



French Armed Forces Update December 2019



This paper is not an official publication from the French Armed Forces. It provides an update on the French military operations and main activities. The French Defense Attaché Office has drafted it in accordance with open publications.

The French Armed Forces are heavily deployed both at home and overseas. On the security front, the terrorist threat is still assessed as high in France and operation “Sentinelle” (Guardian) continues. Overseas, the combat units are extremely active against a determined enemy and the french soldiers are constantly adapting their courses of action and their layout plans to the threat.

1. Operations

In Memoriam

In the evening of November 2, *Brigadier-Chef* Ronan Pointeau, 1st Spahis Regiment (armor), was killed in action after the explosion of an IED during a Recce patrol in the Menaka area. Twenty-four days later, thirteen of his brothers in arm were killed in the same sector during an airborne operation conducted to support the hunt and the destruction of highly mobile terrorist groups operating pick-up trucks and motorbikes. The thirteen soldiers and aviators were killed in the collision of a COUGAR (assault helicopter) with a TIGER (attack helicopter) of the FR Army Aviation.

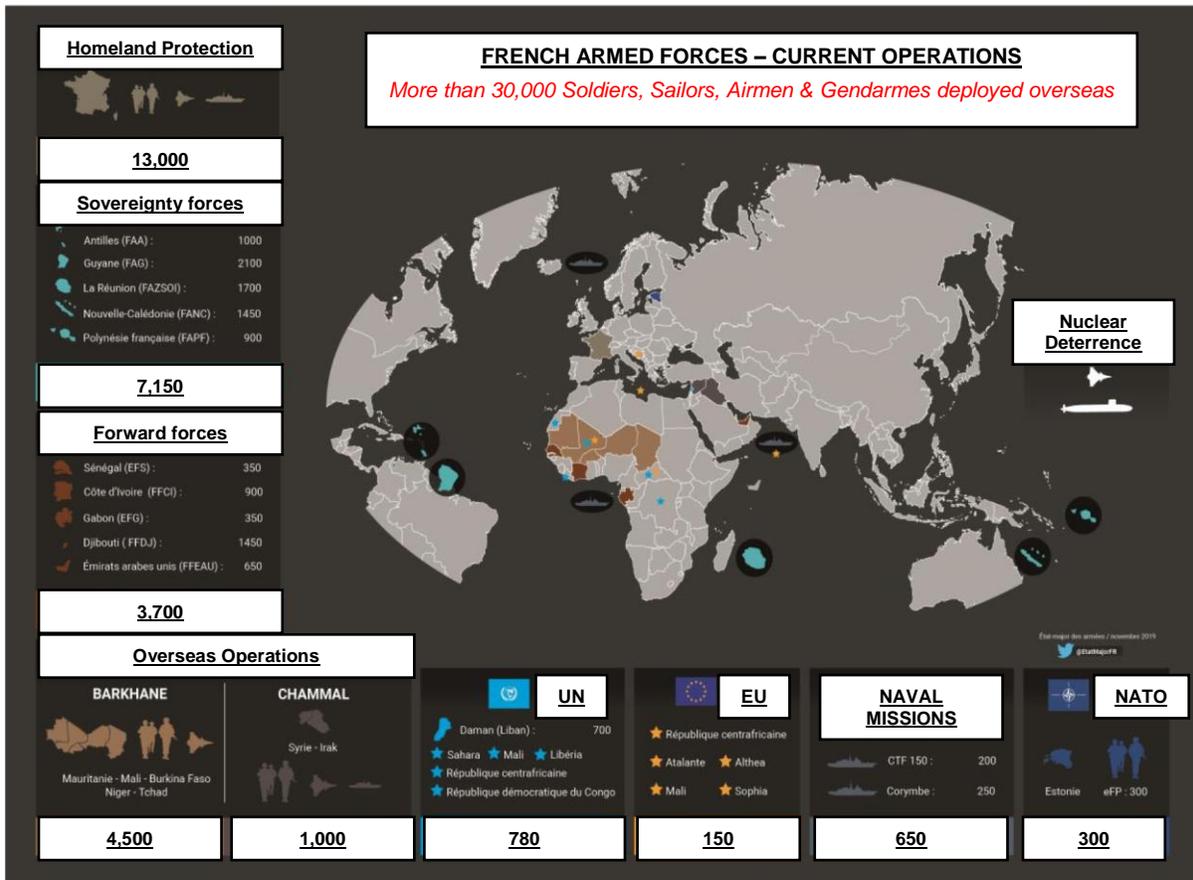
On November 7, a tribute ceremony took place in Valence for *Brigadier-Chef* Ronan Pointeau. For their part, the thirteen soldiers killed in the helicopter collision were honored during a national homage carried out in Honor Court of the *Invalides* and presided by Emmanuel Macron on December 2.



