

NORDEFCO

Nordic Defence Cooperation

Annual Report 2019





From the Ministerial Meeting in Stockholm 19–20 November 2019. Photo: Magnus Liljegren, Government Offices

NORDEFSCO Vision 2025

On the 13th of November 2018, the Nordic Ministers of Defence adopted the following vision for enhanced Nordic defence cooperation:

We will improve our defence capability and cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict. We ensure a close Nordic political and military dialogue on security and defence. Acknowledging our different security affiliations, we pursue an agenda based on joint security perspectives, efficient and cost-effective cooperation to strengthen our national defences and the ability to act together.



NORDEFECO Annual Report 2019

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Foreword

The Nordic countries are bound together by geography, history, culture, language and values and there is a long tradition of Nordic cooperation. Our region constitutes a single strategic area, and we all agree that a major security crisis in the region would affect all the Nordic countries. The current security situation firmly underlines the importance of the Nordic defence cooperation and the need to build security together.

This year the Nordic defence cooperation celebrates its ten-year anniversary. It is worth noting that the cooperation has come a long way since it began in 2009. At the outset, our cooperation was motivated primarily by the aim of maintaining certain defence capabilities and exploring common solutions. The serious changes in the security situation during the last few years has deepened our cooperation and we are now focusing our efforts on the ability to act jointly.

In order to bolster the Nordic defence cooperation, the Swedish chairmanship of 2019 started the work on implementing Vision 2025. We have consolidated and further developed ongoing projects and also launched new initiatives. A special emphasis during this year was on discussions to further develop the Nordic defence cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict.

Of particular importance is the establishment of the NORDEFECO Crisis Consultation Mechanism. In November we tested and endorsed the mechanism. Now we have a tool for enhanced information sharing and consultation during crisis or conflict. This was a major step forward and the Nordic ministers have all agreed that we should take advantage of this opportunity.

At the Visby ministerial meeting in April, Sweden, Finland and Norway signed an agreement on security of supply, and Denmark declared intent to sign the agreement following further scrutiny. This offers an opportunity for a more efficient use of resources in peace, crisis and conflict. The agreement regarding Alternate Landing Bases has been extended to also include armed aircraft. The Nordic defence cooperation is present and active in international operations. In Mali, NORDEFECO has supplied transport aircrafts to MINUSMA and contributed with Mobile Training Teams.

Yet another milestone that I would like to highlight is the Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE). It was the largest air exercise in Europe in 2019 and was recognised as the first Nordic flag level exercise according to agreed criteria. In 2016, the Nordic ministers agreed to develop ACE into a recurring high intensity air combat flag exercise. The Nordic air forces have approached this endeavour in close cooperation with the United States. I am happy



