



# French Armed Forces Update February 2020

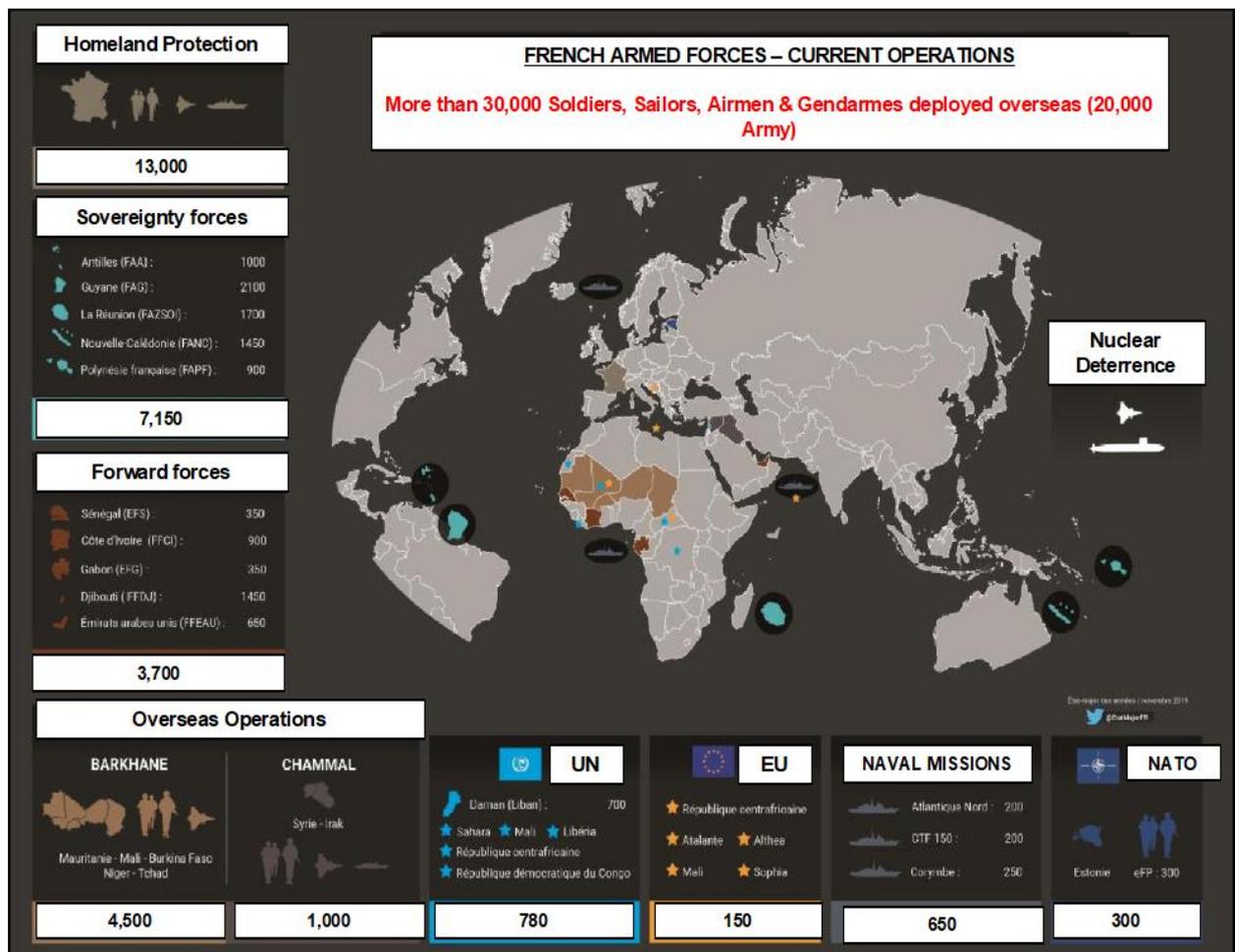


This paper is not an official publication from the French Armed Forces. It provides an update on the French military operations and main activities. The French Defense Attaché Office has drafted it in accordance with open publications.

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

### DEPLOYMENT OF THE FRENCH ARMED FORCES<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Army, Air Force, Navy and Gendarmerie.