1st line (left to right): Adjudant-Chef Julien CARETTE, Sergent-Chef Andrei JOUK, Maréchal des Logis-Chef Alexandre PROTIN, Lieutenant Pierre BOCKEL, Capitaine Romain CHOMEL de JARNIEU, Capitaine Clément FRISONROCHE, Brigadier-Chef Ronan POINTEAU

2nd line (left to right): Maréchal des Logis Valentin DUVAL, Maréchal des Logis-Chef Jérémy LEUSIE, Maréchal des Logis Antoine SERRE, Lieutenant Alex MORISSE, Capitaine Nicolas MEGARD, Capitaine Benjamin GIREUD, Caporal-Chef Romain SALLES de SAINT-PAUL

DEPLOYMENT OF THE FRENCH ARMED FORCES¹ AS OF 09/05/2019



OPERATIONAL NEWS:

OPERATION SENTINELLE:

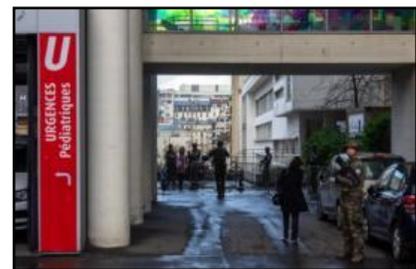
✓ **Continental France Protection Mission**

Operation SENTINELLE was launched in the aftermath of the November 2015 terrorist attacks in France, committing 10 000 soldiers across the country in support of security forces. This operation is still ongoing.

The posture of Operation Sentinelle is now composed of three responsive layers:

- a permanent operational component of 2600 men, whose objective is to ensure permanent missions of security for the most sensitive and vulnerable places;
- a planned reinforcement echelon of 4400 men, that helps secure occasional or seasonal events;
- a strategic reserve of 3000 men in the hands of the French President.

To maintain high its level of readiness and its ability to manage a wide spectrum of incidents, the SENTINELLE force of Paris tested its QRF in the framework of a “White Plan”(WP) exercise. WP is the emergency organization of the Paris’ hospitals in case of mass terrorist killings.



Sentinelle Soldiers in the Trousseau Hospital

¹ Army, Air Force, Navy and Gendarmerie.

OPERATION BARKHANE:

✓ **Global Sub-Saharan Anti-Terrorist Mission**

Operation BARKHANE, spanning five countries in the Sahel region of North Africa, started in the beginning of August 2014 after the completion of Operation SERVAL. With its main base in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, it is actively present in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Niger.

Since mid-October, the BARKHANE force and its allies are facing a surge of violence in the Liptako – Gourma region. In this context, the FR army lost 1 soldier in an IED attack on November 2 and 13 soldiers and aviators on November 25 during an airborne operation launched to harass and destroy terrorist groups in the same sector.



OPERATION CHAMMAL:

✓ **Multinational Joint Operations in Syria and Iraq**

Launched in September 2014, on request of the Iraqi government and in coordination with allied forces, operation CHAMMAL aims at providing air and ground support as well as training to Iraqi forces committed against DAECH and other terrorist groups. The operation has been extended to Syria following the terrorist attacks in France in November 2015.

The detachment of the French Air Forces contributes to the global efforts of the coalition conducting air activities and strikes.

Meanwhile, the FR Army is focused on instruction, training (TF Monsabert) and mentorship (TF Narvick). Especially, the TF Narvik has performed for the last weeks Intelligence Counter Courses (ICC) and Teaching Techniques Trainings to the benefit of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (ICTS).