Photo: Magnus Liljegren, Government Offices

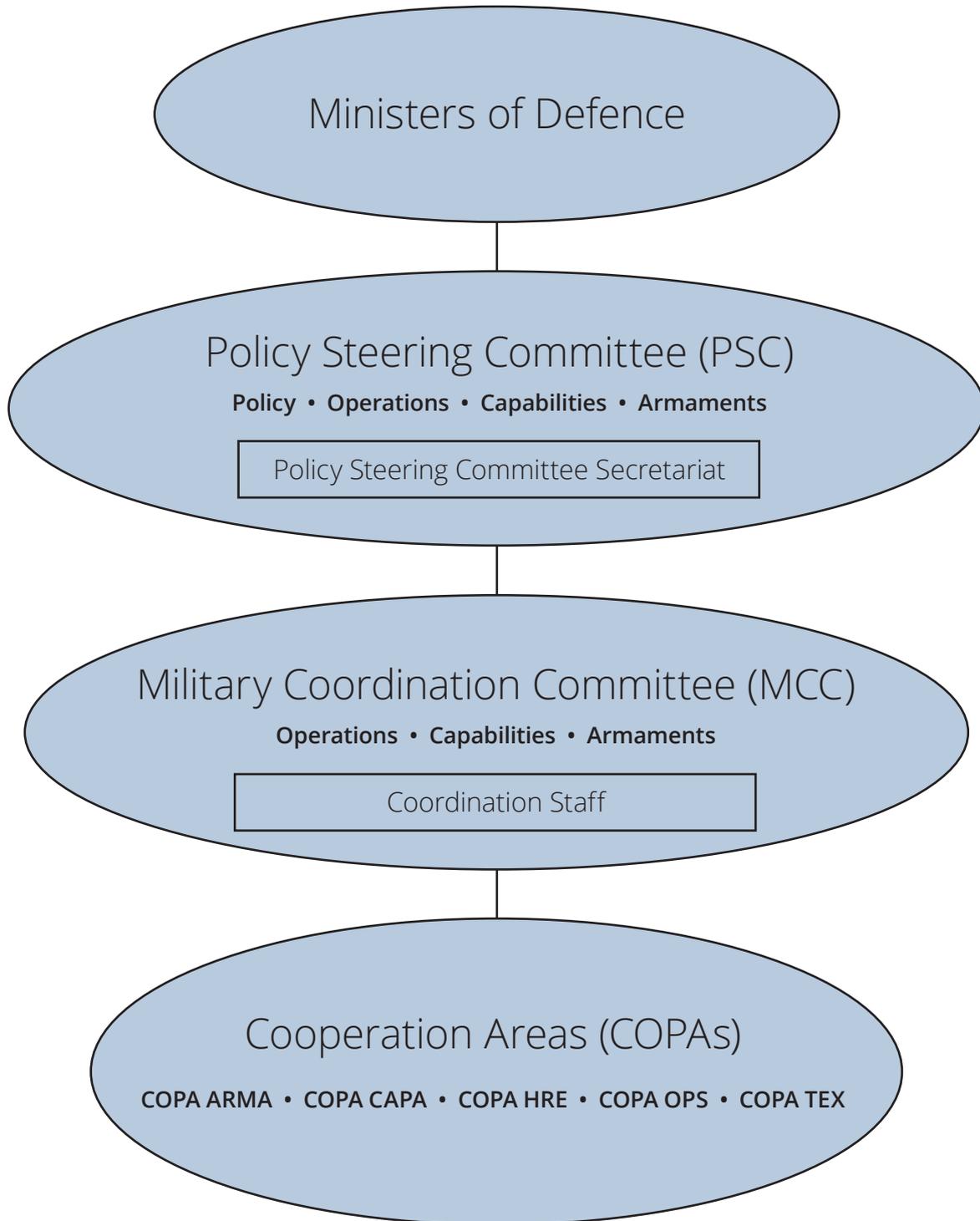
“In order to meet our responsibility, we must continue to strengthen our ability to act together in peace, crisis and conflict.”

that Norway will continue the work and take responsibility for planning the ACE exercise in 2021. Also, this year the military exercise Northern Wind took place near the Swedish-Finnish border where approximately 10 000 personnel from Sweden, Norway, Finland, UK and US participated. Exercises such as ACE and Northern Wind not only improve our national capabilities and ability to act together, they also clearly demonstrate the strong cooperation that exists between the Nordic countries.

The Nordic countries have different security affiliations but are united by the common responsibility of maintaining peace and stability in our part of Europe. In order to meet our responsibility, we must continue to strengthen our ability to act together in peace, crisis and conflict. Strengthening the Nordic defence cooperation in the coming years will benefit the Nordic region and promote stability and security beyond our borders. It is encouraging that there is strong political will and support within our countries for increased Nordic defence cooperation. I would like to take the opportunity to thank my Nordic colleagues and everyone who has contributed to the achievements obtained this year, and I look forward to the Danish chairmanship of NORDEFCO next year.

Peter Hultqvist Minister for Defence Sweden

The NORDEFECO Structure



Swedish Chairmanship 2019

– A Summary

The overarching aim of the Swedish chairmanship of NORDEFECO in 2019 was twofold. Firstly, to initiate a discussion on how to further develop the Nordic defence cooperation in peace, crisis and conflict, and secondly to continue to strengthen NORDEFECO as a platform for a wide-ranging security policy dialogue in order to develop regional security in a more efficient way. The priorities for the Swedish chairmanship were formulated in accordance with the goals set out in NORDEFECO’s vision for 2025.

