without being forced of having to make duplications in sub-areas. In the most unfavorable event there would only be a shifting of a national capability to a new location, namely if no other partner would delegate the respective task or capability to the EATC. In return, however, there will be a big chance for a better pooling of the forces and for achieving important savings through synergies.

But the modularity holds also a critical quantity in respect to the long-term success of the EATC and future integration approaches. If the respective insisting forces in the nations – motivated by the endeavors to preserve existing organizational structures and personnel levels – are opposed to a further onward integration process, the synergies will not be possible to be realized. Mutual trust of the partners is indispensable. It is, of course, also necessary to develop mechanisms which convince all member nations of the fact that they do not have to accept losses in performance and that they are not cheated by the partners. The idea of an EATC was born at a time when the definition of a common European foreign and defence policy was considered to be impending and when joint and combined military structures were imaginable as a logical consequence. In spite of some delays on the way to the EATC, this step is meanwhile no longer the result of political developments, but is ahead of the political integrative developments. This, however, is exactly what delays to some extent the further process of integration, because the counter-argumentation denies the integration efforts in parts the political mandate.

The concept was approved by the four nations in May 2007 and the implementation phase was thus initiated. In August 2007, a multinational staff charged with the buildup and installation of the command began its work for a further detailed, content-oriented make-up. The manning of the first billets in the EATC

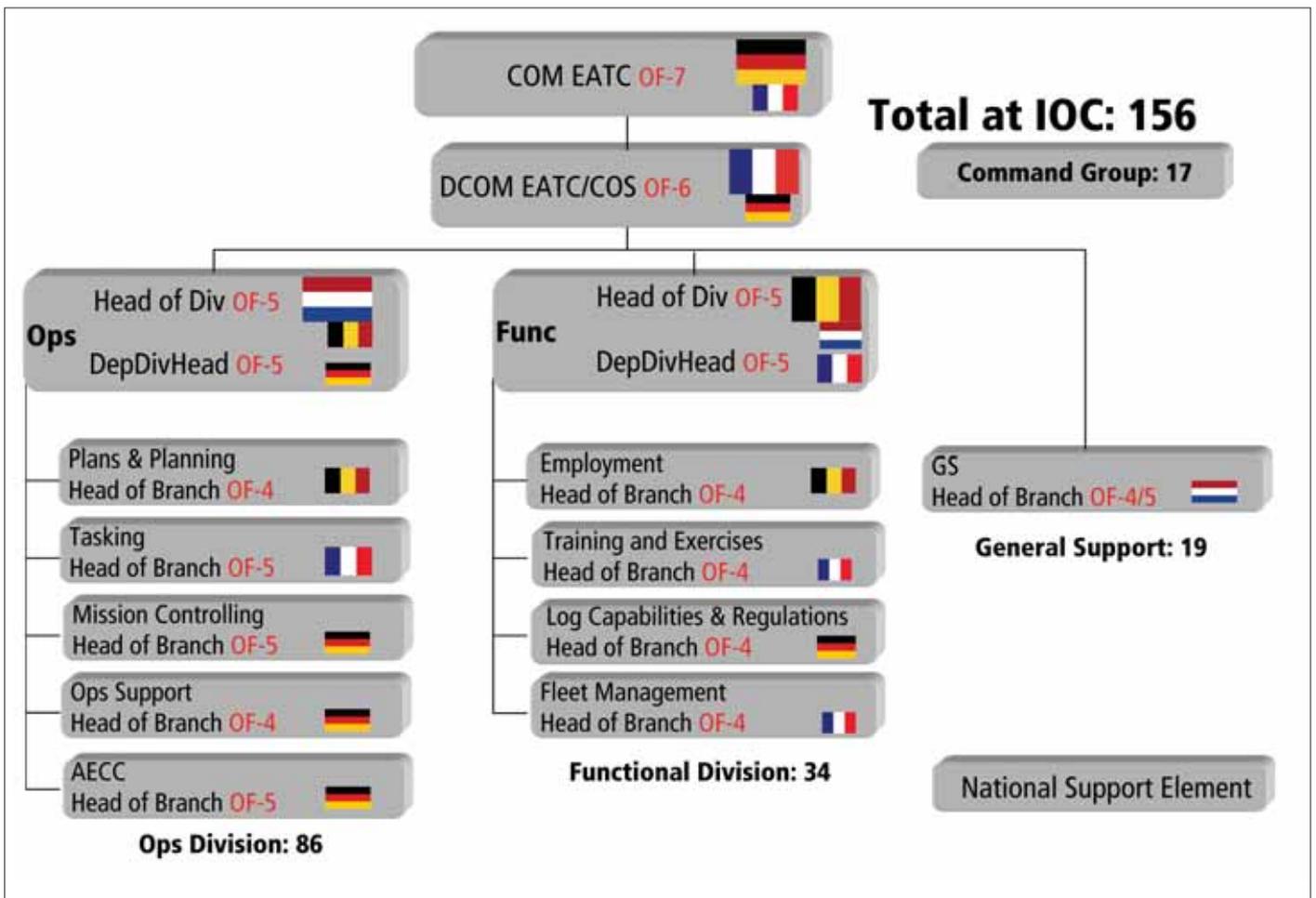
was effected in July 2010. The Initial Operational Capability (IOC) will be reached in December 2010.