## OPERATIONAL NEWS

### OPERATION CHAMMAL:

#### **Multinational Joint Operations in Syria and Irak**

**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 November 2015.**

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

*Meanwhile, the FR Army is focused on instruction, training (TF Monsabert) and mentorship (TF Narvick).*

*On January the 20<sup>th</sup>, the FR Army reorganized its disposition merging the two Task Forces. The aim is to streamline and optimize the support to the Iraqi forces. The “New” TF Montsabert gathers now all the French training teams.*



*As a reminder, in less than 5 years, TF Narvik had brought its expertise to more than 13,800 Iraqi soldiers. A total of 9,500 soldiers and 400 instructors had been trained by TF Narvik in a large spectrum of domains: fight against IED, intelligence, combat in closed environment (combat in urban areas, hand-to-hand combat, force protection), long-range shooting, artillery or first medical aid.*

*In addition, 3,900 Iraqi soldiers of the Counter Terrorism Service, ICTS, called the "Golden Division", had benefited from the TF Narvik trainers experience. Therefore, they strongly contributed to the development of this unit heavily committed in the fight against Daesh (battles of Ramadi, Hit, Mosul and Fallujah).*

#### **French Carrier Strike Group Deployment**

**“Mission Foch” is the French Strike Group deployment from January to May 2020, from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Atlantic.**

*In recent years, due to tensions with Russia since the annexation of Crimea, the resurgence of its submarine activity in the Atlantic and the hardening of its positions in the Baltic (A2AD), NATO has made these regions a priority, with notably the creation of the JFC Norfolk. Ahead of this creation, the USA puts the Second Fleet back on its feet with a particular focus on the protection of transatlantic SLOCs and the expertise in the Far North.*



*In this context, President Macron indicated that the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, after her participation to operation Inherent Resolve/Chammal aimed at ensuring the continuity of the fight against jihadist terrorism in the Middle East through a responsive and adaptable presence, would deploy, from April, in the Atlantic and the North Sea. While in service, the ship has rarely sailed at such latitudes. The last time dates back to 2010, when she reached the Arctic Circle. Therefore, the messaging is strong: this region is more than ever considered as strategic by France. Somewhere, this operational deployment would proceed from the same kind of spirit than the deployment of HST (US Strike Group 8) in the Norwegian Sea in 2018.*

*Commenting on the announced presence of European ships in the Charles de Gaulle Carrier Strike Group (TF 473), President Macron stressed that "this European force, like our Lynx deployment in the Baltic countries, will strengthen the transatlantic link and NATO, additional proof that European defense and NATO are the two pillars of the same building." Indeed, some European surface ships coming from Germany (FGS Lübeck), Belgium (FFGH Leopold), the Netherlands (HNLMS Evertsen), Spain, Portugal*

(FFGH Corte Real), and Greece (HS Spetsai) will integrate the French Strike Group, during whole or a part of her deployment.

### **The Air Force's new "Phoenix" tanker aircraft completes its first operational mission**

On February 15, the new Airbus A330 MRTT "Phoenix" tanker aircraft of the Air Force took off from Istres in the direction of Iraq for a flight that lasted 15 hours. During this mission, and after having traveled 3,500 km, the Phoenix ensured its first in-flight refueling. Rafale Marine aircrafts from the air group [GAé] on board the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, received more than 20 tons of fuel before being engaged over Iraq.



### 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.**

*After the harsh period of December 2019, the Barkhane force and its allies are on the offensive to regain the initiative.*

*During the Pau summit on January the 13<sup>th</sup>, France and its G5 Sahel partners (Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania) confirmed their will to enhance their common effort against terrorism in the Liptako Gourma sector, commonly named "the region of three borders". Possible force reinforcements on the ground are studied by the partners.*



### OPERATION SENTINELLE:

#### **Continental France Protection Mission**

**Operation Sentinelle was launched in the aftermath of the November 2015 terrorist attacks, 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 2,600 men, whose objective is to ensure permanent missions of security for the most sensitive and vulnerable places;*
- *a planned reinforcement echelon of 4,400 men, that helps secure occasional or seasonal events;*
- *a strategic reserve of 3,000 men in the hands of the French President.*



*The recent operation led by the police in Brest against persons suspected of planning an attack reminds us that the terrorist threat remains high.*

## **2. FROM THE FIELD**

### **2.1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE URBAN COMBAT CAPABILITIES FOR THE 6TH IRAQI DIVISION**

#### **Urban fighting training**



Mid-December, the Task Force Monsabert carried out urban combat training for the benefit of the 6th Iraqi division. The different scenarios were designed to work on specific skills and know how as building investigations, first medical cares and injured personnel evacuation. Framed by the French instructors and included in the 6th Iraqi division

program, this professional development period contributed to reinforce the operational capacity of the Iraqi armed forces in urban areas. Throughout this type of courses and sessions, the Monsabert Task Force has contributed to one of the major expectations of the "mentorship pillar" of the Chammal operation.