Throughout the year, several meetings have been held at both the military and political level. At the ministerial level, the Nordic defence ministers met on Gotland 9–10 April and in Stockholm 19–20 November, where the ministers also met in the Nordic-Baltic and the Northern group format.

At the Political Steering Committee (PSC) level, the Capability directors and Armaments directors met in Stockholm 11–12 March while the Policy directors made a joint trip to Washington D.C. and Norfolk 12–14 March. The PSC Policy meeting was combined with several meetings with U.S. representatives. The fall PSC meeting, including a Nordic-Baltic meeting, was hosted by Iceland and took place in Reykjavík 15 October.

The Nordic Permanent Secretaries met in Luleå 23–24 May where they had the opportunity to visit the Arctic Challenge Exercise 2019. The Permanent Secretaries also met in Washington 9 September which offered the possibility for coordination ahead of the Nordic-Baltic-US (NBUS) meeting 10 September.



From the Ministerial Meeting on Gotland 9–10 April 2019. Photo: Josefin Freij, Government Offices

NORDEFCO Cooperation Areas

Military Level

The cooperation areas (COPAs) are a central part of the Nordic defence cooperation military framework. The COPAs are responsible for the implementation of decisions made by the Military Coordination Committee (MCC). Projects and activities are primarily managed through the COPAs, together with the Coordination Staff (CS) that handles the coordination and facilitation on behalf of the MCC. There are five COPAs where nations participate with relevant expertise and national mandates. The areas of cooperation are, capabilities, armaments, human resources and education, training and exercises, and operations. Parallel to the COPAs there is also a Communications Network to support the cooperation.

Cooperation Area Armaments (COPA ARMA)

COPA ARMA aims to enhance coordination and cooperation in armaments and acquisitions. COPA ARMA is mandated to initiate and administrate working groups in any area that is deemed beneficial for Nordic armaments cooperation. Possible development programs and mutual benefits on buying or maintaining equipment are identified from mutual exchange of information on national procurement plans and ad hoc initiatives presented by participating nations. COPA ARMA is also responsible to maintain the dialogue with the defence industry and to seek added value in harmonization of requirements and national processes.

Cooperation Area Capabilities (COPA CAPA)

COPA CAPA addresses the Nordic countries' military development plans and processes, with the main task of identifying and proposing areas for capability cooperation. Based on common needs and mutual benefits, COPA CAPA systematically identifies areas of cooperation where there are possibilities for developing or improving capabilities. The overall intent being to increase operational effectiveness.

Cooperation Area Human Resources and Education (COPA HRE)

COPA HRE aims to achieve an enhanced cooperation within the field of human resources and military education in the Nordic countries. COPA HRE facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experience on policies and procedures regarding human resources and education in order to gain operational benefits and optimized resources among the Nordic countries. COPA HRE works as a hub to coordinate and facilitate platforms for experts to meet regularly and exchange information and best practices in certain fields of expertise.

Cooperation Area Training and Exercises (COPA TEX)

COPA TEX aims to continuously identify possibilities for coordination and harmonization of military training and exercise activities among the Nordic countries. COPA TEX identifies, discusses and coordinates information sharing and cooperation concerning future training and exercise opportunities.

Cooperation Area Operations (COPA OPS)

COPA OPS prepares and coordinates force contributions, deployments/redeployments and logistical support for an increased operational effect in support of ongoing operations. COPA OPS is event driven and operates through respective countries military line organisation and maintains the Nordic network of operational planners, ensuring close dialogue in order to create the basis for common contributions.