Both task forces recently renewed a part of their personnel and received new commanders. The change of command ceremonies occurred in the presence of Iraqi partners and representatives of the coalition forces.



2. The readiness builder of the French Army

Born after the fusion of the Force Preparation Command with the Combined Arms Schools Command in July 2018, the *COM E2CIA*² (located in Mourmelon-le-Grand) aims to develop synergies between instruction and training. Expert and referent of the French Army for the Combined Arms Warfighting up to the brigade level (command, fires and maneuver), its four main missions are:

1. Develop a global and coherent combined arms training:
 - Initial & Advanced instruction (updated course management plans) and major events such as the combined arms universities or the annual training camp of the FR Army centers of excellence;
 - Supervision and control of the land forces' operational training.
2. Program and conduct the joint operational readiness optimizing the resources and the expertise of its training centers.
3. Contribute to the doctrinal effort of the FR Army in the perspective of the SCORPION³ transformation (works on studies on general and concepts tactical procedures as well).
4. Support the SCORPION experimentations to enhance and accelerate the appropriation of the SCORPION warfighting within the FR Army.

To complete these tasks, the *COM E2CIA* relies on the centers of excellence of the maneuver and support branches (Infantry, Armor, Artillery and Engineer) and the FR Army's readiness training camps organized in 3 regional poles:

² *COM E2CIA* = *COM*mandement de l'*En*traînement et des *Eco*les du *Co*mbat *Interarmes* = Combined Arms Combat Schools and Training Command

³ *SCORPION* = *Synergie du C*ontact *R*enforcée par la *P*olyvalence de l'*in*fovalorisation = French army's modernization Program. Its aim is to increase combat capacities with collaborative Combat and information sharing.

- The pole “Champagne” dedicated to the ground maneuver (*CENTAC*⁴, *CENZUB*⁵, *CEPC*⁶, *CENTIAL*⁷ & *FECS*⁸);
- The pole “Provence” in the camp of Canjuers more focused on live fire;
- The pole “Pyrénées” in charge of the specialized trainings and expertises as the commando training in the Army.

The *COM E2CIA* in brief:

- 1 headquarter, 3,700 personnel, 4 centers of excellence, 11 training centers (371,000 Acres of land = 0,3% of the national territory);
- 700 major armored vehicles dispatched on two national training centers;
- In 2018, the centers trained 35 regiment and battalion staffs, 65 companies and 30 logistic battalion staffs;
- In 2018, the 4 centers of excellence provided initial and advanced instruction for 11,300 students);
- Heir to the traditions of the 12th Light Armored School Division, its insignia represents a griffon. This mythical animal associates the force and the courage of the lion to the vigilance of the hawk.



3. Train to fight tonight

3.1 DEFENDER 20: the 4th French Combat Air Mobile Brigade (CAMB) participation to JWA 20 Academic Touch Point with 1st Cavalry Division



In order to enhance interoperability with the US Army, the French Army participates since 2018 to the Joint Warfighting Assessment series (JWA). When JWA is conducted in Europe (even years), a French Combined Arms Brigade is tasked by the French Land Forces Command HQ to operate under a US Division. For JWA 20, the 1st Cavalry Division will have the 4th French CAMB under its Tactical Control.

From 5 to 7 November 2019, an Academics session was organized by Joint Modernization Command (JMC) in Fort Hood, TX with the main intent to link up the 1st CD Staff with the French and Multinational Key

Leaders (CAN, UK). This sequence was also aimed to get a better understanding of the multinational capabilities, TTPs and MDO environment. The French Army was represented by the 4th CAMB Chief of Staff, his main subordinates and the French Liaison Officer to the Fires Center of Excellence/Joint Modernization Command.

The 1st Cavalry Division CG underlined the importance of the communication with the Multinational partners while the 4th CAMB Chief of Staff mentioned the great stimulation for his staff to be part of this outstanding exercise.

This first critical contact was an overall success and enabled to shape the path for a common commitment in DEFENDER 20 next year.