### **Build the future**

After a month of hard work, the engineers of the TF Monsabert completed the construction of a combat village to strengthen and develop the training infrastructures of the 6th Iraqi division. The five-engineer detachment led the project from its conception to its realization. The creation of the village made with containers required meticulous and coordinated teamwork to deliver a solid package. Designed to help the Iraqi militaries to develop their professional skills, it represents one of the foundations of their future capacities.



### **French ground robots against IED**



To help their Iraqi partners to mitigate the IED threat in urban areas, the TF Montsabert's specialists presented a French anti-IED robot: the PackBot.

Built to limit the exposure of engineers and save lives, this 20 kilogram remote-controlled robot can locate and defuse improvised explosive devices. Equipped with a mechanical arm and a camera, it can lift heavy items, work on the identified explosive and protect itself from an explosion.

As ground robots regularly accompany soldiers, the entire course enabled Iraqi specialists to perfect their technical and tactical skills. This partnership based on knowledge sharing and development contributes directly to the fight against terrorism in Iraq.

## **2.2. BARKHANE ATTACKS**

Alongside its allies (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger) and the G5 Sahel joint force, the Barkhane forces have intensified their efforts in the Liptako and Gourma areas. In total, more than 1,000 soldiers, half of them from partner forces, took part in this action against armed terrorist groups. The coordination and the allocation of a sector for each force allowed to cover a large area in order to drain the resources of the enemy and disrupt its logistic flows.



Especially, the recent operations were marked by a large aviation maneuver designed to sweep the terrorist groups towards a blocking disposition on the Burkina Faso border set up by the G5 forces. Since January 2, pick-ups, motorcycles, light weapons, ammunition, diverse pieces of equipment were destroyed, and terrorists killed. Moreover, the seizure of an Islamic State flag during the operations demonstrates at least the influence of the terrorist organization in Africa.

## **2.3. A NEW EUROPEAN PARTNER IN MALI**



Following the decision of the Danish Parliament to support France in its fight against terrorism (October 25), the Danish Army deployed a helicopter detachment in the first days of December 2019. Supported by French and British aviators, the detachment in Gao quickly reached its full operational capacity. In less than one month, the two MERLIN realized more than 75 flight hours and more than 30 sorties to support the maneuver of the Barkhane forces

on the ground.

As a reminder, the MERLIN helicopter is capable of carrying up to 30 infantrymen or 5 tons of cargo. Given the size of the area of action, these assets bring to the force a precious additional capacity.

### **3. FRANCO - AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP**

#### **3.1. BRIGADIER GENERAL WASMUND OFFICIALLY ASSIGNED AS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF FRANCE'S 3RD DIVISION**

On January 20, U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Todd R. Wasmund has been assigned Deputy Commander of France's Marseille-based 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division as part of the first reciprocal exchange of general officers between the two armies. His counterpart, French Brig. Gen. Hubert Cottereau, has been assigned last summer as deputy commanding general for readiness with the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Infantry Division.

As part of the Army's Military Personnel Exchange Program, the swap is designed to strengthen "bonds of friendship, understanding and interoperability" between the two countries and their militaries.

During his welcoming speech, MG Michon, commanding the 3 (FRA) DIV, mentioned that this unique event exemplifies the strong cooperation, lived daily by our troops engaged in Sahel and the Levant, between the US and France. Our armies must be ready to intervene side by side in a large-scale combat operation anywhere in the world.

*Order of the Day n.7 of Major General Laurent Michon, Commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division*

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, enlisted personnel, civilian personnel of the staff of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division,

Today is a historic day for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and the Army as a whole as we welcome our new general, deputy in charge of operations, US Brigadier General Todd R. Wasmund. This unique event exemplifies the strong cooperation, lived daily by our troops engaged in Sahel and the Levant, between the US and France.