Norwegian soldiers participating in Northern Wind 2019. Photo: Jesper Sundström, Swedish Armed Forces

Cooperation Area Armaments (COPA ARMA)

COPA ARMA had several ongoing projects in 2019. One prominent deliverable was the COPA ARMA 2019 screening process of possible cooperation on ammunition procurement. During 2019, ten different working groups were operating with experts from the Nordic countries' line organizations, such as defence headquarters, logistics organizations, Ministries of Defence, services, etc.

The working groups' activities produced added value to the participating countries in the form of cost savings, exchange of information/best practices, sharing of national resources etc.

Nordic Combat Uniform (NCU)

The work on the Nordic Combat Uniform is on-going. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are cooperating on procuring a new military uniform, with differing camouflage for each nation. The project has started user-testing and evaluations during 2019–2020. Denmark is planned to be the first country to receive deliveries of the completed uniform during 2021.

NORDEFECO Project Development Guide (NPDG)

The purpose of the NPDG is to establish procedures and guidelines for how NORDEFECO common procurement projects are developed and executed based on experience from the NCU project. By giving an overview of relevant issues and stakeholders, the NPDG aims to increase the potential for success for NORDEFECO common procurement. The NPDG provides practical guidance on how to ensure that critical issues are treated properly and to mitigate risk, as well as give insights into lessons learned.

Cooperation Area Capabilities (COPA CAPA)

COPA CAPA focused on improving the capability development process within NORDEFECO in 2019. As follow-up from 2018, COPA CAPA has explored new possibilities for cooperation within the NORDEFECO Exploratory Space Study and the Study on Autonomous and Unmanned Systems as well. Autonomous systems, unlike remotely operated systems, have the ability to perform certain functions independently. This can support military operations, e.g. by contributing to force protection as well as increasing mobility and improving lethality.

Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance (NORECAS)

The Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance consists of sharing of radar data and integration of air traffic control and communication systems. This provides improved situational awareness in the Nordic region in peacetime, with the aim to enhance and strengthen air surveillance cooperation within NORDEFECO. The project is in its implementation phase and is estimated to be operational by mid-2021.

Autonomous and Unmanned Systems (AUS)

In the Autonomous and Unmanned Systems project, COPA CAPA explored the potential for including AUS-related issues into NORDEFECO activities. AUS is a rapidly growing technological trend, which is becoming more present in military capabilities and is expected to be of greater importance for the development of the defence sector. The work included how the Nordic nations can enhance information sharing, knowledge and education within this area.



ACE was executed between May 20th and June 5th 2019. *Photo: Jesper Sundström, Swedish Armed Forces*



Training before the Arctic Challenge Exercise 2019. *Photo: Jesper Sundström, Swedish Armed Forces*

Cooperation Area Human Resources and Education (COPA HRE)

The work and focus within the COPA HRE have been concentrated on the working group Nordic Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear threats Centre of Competence (CBRN CoC) and the final report is due late 2019. The required knowledge for education and training of CBRN specialists is a scarce resource. In this respect there are knowledge gaps in the NORDEFECO nations, which will be mitigated by enhanced cooperation.

A new working group within the scope of “broader recruitment” and working group PME (Professional Military Education) has widened the area of cooperation in the field of education for Non-commissioned officers (NCO’s). It is now composed of cooperation in OF and OR (Officers and Other Ranks), education and includes the Baltic Defence College, an area in the Nordic context that has potential for further enhanced cooperation. The overall aim is to further explore the possibilities on how to develop the Nordic exchange program on military personnel education on other levels, including NCO education.

Working group Nordic CBRN Centre of Competence

The Working group aims to establish a Centre of Competence in Sweden in 2021 (at the National CBRN Defence Center in Umeå). The participating nations see the need for and the benefits of enhanced cooperation in the CBRN area. Since there are relatively few individuals that have specialist level of CBRN expertise in the NORDEFECO nations, they are valuable and hard to replace.

Working group Professional Military Education (PME)

The aim of working group Professional and Military Education is to further explore the possibilities on how to develop the Nordic exchange program on military personnel education and to further explore the possibilities on how to develop the Nordic exchange program on military personnel education on other levels, including NCO education.