⁴*CENTAC* = Centre d'ENTraînement Au Combat = Combined Arms Training Center;

⁵*CENZUB* = Centre d' ENTraînement aux actions en Zone Urbaine = Combined Warfighting in Urban Areas Training Center

⁶CEPC = Centre d'Entraînement et de Contrôle des Postes de Commandement

⁷ CENTIAL = Centre d'ENTraînement InterArmes de la Logistique = Combined Arms Logistics Training Center;

⁸ FECS = Force d'Expertise Combat Scorpion = Scorpion Combat Expertise Force.

3.2 “Skrenvil 2019”: building inter-services interoperability

During “Skrenvil 2019” (October 2019 7 – 18), the French Army and the French Navy maintained and trained their high degree of interoperability, which is a key factor for an efficient force projection.

Conducted in the Mediterranean Sea from the LHD *Dixmude*, this large-scale joint amphibious exercise committed the frigate *Languedoc* and a light combined battle group of the 6th Light Armored Brigade supported by an Army Aviation detachment (for a total of 500 sailors and 450 Army personnel).

Brick of the operational preparation of the 21st Marine Infantry Regiment (deployed in Ivory Coast in 2020), “Skrenvil 2019” was organized in two main phases. As the first one was centered on the evacuation of national and allied countries citizens, the second part was focused on kinetic actions launched from the sea in the support of a regional ally.



3.3 “Ardennes 2019”: working on specific skills



From October 15 to 18, the 3rd Engineer Regiment (3rd RG) organized an exercise in the heart of Charleville-Mézières focused on urban warfighting. During “Ardennes 2019”, the engineers have been reinforced by specialized detachments of the 2nd Hussars Regiment, the 132nd Military Working Dogs (MWDs) Regiment and the 3rd Combat Helicopters Regiment. Two foreign units, a Belgian (4th Engineer Battalion) and a British (22nd Engineer Regiment), had been integrated as well. Brick of its operational preparation, Ardennes 2019 represented for the 3rd RG a relevant way to train on specific technical and tactical skills of its engineers. In addition, this exercise was also an excellent opportunity to work alongside with international partners.

Key figures:

- 500 soldiers & 100 tactical vehicles deployed;
- Light crossing assets (1 platoon);
- 1 PUMA (Assault) platoon;
- 3 MWDs teams, 2 French & 1 Belgian;
- 1 team of the 2nd Hussars Regiment (intelligence);
- 1 British combat platoon of the 22nd engineering regiment;
- 1 Belgian combat platoon of the 4th Engineer Battalion.



3.4 BACCARAT 19: Aviators on the field



Designed and framed by the French 4th Combat Air Mobile Brigade (CAMB), BACCARAT 2019 committed British and Spanish units alongside their French partners. Conducted during 10 days (September 16 – September 26) within a wide-open area of maneuver (300 km deep by 150 km wide), the exercise based on a large-scale combat operation scenario took the



aviators and the ground warfighters from the training camps of the Champagne region to the blue ridge of the Vosges Mountains. Air-to-ground and ground-to-ground live fire phases were conducted as well (day and night). Composed of 4 combined Battle Groups, one Spain framed multinational helicopter battalion and one infantry regiment, the 4th CAMB put into practice the Aviation Warfighting principles that combine successively or simultaneously air and ground actions. Excellent training for the maneuver units, the support and sustainment of BACCARAT constituted a challenging task for the logistic component as well.

Committing 2,000 fighters and aviators, 80 armored vehicles and 60 helicopters, the overall format of the exercise meet the readiness and training expectations of the FR Army in the perspective of large conflicts. After this edition, the 4th CAMB CG, BG assessed the scale and the multinational format compatible with the current op tempo and reasonably reproducible in a yearly base. In 2020, BACCARAT might take place in the Alpes Mountains.



*1st line, from left to right: UK AW159 Wildcat, FR CAIMAN, UK APACHE;
2nd line, from left to right: TopOwl Helmet, Spanish Infantrymen, FR TIGER.*

4. France - US relationship

French Legion of Honor presented to General Paul Funk

On October 16, General Funk, TRADOC CG, received the French Legion of Honor, the famous red ribbon, from Major General Michel Delion, director of the Center for Doctrine and Command Teaching (CDEC⁹).