Welcoming a US General at the staff of a French division is thus a major step in the close military partnership, formalised by our chiefs of staffs with the signature of the *Strategic Vision Statement* in 2015. It is in this context that French general Hubert Cottereau joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division last summer and that we welcome now General Wasmund.

The implementation of the *Strategic Vision Statement* is first and foremost operational: our armies must be ready to intervene side by side in a large scale operation anywhere in the world. This is neither new, nor the result of recent events.

We must remember that during World War I the French Army served as model and guide for the equipment and combat doctrine of the young US Army, in which remarkable leaders were formed like Colonel George Marshall, Captain George Patton, who would later command the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Division in France, and many other brilliant officers.

Twenty years later, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division remembers it even better, the US supplied eight French divisions in North Africa, before fighting alongside them in Italy first, then France, to liberate the Nation, starting with Provence and Marseilles, and finally in Germany, to claim victory. The interoperability between our two armed forces was already important then.





After three decades of the Cold War, Korea, and the development of NATO, it is during the First Gulf War that our two armies fought again side by side, with 18,000 French soldiers engaged with the US XVIII and VII Corps in Operation Desert Storm. Let's remember that the 6<sup>th</sup> Light Armoured Brigade and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division were already present. This was then followed by twenty years of external operations together in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan especially, marking a new step in our mutual trust, with the integration of Task Force Lafayette in Kapisa under US command. Then name of Task Force Lafayette reminds us also of the origins of the France-US friendship, with the name of a young French general who fought alongside the Americans until the victory at the battle of Yorktown in October 19, 1781, cementing the American Independence.

Thus, the roadmap of this common strategic vision is for the long term. It fixes as common objective the fluid integration of one of our two nations in a division, and then a division in a Corps. While the world is rapidly evolving, that threats become more pressing, this vision perfectly embodies the

bilateral ambitions of our respective heads of state for the 2025 horizon, which goes much further than our current engagements in Syria, Iraq, and Sahel.

To meet this objective, the US and French armies must train hard today, before engaging in an operation side by side and achieving victory tomorrow. This is clearly the objective of exercise WARFIGHTER in which the division will participate in 2021 under the command of the III Corps of the US Army. One of the main tasks of the General Deputy in charge of Operations will of course be to guarantee the interoperability of the Division staff with our allies and accompany the increase in strength of the division and the army towards this exercise.

However, one must not look at the arrival of General Wasmund in the framework of this sole major objective. I want to stress that the General will fully assume from today onwards the role of general deputy in charge of operations as would a French general do. As such, I entrust him fully with the responsibility of the operational preparedness of the division. He will thus particularly focus on planning, training, as well as alerts of subordinate units and of the staff.

Todd, in the name of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and its staff, I welcome you and your wife Tracy in Marseille. I am counting on the men and woman of the staff to accompany you throughout your stay and to allow you to fully and serenely appropriate your new environment. You already have all my trust to fulfil this beautiful mission, demanding, but exciting, for the success of the armies of both our allied nations, the US and France: "A unique objective: victory!"

### 3.2 France integrates the Combined Space Operations

On February 11 and 12, at the meeting of national representatives of the Combined Space Operations initiative in Ottawa, Air Division General Michel Friedling, head of space command, signed the letter of adhesion to the Combined Space Operations (CSpO) initiative on behalf of Florence Parly, Minister of the Armed Forces. France thus fully joins this cooperation initiative. The Combined Space Operations Initiative (CSpO) aims at coordinating the efforts of each of the seven participating nations in the area of space defense. It also seeks to improve space capabilities, whether national or collective, and to facilitate combined space operations between participants.



### 3.3. FRANCE IS ON ITS WAY TO WFX 21-4

In 2015, the Chief of Staff of the French and US Armies signed a Strategic Vision Statement.

It stated that in order “to achieve operational and tactical interoperability” (...) “ a French Division is able to train, exercise and operate under the operational control of a United States Army Corps Headquarters”, and a “United States Army Division is able to train, exercise and operate under the operational control of Headquarters, Rapid Reaction Corps-France”.

In 2018, the 7<sup>th</sup> French Armored Brigade was committed into Joint Warfighter Assessment (JWA 18) and has proved its high level of interoperability.