Cooperation Area Training and Exercises (COPA TEX)

The valued relationship with strategic military partners in Europe and across the Atlantic, including NATO, is strengthened by synchronizing exercises and training events for the purpose of enhancing interoperability and sharing best practices in military domains of mutual interest for our military forces.

The COPA TEX List of Nordic Exercises, “TOP NORDIC EXERCISES”, which was produced in 2019, was decided by the PSC to be an annual report.

Increased dialogue amongst the Nordic countries has been established in order to, to the maximum possible extent, influence and benefit from participation in multinational exercises of common interest from large strategic NATO exercises to regional bi- and multilateral exercises.

Sharing of experiences

The Nordic countries are sharing lessons learned from participation in exercises and training activities both on a national and international level. The best national practices are evaluated and shared among countries with common goals. National processes and procedures for sharing lessons learned are developed and harmonized based upon both national and NATO doctrines. COPA TEX is continuously developing and refining how to best share lessons learned among our nations.

Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE)

The major joint combined air exercise Arctic Challenge Exercise 2019 is a clear evidence of the Nordic nations’ aim to bring military excellence into a complex and realistic threat scenario in the northernmost parts of Europe. The exercise was developed under the auspice of NORDEFECO to become one of the major air exercises in Europe supported by U.S. Air Force in Europe. Arctic Challenge Exercise matches the most advanced and complex Western air exercises of today – and tomorrow.

Cooperation Area Operations (COPA OPS)

The building of trust and confidence between the Nordic nations' representatives have been of great importance. This confidence has given the Nordic nations' military headquarters the ability to handle time critical issues as well as prudent planning issues. COPA OPS has, based on common Nordic political decisions, been ready to prepare, plan, and coordinate contributions, deployment/redeployment and logistics support to operations both domestic and abroad. In order to achieve the tasks, COPA OPS will continue to maintain the Nordic network, keep a relevant dialogue and monitor the global situation.

During 2019, COPA OPS scrutinized possible joint NORDEFECO ventures within the framework of the NATO Mission in Iraq (NMI). This task is to be further explored in 2020. Discussions also found that there was common ground for possible NORDEFECO cooperation in Sahel. All Nordic nations were involved in some level of further planning and joint ventures in support of operation Barkhane. The task is ongoing and will be further explored in 2020.



Training provided by the Nordic Mobile Training Team in Timbuktu. Photo: Hampus Hogstedt, Swedish Armed Forces

Arctic Challenge Exercise

During 2019 the Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE) has been planned, developed and conducted as a recurring high intensive Air Combat Flag Level Exercise, as decided by the Ministers for Defence in November 2016.

ACE was held for the first time in 2013. It is an air combat exercise executed jointly every second year by Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden with rotational responsibility for the exercise. In addition, considerable support for the exercise is provided by the United States Air Force. The exercise originates from the 15-year-old Cross Border Training (CBT) concept between Finland, Norway and Sweden. In 2019, the exercise was conducted for the fourth time.

In 2015, an initial report was drafted suggesting advancement of the exercise to reach so-called flag level, making it more intensive, complex and cutting-edge in close cooperation with the U.S.

A flag-level exercise is characterized by a dynamic and realistic scenario. The five countries organizing ACE agreed on the following criteria to be met: real time kill removal, extended Ground Based Air Defence Capability (GBAD), secure communication, possibility for tactical use of munitions, extended jamming capability, dynamic opponent, and separate training and opponent planning cells and distribution.

During the NORDEFSCO ministerial meeting in Copenhagen in November 2016, the Nordic ministers agreed on a plan to develop ACE into a recurring flag level exercise. It was agreed that this should be done gradually and the need for U.S. support and involvement was emphasized. Subsequently, a Letter of Intent (LoI) between the Air Chiefs' of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the U.S. Air Force in Europe was signed in October 2017, stating the intention to develop the existing ACE exercise concept into a high-quality European flag exercise.

