

CLOSER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO FIGHT HOSTAGE-TAKING, KIDNAPPING AND TERRORISM

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[Press Release](#)

ATLAS, the network of special intervention units, signs terms of cooperation with Europol





As the European Union faces increasing threats from organised crime groups and terrorist attacks inspired by religious, left- and right-wing ideologies, an effective law enforcement response must include the availability of well-trained and EU-wide interoperable special intervention units. Therefore, Europol and the ATLAS Network (the cooperation platform of 38 special intervention units of EU Member States and associated countries, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland) today signed the terms of enhanced cooperation. The document was signed by Herbert Kickl, Austria's Minister of the Interior, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union; ATLAS Chairman Commander Bernhard Treibenreif; and Europol's Executive Director Catherine De Bolle.

According to the terms of cooperation, an ATLAS Support Office will be established as a team attached to the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) within the Operations Directorate at Europol's headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. The ATLAS Support Office will be the main

interface of ATLAS with Europol and will support the ATLAS Chairmanship by providing contacts to strategic and operational experts at Europol in the relevant areas of combating terrorism and serious and organised crime.

Europol's Executive Director Catherine De Bolle: "I am very pleased to open a new chapter of cooperation between Europol and the Special Intervention Units of the EU Member States gathered in the ATLAS Network. I am sure that the closer relationship between Europol and ATLAS will bring added value to the preparedness of the law enforcement community and therefore for the safety of all European citizens. One important element we are pleased to see is the facilitation of cross-border deployment of Special Intervention Units. Europol is also committed to supporting ATLAS with the development of ambitious projects for the future, including the establishment of joint training activities and the pooling of resources. "

Herbert Kickl, Minister of the Interior of Austria: "Cooperation between the ATLAS Network and Europol is an important step in the EU and an essential element of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In a crisis situation, special intervention units must be able to support each other across borders."

The signing of the agreement coincides with the ATLAS common challenge, a counter terrorism exercise in seven European regions taking place from 8 to 11 October. The ATLAS common challenge exercise aims to test the effective operational readiness of European special intervention units as regards cross-border operations. Furthermore the exercise will gather information on warning systems and assistance procedures when tested under real-life circumstances.

The different scenarios of the ATLAS common challenge are:

GROUP 1: MARITIME SCENARIO

Special intervention units: GSG 9 (Germany), DSI (Netherlands), NI (Sweden), AKS (Denmark), DELTA (Norway), KARHU (Finland)

Scenario: this scenario trains the forces for a hostage situation on a vessel on the Baltic Sea. The difficulties lie in the coordination of the assault forces (approach with several helicopters and speedboats in the dark), communication and controlling the different operation phases.

GROUP 2: AEROPLANE SCENARIO

Special intervention units: UEI (Spain), GIGN (France), DSU (Belgium), GIS (Italy), GEO (Spain), GOE and GNR (Portugal)

Scenario: at the disused Teruel airport in Spain, units are trained to deal with the hijacking of a wide-body aircraft. Current technical developments of ATLAS projects regarding the mechanical opening of aeroplane doors or the opening with breaching methods are to be tested during this operation.

GROUP 3: METRO SCENARIO

Special intervention units: BOA (Poland), OMEGA (Latvia), ARAS (Lithuania), K-Komando (Estonia)
Scenario: terrorists have taken 500 hostages on a metro train in Warsaw. The special intervention units will try to free and evacuate all the hostages.

GROUP 4: MASS HOSTAGE SCENARIO

Special intervention units: LYNX (Slovakia), Cobra (Austria), URNA (Czech Republic), TEK (Hungary), RED PANTHER (Slovenia), SIU (Croatia)
Scenario: in the historical Slovakian town Komárno a situation similar to that of Paris in 2015 is being re-enacted. The main difficulties here are the rapid response to highly mobile offenders, coordination of many different units and the use of armoured vehicles or special vehicles. EKO Cobra will assist the Slovakian unit with up to 50 officers during the operation.

GROUP 5: LAND/SEA SCENARIO

Special intervention units: VIKING (Iceland), ERU (Ireland), PSNI (Northern Ireland), SCO 19 (England)
Scenario: this scenario is based on a counter terrorism operation which starts in Iceland and ends in Northern Ireland through cross-border cooperation with a common assault.

GROUP 6: TRAIN AND CBRN SCENARIO

Special intervention units: SEK (BW-Germany), USP (Luxembourg), RAID (France), SIU (Switzerland), NOCS (Italy)
Scenario: in the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg, a passenger train has been taken over by terrorists. In the course of negotiations the units gain information that a dirty bomb could be used. Therefore CBRN specialists from the French units RAID are brought in.

GROUP 7: BUS HIJACKING SCENARIO

Special intervention units: EKAM (Greece), EAO (Cyprus), SOBT (Bulgaria), SIAS and BSIJ (Romania)
Scenario: a coach has been hijacked in northern Greece. It is being tracked by Greek and Bulgarian special intervention units to Bucharest. In order to prevent it entering Ukraine, the units assault what are now two hijacked coaches. The operation is being coordinated by a crisis centre in Bucharest.

CENTRAL INFORMATION AND COORDINATION HUB AT EUROPOL

During the entire exercise a central information and coordination hub will be installed in an operational room at Europol headquarters. Liaison officers from the different regional organising units alongside members of the ATLAS Command and Control Forum will be present to visualise situation reports of the transnational operations as well as support the regional operation

coordination.

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