In 2019, France was not able to commit a full brigade in the exercise but occupied some key positions within the 7<sup>th</sup> (US) Infantry Division. In 2020, France will participate to Defender 2020 and commit the 4<sup>th</sup> French Combat Air Mobile Brigade into JWA 20.

From the French perspective, one brick was still missing: the divisional one.

In November 2019, GEN McConville, new CSA and GEN Burkhard, new French CSA met for their first official meeting as CSAs; GEN McConville then invited the French Army to commit a Division into Warfighter 21-4, in April 2021.

The challenge is a demanding one, but the French Army is already committed into it: the 3 (FR) Division, with BG (US) Wasmund as a DCG, has been selected for this exercise and is already working on what has been identified as a top priority objective of the French Army for 2021. The French Liaison Officers in the US are working on it too, and the first meetings have been very useful. Looking forward to exercise under the III (US) Corps!

On track for Decisive Victory!



### 3.4. FREMM Normandie sails across the Atlantic Ocean

French FREMM *Normandie*, the most recent batch of six anti-submarine warfare destroyers, has departed its home port Brest in mid-December 2019 for its post-delivery shakedown cruise across the Atlantic before joining active service with the French Navy in July 2020.



FS Normandie arrived in Norfolk naval base by the beginning of January 2020 to participate, with two other allied ships, Canadian Halifax-class frigate HMCS Ville de Quebec and Royal Danish Navy frigate Iver Huitfeldt, in a composite training unit exercise (COMPTUEX) for the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group (CSG).

After ten days of exercises at sea in all domains, the ship has sailed towards the VACAPES firing range to conduct a life firing exercise, shooting a surface to air ASTER missile on a remote-controlled target on 24 January 2020.

Then the ship headed towards Boston for its last of three port visits on the East Coast after visiting New-York and Norfolk. By the beginning of February FS Normandie sailed back to Eastern Atlantic having demonstrated high interoperability standards with the US Navy and Nato forces.

#### 4. EUROPEAN DEFENSE CORNER

##### **Franco-Belgian armies' strategic partnership aimed at building a native interoperable operational capacity**

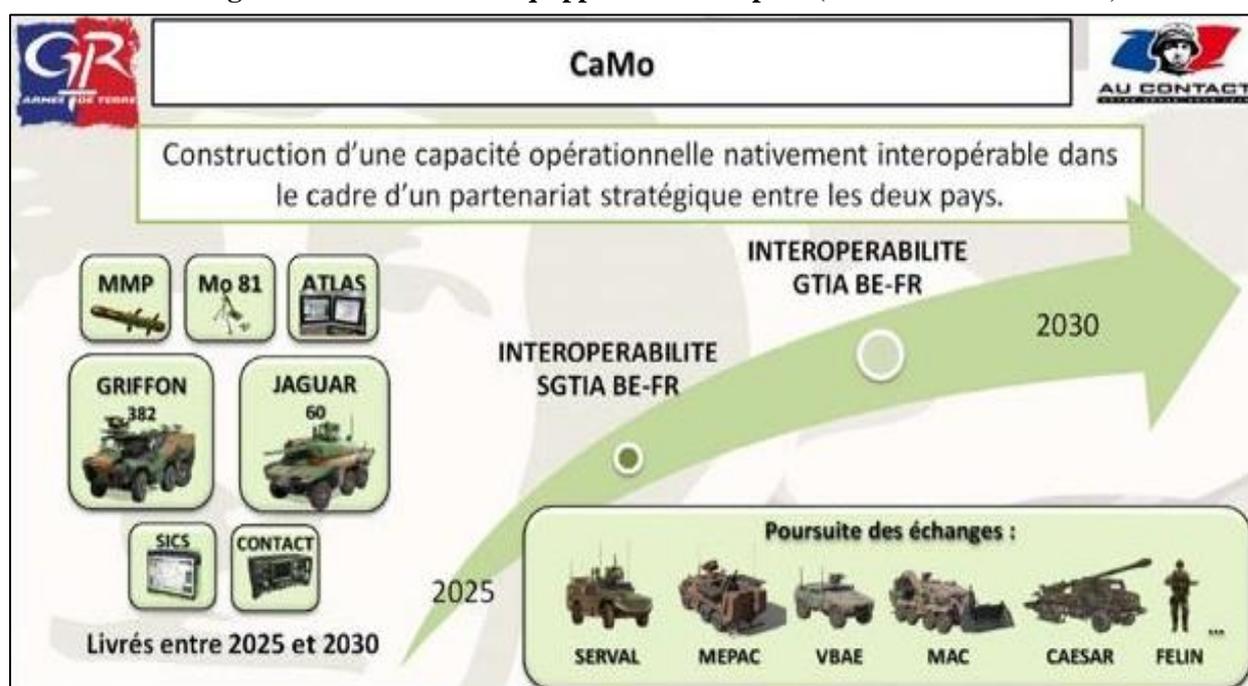
The intergovernmental agreement between the Belgian and French governments on their *Capacité Motorisée (Motorised Capability, CaMo)* strategic partnership came concretely into effect when the Belgian Army agreed the first CaMo contract last summer 2019.