Planning for ACE 2019 started in September 2017. The organization included a Core Planning Team (CPT) with representation from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden with additional support from U.S. Air Force. The CPT coordinated different working groups in charge of the various projects, such as flight safety and scenario building.



The Nordic Permanent Secretaries met in Luleå 23–24 May where they had the opportunity to visit the Arctic Challenge Exercise 2019. *Photo: Jesper Sundström, Swedish Armed Forces*

ACE was executed between May 20th and June 5th. The scenario was based on a crisis management operation, with UN-mandate. The aim was to increase air defence capability, interoperability, training opportunities, cost effectiveness and operational effect. The exercise included approximately 100 fighters and 25 supporting aircraft¹ covering 4 000 participants (including ground forces) from nine countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK and USA. NATO also participated with AWACS aircraft. Four bases in three countries hosted all participants: Ørland, Bodø, Luleå and Rovaniemi. ACE was the main air exercise in Europe this year.

The hard work to develop ACE into a European high-quality flag level exercise paid off, ACE 2019 was evaluated as the first Nordic flag level exercise according to criteria set up in 2015. ACE sends a clear signal of the strong cooperation that exists between the Nordic countries and serves as a stabilizing factor for the region. It is also an important step in reaching the targets stated in NORDEF's Vision 2025 by facilitating interoperability between our countries as well as enhancing Nordic-Transatlantic relations.

We are now looking forward to the next ACE exercise under Norwegian leadership in 2021.

¹ Examples of participating aircraft are JAS 39 Gripen, F-15, F-16, F-18, Typhoon and Rafale

10-year anniversary of NORDEFECO

Nordic cooperation was initiated in 1952 through the creation of the Nordic council. Since then the Nordic countries have been engaged in United Nations peacekeeping initiatives, providing a concerted effort in supporting UN missions such as United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Suez region in the 1950s and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the Balkans during the 1990s.

“NORDEFECO constitutes the current framework for Nordic cooperation on defence and this year the cooperation celebrates its 10th anniversary.”



In 1997 the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS) was initiated for coordinating peace support education and training. NORDCAPS inherited those responsibilities which prior had been under the Nordic Stand-by Forces in United Nations Service (NORDSAMFN). Nordic defence cooperation continued to evolve during the 1990s with the establishment of Nordic Armaments Cooperation (NORDAC). In 2007 the Swedish and Norwegian Armed forces published a joint study outlining a partnership intended as a complement to the two countries' cooperation with EU and NATO. As a result of the study Nordic supportive Defence Structures (NORDSUP) was established with the aim of increasing cost-efficiency and enabling retainment of military capabilities. NORDSUP was established in 2008 and included all five Nordic countries.

In 2009, the three structures NORDCAPS, NORDAC and NORDSUP were brought together into a single overarching structure: the Nordic defence cooperation (NORDEFECO). NORDEFECO constitutes the current framework for Nordic cooperation on defence and this year the cooperation celebrates its 10th anniversary. Following is a historical overview of Nordic defence cooperation 2009–2019.

2009

In January 2009, Finland assumed the chairmanship of the NORDSUP Steering Committee. The Finnish chairmanship strived to create an overarching structure encompassing all aspects of Nordic defence cooperation. In November 2009, this was accomplished when the Nordic ministers for defence signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and created the Nordic defence cooperation (NORDEFECO). NORDEFECO brought the previous NORDAC, NORDCAPS and NORDSUP cooperation structures together into one common institutional framework.

2010

In 2010, the Norwegian chairmanship focused largely upon the establishment and implementation of the new NORDEFECO structures. Discussions on the development of NORDEFECO towards 2020 was initiated, and a Nordic General Security Agreement was signed. The cooperation area Training and Exercises (COPA TEX) was established, and a joint weekly training programme for the air wings in Bodø, Kallax and Rovaniemi was introduced (Cross-Border Training North). During the year NORDEFECO also initiated cooperation activities and informal discussions with the three Baltic States.

