



Major General Andreas Schick,

Commander European Air Transport Command

Today, EATC is the major command for air mobility in Europe. Seven nations operate their military air mobility assets under one command with one common set of rules and regulations. The foundation idea emerged in 1999 at the Washington NATO Summit and the EU Helsinki Summit. Both summits recognized that military air transport shortfalls need to be addressed and interoperability to be enhanced if operational challenges are to be met. France and Germany took up the initiative and laid the foundations for a common command. Soon, Belgium and the Netherlands joined this forward-looking project and EATC saw the light of day on 1 September 2010 at Eindhoven Air Base. Luxembourg joined in 2012. Two years later, in 2014, it was the turn of Spain and Italy to accede the club.

EATC's Main Objectives Are ...

... laid down in our mission statement: EATC enhances the combined operational capabilities of the member nations, conducts air mobility missions, always keeping in mind to improve the effectiveness and efficiency, and increases interoperability. To ensure efficient operational control, EATC integrates all transferred national responsibilities and resources.

The member nations have transferred the authority of their air mobility assets to EATC. Across the seven nations, EATC has in its portfolio approximately 170 aircraft for air transport, air-to-air refuelling and aero-medical evacuation. These assets are stationed on 15 national air bases across the seven nations.

The integrated staff of currently 200+ persons handles the full process from planning and tasking to controlling of the fleet both in peacetime and in times of crisis. At any moment, EATC chooses the asset, which best fits to the requirements of the mission at hand. The diversity of the

portfolio with more than 20 types of aircraft gives EATC a unique flexibility and effectiveness.

The Key to EATC's Success ...

... is first of all political willingness, which was confirmed by the seven nations joining EATC. Yet to be successful, political willingness needs to be coupled to another required resource: mutual trust and confidence at all levels. Nations are only willing to pool and share assets and other resources if this condition is fulfilled.

Trust and confidence are not a given fact. It is a sustained, long-term effort.

The fact that our member nations integrated EATC into their Air Mobility Command and control structure clearly underlines the expectations they have placed in this concept and the organisation, up to the point that some nations completely disbanded their national Air Mobility Command, solely relying on the expertise and capacity of the EATC. Thus, and as a natural consequence, I as the commander of EATC have to report annually to the Air Chiefs in the so-called MATraC. This is our high-level steering body where we receive directions and guidance on the topics and challenges to tackle.

However, the national trust and confidence towards EATC relies also on the assurance that EATC honours at all moment the specific requirements from the member nations and ultimately their national sovereignty. The business model is a well-thought-out concept that assures the transfer of authority of the member nations' air transport assets. The fact that the transfer of assets can be unilaterally revoked at any given time and without explanation, safeguards possible national caveats. From the beginning, this built-in provision resulted in the vast majority of aircraft being transferred to the EATC. And in consequence, EATC delivers high-quality

(Photo: German Air Force)



service, taking into account at all moment the needs of each member nation.

The credible relationship between the air forces is an important source of resilience among the nations. They share aircraft within EATC framework offering each partner privileged access to their national assets. To be clear: we are not talking exclusively about basic access to partner nations' assets. The cooperative efforts among EATC nations involves more than that: if one nation is in need of air mobility assets, the partners support even if this leads to cancelling their own national missions. This may happen, for example, for operational urgencies or humanitarian assistance.

Another important basis for this fruitful cooperation is shared values and concepts. EATC excelled since 2010 in fostering standardisation of doctrines and procedures. Interoperability is the indispensable prerequisite to smoothly run our daily multinational operations and is considered the main objective during our multinational air mobility training and exercises activities. Enhancing interoperability also as early as during the ramp-up of fleets, evidently leads to increased mutual support, common operations and cross-national activities.

Over time, while constantly proofing the outstanding idea and the set-up of the concept, EATC developed into a recognised centre of expertise for air mobility in Europe. EATC has always been a 'blueprint' for European military cooperation. Today, it is the evidence of cooperative and coordinated efforts by seven nations translated into a successful pooling and sharing model.

Reaching Out to Partners to Strengthen European and Transatlantic Security and Defence

EATC and the seven members have a role to play. The basis has always been to draw on strong cooperation with other stakeholders in the air mobility domain. Over the years, EATC has confirmed its willingness to multiply cooperative efforts and set up partnerships to support multinational military operations. Each partner organisation has its own objectives. This does not hamper cooperation; on the contrary, the duality shows how we enhance one another.