Placed by the *Direction Générale de l'Armement (DGA)*, the French defense procurement agency, the contract plans the procurement of **382 Griffon multi-role armored vehicles** and **60 Jaguar armored reconnaissance vehicles** (USD 1.8 billion) for entry into service in 2025-30.

The Belgian vehicles would be identical to those of the French Scorpion program (also in terms of tactical CIS). The aim is that the entire **Belgian motorized brigade (5 battalions) becomes interchangeable with French units, so they can conduct joint operations at very-short notice** (the Belgian Army is also interested by the French model of 5-days Response Units).

**Timelines** of this strategic partnership are:

- 2024-25: Belgian units educated/trained to receive SCORPION equipment (vhl & radios);
- 2025: delivery of the 20 first Griffon armored vehicles ;
- 2027: delivery of the 12 first Jaguar vehicles /1<sup>st</sup> Belgian Scorpion Coy ready to operate;
- 2028: **1<sup>st</sup> Belgian Scorpion Battalion can be sent in overseas operations** (France=2021);
- 2030: **the Belgian motorized Bde is equipped with Scorpion** (France: 1<sup>st</sup> BCT in 2023).



## 5. FRENCH DEFENSE CORNER

### 5.1. BUILD THE NATIONAL DEFENSE OF TOMORROW

The first edition of the “*Fabrique Défense*” (*Defense Factory*) event, organized by the Ministry of the Armed Forces, was held Friday 17 and Saturday 18 January 2020 in Paris and in other French cities as well. During “DF” the French Armed Forces presented their most recent technological innovations, vehicles, gear, as well as different simulators to offer visitors an immersive experience. The event aimed at demystifying the defense world and present the numerous career paths the French Armed Forces offer.

Beyond offering a space for recruitment, the event provided a platform for dialogue between different actors across the defense world; institutions, think-tanks, industry, academia. There was also a focus on culture as movies, TV shows, and books that talked about defense were presented during the event.

The event is part of the Ministry’s efforts to reach out to younger generations, increase the defense spirit, strengthen the bond between the French Armed Forces and the Nation, and develop a European strategic culture.

### 5.2. THE “FORUM INTERNATIONAL DE LE CYBERSECURITE”, FIC

Major European event on Cybersecurity, the International Cybersecurity Forum (*FIC* in French) occurred in Lille from January 28 to January 30 and gathered:

- A tradeshow and networking events for buyers and suppliers of cybersecurity solutions
- A forum organized to foster the reflection and the exchanges among the European cybersecurity ecosystem.



<https://www.forum-fic.com/en/home.htm>

## 6. FR ARMY MODERNIZATION

### 6.1. THE FRENCH ARMY HAS RECEIVED ITS FIRST VT4 VEHICLES WITH THE INTERCHANGEABLE "BRUN TERRE DE FRANCE" CAMOUFLAGE



For more than thirty years now, Army vehicles have been painted with a "Central Europe" camouflage, combining black, brown and green spots. But this will change with the SCORPION program, with the expected appearance of a new camouflage for Griffon, Jaguar and Serval armored vehicles, as well as for the renovated Leclerc tanks.

The change will also affect the unprotected Tactical Multipurpose Light Vehicles (*VLTP or VT4*), which are gradually replacing the Peugeot P4s.

On December 18, the 40th Artillery Regiment in Suippes received the first four standard VT 4s from the French Army with a new camouflage color, called "*Brun Terre de France*" (Brown land of France).

This new color is the first component of the new Scorpio camouflage. In fact, this color is a unique background on which interchangeable and reversible camouflages stickers can be quickly applied or removed depending on the environment in which these vehicles will be driven (desert, urban, mountain environment). All the new vehicles of the Army will be delivered in that new camo color.