2011

In 2011, the Swedish chairmanship furthered the implementation of the NORDEFECO military structure and developed frameworks to drive the process forward. A five-year Combined Joint Nordic Exercise Plan for 2012–2016 was developed and the Nordic countries agreed to establish the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations. Additionally, cooperation with the Baltic states was established and they were invited to participate in selected activities at the military level. The established Nordic cooperation in Afghanistan continued with Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian weekly-operated common logistical flights to Afghanistan.

2012

The Danish chairmanship dedicated the year to developing NORDEFECO along the lines of smart defence and pooling and sharing. In November, Nordic cooperation was further enhanced through the signing of the letter of intent on a Nordic Tactical Air Transport (NORTAT). Other achievements during the year were the introduction of a top-down screening process by the Military Coordination Committee (MCC), the establishment of annual NORDEFECO-Baltic meetings at MCC-level, and Cross-Border Training South. Nordic cooperation in Afghanistan continued with enhanced planning for coordination of redeployments from Afghanistan.

In 2013, during the Finnish chairmanship, the most important achievement on policy level was the development of the NORDEFECO Vision 2020, renewing the political commitment in deepening the Nordic defence cooperation. In 2013, the NORDEFECO structure was evaluated and the MCC representatives decided on a plan to change the structure, process and working methods. A four-year action plan was developed with the aim of enabling a more effective national resource planning and enhancing the quality of the cooperation output. The Nordic Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) as well as the National Armaments Directors (NADs) and Nordic Permanent Secretaries/State Secretaries were also more formally incorporated into the existing NORDEFECO structure. The cooperation area of strategic development was merged with the area of capability. Armaments were also introduced as an additional cooperation area (COPA ARMA) within NORDEFECO. The Combined Joint Exercise Plan for the Nordic countries was expanded to also include the Baltic States. Additionally, Finland, Norway and Sweden made a joint contribution together with the Baltic States to the EU training mission in Mali.

Other achievements during 2013: the Nordic defence ministers signed a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of a pool for NORTAT.

In 2014, the scope and intensity of the dialogue between the Nordic countries increased due to the changing security situation in Europe. The need to exchange information and to develop Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation and security dialogue grew with the Nordic region's increased importance. Cooperation on air surveillance was intensified by addressing the potential for a closer and more operational cooperation within air surveillance. A roadmap concerning Nordic Cooperation for Air Surveillance Information Exchange (NORECAS) was developed during the year. Finland, Norway and Sweden, together with NATO, also implemented an agreement on Air Situational Data Exchange (ASDE).

Furthermore, Nordic-Baltic cooperation developed to include all activities under the military cooperation areas (COPAs) and all COPAs were thus in essence open for participation by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Nordic-Baltic Assistance Programme capacity-building initiative was initiated in 2014. During Norway's rotation to undertake NATO's Air Policing Mission on Iceland in spring 2014, Finland, and Sweden participated in training and exercise activities. Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway also assisted the UN and OPCW in the escort and transportation of chemical weapons out of Syria. In 2014, Cross-Border Training South and North was merged into Cross-Border Training.

2015

In 2015, the Swedish chairmanship launched the concept of NORDECFO Action Plans (NAP) at Policy Steering Committee (PSC) level. The purpose was to emphasise certain areas for cooperation as laid out in Vision 2020. Several action plans were proposed with the ambition to provide the military level with clear taskings, goals and timelines. Significant progress was made regarding information sharing with a decision to implement a secure communication system between the Nordic capitals. In the Nordic-Baltic assistance programme, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway deployed a Nordic-Baltic team to Georgia, developing a joint training and evaluation centre. Furthermore, the work on establishing a high intensity air combat flag exercise was initiated, and the concept of Cross-border training (CBT) was taken further with Iceland signing the technical agreement. Development of Nordic Cooperation within the framework of Open Skies was also initiated during the year.