The award was presented to General Funk for his operational experience and support to France on deployments overseas, especially when he led the US and Multinational troops of the Combined Joint Task Force fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria during Operation Inherent Resolve from September 2017 to September 2018.

The Legion of Honor is the highest French order of merit for military and civil merits. Established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte, it has been retained by all later French governments and regimes. That day, General Funk joined other famous American recipients like Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, George Patton and James "Jumpin Jim" Gavin, one of the very first American paratroopers and ambassador to France.



GEN Funk & MG Delion

⁹ The CDEC plays an essential role in elaborating and communicating current and future land forces employment perspectives in France.

5. Building Readiness with multinational partners

5.1 “Wessex Storm”

From October 13th to November 12th, the 3rd Combat Company of the 1st Infantry Regiment participated in the exercise “Wessex Storm” that took place on the Salisbury training camp in Great Britain. Integrated in a battle group framed by the Royal Regiment of Scotland, the French fighters conducted by day and night defensive actions, neutralization and securization missions as well. Part of the partnership between the French and the British armies, this annual exercise also included live fire phases.



5.2 “Celtic Uprise”: France and Belgium strengthen their cooperation



Part of the *CaMo*¹⁰ agreements signed in 2018 by France and Belgium, “Celtic Uprise” was the first step of a long-term partnership. As a reminder, the strategic plan between the two nations is not only the renewal of the Belgian Army’s light and medium armored fleet with Scorpion vehicles (382 Griffon and 60 Jaguar). It incorporates training, doctrine and support aspects as well.

Within this framework, “Celtic Uprise” gathered about 1,000 French and Belgian soldiers in vicinity of Namur and in eastern part of the province of Hainaut during a week (September 18 – 25). For the first edition focused on areas control, a French combined company had been integrated to a Belgian Battle

Group. The primary objective was to work on common procedures at the company and battalion levels.

In the future, the goal is to develop synergies, especially in terms training, based on an annual exercise, the creation of a certifying Belgian training center (specialized on “NATO Stability Operations”) and the access to the French training centers, such as the *CENTAC*¹¹ of Maily or the *CENZUB*¹² of Sissonne, for the Belgian ground units.

5.3 French Tankers in Latvia



Integrated into the UK framed Battle Group deployed within the framework of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence mission in the Baltic countries, a Leclerc tank crew won the shooting competition organized during IRON SPEAR 1902. Scored on time, accuracy, prioritization of engagement and communication, the 44 MBT crews coming from 8 countries executed timed fires by day and night.

Following a French crew, a Norwegian crew took the second place just before American tankers. This result not only underlines the high level of readiness of

the French tankers but also a valuable reward for the maintenance and sustainment personnel (link: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2453606468049356>).

These challenges are part of the training of the NATO battalions deployed in the Baltic countries. They are complemented by tactical exercises like the one performed by the French combined arms Coy (infantry – armor) from November 6 to 8.

¹⁰ *CaMo* = *Capacité Motorisée* = Motorized Capacity;

¹¹ *CENTAC* = *Centre d'ENTrainement Au Combat* = Combined Arms Training Center;

¹² *CENZUB* = *Centre d' ENTrainement aux actions en Zone Urbaine* = Combined Warfighting in Urban Areas Training Center.

5.4 French Mentoring for the Gabonese Forces



In September and October, the French Elements in Gabon (Forward Presence Forces) trained 350 Gabonese soldiers who will be shortly deployed in Central Africa in the framework of the MINUSCA, the UN mission in the country. The final objective was to prepare a battalion size force to the different situations they will face during their deployment. Therefore, the courses included weaponry instruction, shooting, improvised explosive device management, topography and first aid skills. Tactical training on several key missions as convoy escorts or crowd control was also included.

6. November: a period of yearly remembrance

A new monument in the heart of Paris

Celebrating originally the end of the combats in the western front on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the “11 Novembre” has become a day of remembrance and tribute to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for France during WWI. Anonymous representative of the “Poilus”¹³, the “Unknown Soldier” was buried under the “Arc de Triomphe” in Paris on January the 28th, 1921. In the following years, each French town had built up a remembrance monument (even humble) to honor its children fallen for the nation.