Next to various cooperation agreements, we have established with EU and NATO military bodies, a distinguished example with civilian partners is the trilateral cooperation with EDA and OCCAR-EA. The three partners decided in 2018 to jointly optimise and develop the A400M capability, enhancing synergies and avoiding duplication of efforts.

Just across EATC's headquarters at Eindhoven Air Base is the Movement Coordination Centre Europe (MCCE). While EATC is a command whose core activities are air mobility missions and the strive for interoperability, the MCCE is a coordinating and brokering body encompassing the full spectrum of air, land and sea transportation. The permanent symbiotic relationship between the two entities lies among others in the ability to extend each other's actions in the effective use of the ATARES mechanism. MCCE is the pivot point of the ATARES exchanges.

Major General Andreas Schick was assigned to the post of EATC commander in September 2020. He joined EATC in Eindhoven as Chief of Staff in 2017. Major General Schick joined the German Air Force in 1980 and started with his officer training in 1982. After graduating from pilot training in 1985, he received weapon system training in the F-4F Phantom and the Eurofighter in 2007. Subsequent to the General Staff Course, Major General Schick fulfilled various command staff posts and took on several leadership assignments in the German Armed Forces, including an international posting at SHAPE as military assistant to SACEUR. He undertook operations assignments at ISAF HQ, Kabul (2008), and in Counter Daesh, Incirlik (2015-2016). Between 2013 and 2014, he filled the position of Branch Head Military Policy and Strategy Formulation at the German Ministry of Defence.

EATC on the other hand is an incubator of ATARES exchanges – a catalyst to boost the exchange among the nations.

The prerequisite within EATC is that only EATC member nations can directly request air transport. This narrows of course the scope for optimisation and for cooperation – two important factors for EATC. This is why EATC set up the "sponsor nation" concept. This concept offers that one (or more) of the EATC member nations stages as a sponsor to request a mission for the benefit of non-EATC nations or multinational entities such as NATO or the EU.

During the pandemic, the sponsor nation concept demonstrated its inestimable value in times of an unpredictable crisis and when urgency is asked for. Since January 2020, EATC member nations have staged as sponsor-nation for their EU partners, NATO and allies or countries such as Georgia, Tunisia, South Korea and Balkan states.

My Priorities for the Next Years ...

... are impaired by the pandemic but offered unforeseen opportunities.

First of all, I will prepare the EATC IT for the requirements of this new decade. We have a long way in front of us, looking into cyber security and its increasing challenges. Next comes how to advance with our in-house developed and maintained command and control software application MEAT. At short term, we will establish the basis to set up modern and updated home office and document management capabilities.

Secondly, I intend to intensify the cross-certification acceptance between the nations as for the maintenance part and the aircrew side, thus fostering interoperability. This is the prerequisite to offer the member nations real synergy options for deploying truly combined operational detachments.

My third priority is to offer as soon as possible a reliable air network, with the special focus on increasing the efficiency of our missions, thus freeing assets for other priorities. EATC is to test the first step: the introduction of a shared inter-theatre shuttle system. Unfortunately, we had to delay our trial phase amongst others because of pandemic-induced operational constraints. We have reviewed our timelines with the long-term objective in mind: to combine the shuttle system with infrastructural and logistically improved main operating bases linked to land and/or sea transport solutions, the so-called hub-and-spoke system.

My fourth priority is a long-term project to better support the nations during the early planning and subsequent execution phase for air mobility missions in crisis situations, under short notice and high-peak demand. We need to "multinationalise" what is still a purely national responsibility and process, and EATC could play an important role to achieve better effectiveness and efficiency.

Conclusion

My priorities are to direct EATC's focus in the next years, of course without losing sight of our daily tasks and missions and ongoing engagements. I will stay in close contact with the Air Chiefs or other national representatives to lead EATC into this new decade.

EATC is proud of its achievements. We proved the success of our vision, our commitment and the trust. We are today a recognized centre of expertise for air mobility because of the outstanding cooperative effort and innovative work of all people, air forces and other partners involved in our unique project.

Now, we will pick up the speed for the next decade. EATC has great potential to go beyond the basic principle to share scarce air mobility resources among seven nations. We will seize any opportunity to intensify the collaborative efforts with partners, from committing to close partnerships to enlarging our community if decided by our national authorities.

The pandemic strengthened our ability to deal swiftly in a crisis situation. Together with our member nations' will, we continue to demonstrate the priceless value of our commonly shared capability in Europe!