After 196 vehicles in 2019 delivered with the new "Central Europe" camouflage, the French Army will get 430 VT 4s.

As a reminder, the VT4 is a variation of the Ford Everest. Delivered by ARQUS, this vehicle weight 3.5 tons and have a 220HP diesel engine. It’s air transportable and fitted with the latest signal and navigation.

## 6.2. NEW LIGHT WEAPONRY



After the replacement of the FAMAS rifle in 2017 by the HK 416F, the French Ministry of Armed Forces has just officially announced the replacement of the sniper rifles and the pistols of the Army.



Chosen to replace the FRF2 in service since 1980, 2,620 FNH SCAR-H 7.62mm NATO PR semi-automatic sniper rifle, (*Fusils de précision semi-automatiques* FPSA) will be bought in 2020 throughout a € 100 procurement program. Other foreign armed forces use this rifle like the US SOCOM units (Mk20 Mod 0 Sniper Support Rifle, SSR).



In the framework of the Defense Budget Act 2019-2025 (*Loi de Programmation Militaire, 2019 - 2025*), the Army will also replace its semi-automatic pistols, the PA MAC 50 and the PAMAS G throughout a €44 million contract awarded by



Glock.

Therefore, almost 75,000 pistols Glock 17 Gen5 will be delivered by the Austrian company.

Chosen for its reliability, robustness and ergonomics, this pistol is intended to be used in the event of rapid action and the need for self-protection. By 2020, almost 60,000 pistols will be distributed within the Army.

## 6.3. SAVE THE DATES!

### CYBER - CIS

#### *Paris Cyber Week 2020*

Paris Cyber Week brings together European stakeholders and public decision makers to lead the digital transformation with Trust. <https://www.paris-cyber-week.com/>



### EUROSATORY

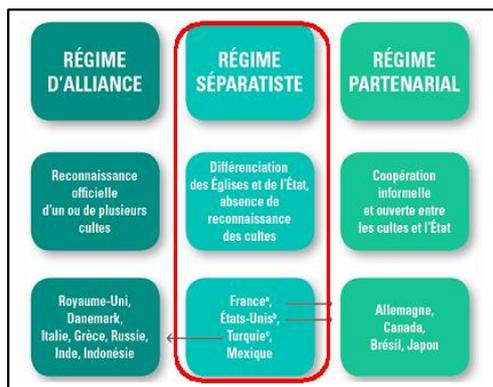
Eurosatory is the world's largest exhibition dedicated to the land and air land defense and security sectors. The vast majority of countries that have a real defense and security industry are represented.

This event brings together not only manufacturers, but also Official Delegations, VIP Experts, operational users, purchasing managers, research offices, researchers, investors, politicians and journalists who follow defense and security issues. <https://www.eurosatory.com/home/visitors/?lang=en>

During this week, the USA will be represented at the official US Security and Defense Pavilion, set up by the AUSA.



7. EXPLAINING FRENCH LEGAL MODEL OF SECULARISM THROUGH ITS PRACTICE IN THE MILITARY



One of the multiple merits of the booklet of the Ministry of The Armed Forces, first published in 2017 and reviewed in December 2019, is to kill false ideas about one serious question: how do the French Armed Forces take into account the religious beliefs of their members?

While we often consider French secularism as a dogma hostile to the expression of religion outside the private sphere, the sole **presence of military chaplains (369 in total, wearing military uniforms and paid by the French government)** of the four main religions practiced in France (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant since 1874 and Muslim since 2005) proves this perception wrong.

The type of secularism experienced within the defense community is exemplary due to the military imperative of cohesion and fraternity.

The booklet explains clearly the **three distinctive types of state secularism**: (1) the “alliance” between the state and one or several official churches (UK, Italy, Russia, etc.), (2) the “partnership” (informal cooperation; Germany, Canada, Japan) and the “separation” (US, France, Turkey, Mexico, etc.), meaning that no church or belief is directly and officially state-sponsored. The regime of “separation” varies from a state to another: while it proves very strict in Mexico, **it has somehow drifted in the US** (the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, 2001, allows federal funding to selected religious organizations) **as well as in France** (law Debré, 1959, authorizing the governmental funding of religious schools) to a **more partnership-type relation**.