In 2012, a law extended the tribute to all the “fallen for France”, whether civilian or military, of old or current conflicts and overseas operations. Therefore, the “11 Novembre” is not only the commemoration of the victory and peace but gained a wider symbolic signification close to the American Memorial Day.



In that perspective, the president of the French republic Emmanuel Macron inaugurated, on November 11, the monument to the “Fallen for France” in foreign operations, at the André-Citroën Park in Paris. Proof of gratitude to the combatants who made the ultimate sacrifice since 1963, the monument has been designed and built as a place of recollection for the defense community, the families and the relatives of the fallen military. Representing six soldiers carrying a non-visible coffin, the monument is completed by a wall bearing the names of the 549 dead for France in *OPEX* since 1963. Encouraging meditation, it also expresses and represents French Soldiers’ determination to defend the country.

The “Bleuet” of France: symbol of hope and solidarity

Like the Poppy chosen by the Commonwealth as the remembrance flower, the Cornflower or *Bleuet* of France is known to grow in land devastated by shells. Due to the colors brought into the mud of the trenches, the soldiers considered these flowers as a glimmer of hope in the middle of the rage, fury and darkness of the battle.

Overwhelmed by the tragic destiny of the mutilated veterans, the famous “*gueules cassées*”¹⁴, Suzanne Lenhardt and Charlotte Malterre organized the production of these flowers manufactured in tissue and as of 1916, sold them to gain helping funds. Later on, other initiatives of reintegration by work followed.

Sold even today during national holidays, the flowers still contributes to fund actions of solidarity for wounded soldiers, widows, orphans and victims of terrorism.



¹³ “*Les Poilus*” = “the Hairy Ones” = popular name given to the French soldiers during WWI who used to wear the beard and mustache;

¹⁴ “*Gueules cassées*” = “Broken Faces” = name given to the mutilated veterans of WWI;

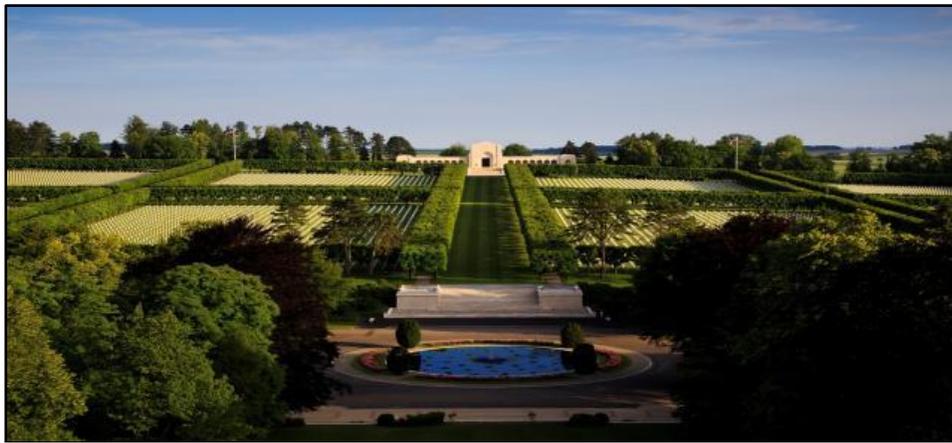
WWI American monuments



Montsec Hill American Memorial

Since the end of the conflict, France hosts places devoted to the memory of the Americans who crossed the Atlantic Ocean to fight alongside the French *Poilus* during the “Great War”. Erected in the Meuse and Argonne region, the Montsec Hill Memorial and the American Cemetery of Meuse – Argonne (located in Romagne-sous-Montfaucon) are among the most impressive monuments. The first is dedicated to the decisive actions of the American Infantry in the sector of St-Mihiel in 1918 and the second is the final resting place for 14,246 American soldiers. Built less than 40 kilometers from Verdun and the French National Cemetery and Ossuary of Douaumont¹⁵, they are the living proof of their sacrifice and the links between

France and the United States of America.



The American Cemetery of Meuse – Argonne

¹⁵ National Cemetery and Ossuary of Douaumont: 16, 142 graves in the cemetery and body rests of 130,000 unknown soldiers in the Ossuary.