## Structure and Authority

The multinational staff structure, which has meanwhile been largely manned, comprises presently approximately 160 billets. It is made up of a strong operational pillar, an expandable functional pillar, a general support element, and an advisory support group. The EATC is controlled and managed by a commander in the rank of a major general who is initially provided by the Luftwaffe.

The operational pillar is – when all transport requests have been submitted in time – intended to control and manage the international employment of transport means optimized in respect to load capacity, range, and operational task and to thus bring about a reduction of the parallel employment of aircraft of different nations. The aircraft released as a result of that can thus take over additional tasks which would not have been realizable otherwise or which would have incurred additional charter costs. To that end, the commander is conferred by the nations the operational control (OPCON) for all or most portions of the national military air transport capacity. This is the decisive step to make the EATC a multinational command authority, which rightly bears the word “command” in its designation. With the “transfer of authority” by the member states the EATC will take on the tasks of planning, control, management and after mission analysis of the strategic and tactical air transport for the nations Belgium, France, Germany and The Netherlands and dispose in its function as multinational military establishment with approximately 200 transport aircraft of these countries of about 70,000 flying hours per year.

The functional pillar of the EATC is intended to control in a modular way inter alia the EAC approaches regarding the harmonization of regulations, the development of joint training programs and the technical and logistical fleet management. In the target conception it is downright imaginable that training facilities or maintenance units be put under the technical control of the EATC as the transport command of the participating nations. Instead of performing parallel staff work in the individual nations, which are preparing for the time phased delivery of new aircraft, it would be suitable to assign concretely defined work packages to the EATC. Although such efforts were often set limits in the implementation in the past, as national structures tailored to the respective models and mission roles have developed over the decades, there should, with regard to the introduction of the A400M, be the chance, however, to achieve an international consolidation, if possible also for the fundamental work of a genuinely integrated multinational A400M unit.



Structure of EATC.

An even deeper integration has, in part, been politically sanctioned already. It must nonetheless be expected that frictions will arise in the course of the practical implementation of the buildup of integrated European armed forces. The actors commissioned with the implementation act normally on a level where the legal parameters are to be observed as a set quantity. But to achieve a real harmonization of the sequence of operations, it is in many fields imperative to initially adapt the statutory fundamentals between the individual nations. At the same time or in a subsequent step deliberations should be made about the transfer of powers – within the meaning of an advancing integration – to joint organizational units to be established. This postulates, however, that the national interests of the participating partner nations are set aside in view of the overall profit to be yielded. Only in this way will the integration in the military air transport become both a political and military success story.

As for Germany, the way to a European integration in the field of air transport has been cleared and respective steps have been taken. The decision to organize and manage the military air transport on a European level is the only and best way to use the scarce resources even more efficiently in future as well. Accordingly, the Concept of the Bundeswehr provides for

the deactivation of the national air transport command as soon as the preconditions have been created for the takeover of the tasks by the EATC. The official “transfer of authority” – that is the assignment of the German air transport forces – took place on 15 October 2010; France and The Netherlands followed in November 2010; Belgium in December 2010. After more than 40 years of a successful history the national Air Transport Command was officially deactivated on 31 December 2010.

## National Responsibility

The majority of the tasks of the Air Transport Command have been taken over by the EATC. Some of the tasks remain in national responsibility, however. These will be carried out within national structures in future, too. The administrative control of the air transport units was thus transferred to the air force divisions. The responsibility for the command and control of the helicopter forces both for the search and rescue service and for the air transport with helicopters will be exercised by a combined command post and placed under administrative control for the employment by the National Air Defence Command Center. The technical task “air transport” will be taken over

by the higher command authority, the Air Force Command.

## Summary

The distribution of the military air transport to national and international structures has been a great challenge to the Luftwaffe. Responsibilities and chains of command were revised and newly organized; interfaces were bridged, and regulations and procedures adapted to the new parametric conditions. With the setup of the European Air Transport Command (EATC) and the concomitant dissolution of national structures for the benefit of a multinational European command structure, the Luftwaffe has taken a big step in direction of a European integration. It has thus taken up a pioneer role in the armed forces. The chances for the future military cooperation in Europe will be judged by the success of this project. The Luftwaffe accepts this challenge with conviction and great engagement. ■

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