2016

In 2016 a key priority for the Danish chairmanship was to explore the possibility of flexible military access, at sea, land and in the air between the Nordic countries. During the year development of the Easy Access Agreement (EA) was initiated, and the agreement was signed by the Nordic ministers in Copenhagen on 9 November 2016. The agreement facilitates movement of military capabilities in the respective countries' territories during peacetime. Furthermore, Denmark, Sweden and Norway entered the Alternate Landing Base Agreement (ALB), which allowed unarmed military aircraft to land on each other's airbases. In 2016, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland also signed a technical agreement on a Nordic Combat Uniform (NCU), establishing a joint purchase of uniforms.

Other activities during 2016: A declaration on the Nordic-Baltic Assistance Programme was signed in September, ensuring continued Nordic-Baltic cooperation. In June, the UN ambassadors from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and Portugal signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to make a tactical air transport capability available, through a Nordic rotational programme, for the UN mission MINUSMA. Furthermore, a framework for an agreement on NORTAT was developed during the year and was signed by the Nordic Air Chiefs in November.

2017

The Finnish chairmanship dedicated the year on fostering continuity and to take forward selected initiatives. The MoU on NORECAS was finalized during the year and was signed by the ministers in November. The initial implementation of the Easy Access MoU started with the drafting of an implementation plan. A Table Top Discussion (TTD) was organized in connection with PSC meeting in October and Policy Directors and MCC representatives from each Nordic country participated.

Other activities during 2017: an agreement was made on the further development of ACE and a LoI on strengthening the exercise was signed together with the United States. Finland and Iceland also signed the Technical Arrangement on the ALB meaning all the Nordic countries had joined the agreement at the end of 2017.

2018

During 2018, the Norwegian chairmanship sought to introduce new plans and objectives while also continuing ongoing projects. A key priority was to develop a new vision for NORDEFECO. At the ministerial meeting in Oslo 13 November, the Nordic defence ministers agreed on the new vision, Vision 2025. The secure communication system became operational between all five Nordic countries. At the fall ministerial meeting, the Nordic ministers agreed to task the MCC with drafting a technical agreement regarding an extension of the Alternate Landing Base concept to include armed aircraft. NORECAS was further developed with the Nordic Air Chiefs from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden signing a Technical Arrangement. Other activities during 2018: Denmark, Norway and Sweden supported MINUSMA in Mali with tactical air transport capability through a rotational programme.

2019

During the Swedish chairmanship of 2019 the work to implement Vision 2025 has been initiated. On 19 November, the ministers endorsed a Crisis Consultations Mechanism enabling information exchange, enhanced common situational awareness and a forum to discuss and coordinate joint strategic messaging regarding shared concerns in crisis or conflict. The Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE) was successfully conducted as a flag level exercise based on the criteria set up in 2015. On 9 November 2019, a new version of the Alternate Landing Base agreement (ALB) was signed by the Nordic air chiefs, now including also armed aircraft. On 20 November 2019, the agreement was also signed by Iceland.

An action plan on total defence and resilience was adopted at the PSC meeting in March 2019 with the aim of enhancing knowledge, sharing experiences and exploring possibilities for further cooperation. An ad hoc ministerial working group was established with the main task to identify possible areas for cooperation. The results were presented at the ministerial in November, where the ministers concluded that the findings by the working group constituted a good platform for moving forward.

At the ministerial meeting in April, Sweden, Finland and Norway signed an agreement on security of supply. The agreement creates opportunity for a more efficient use of resources during peacetime and in the event of crisis or conflict. Denmark issued a letter of intent to sign the agreement on security of supply at a later stage. In October, a Nordic Project Development Guide was published.



From the Ministerial Meeting in Stockholm 19–20 November 2019. From left: Antti Kaikkonen, Minister of Defence Finland, Trine Bramsen, Minister of Defence Denmark, Peter Hultqvist, Minister for Defence Sweden, Arnor Sigurjonsson, Director General Iceland and Frank Bakke-Jensen, Minister of Defence Norway. *Photo: Magnus Liljegren, Government Offices*

Joint Nordic Op-Ed on strengthened cooperation

The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) is celebrating its ten-year anniversary this year. It is a close and operational cooperation that contributes to a more secure Nordic region. Now we are taking additional steps to be better prepared in case of a crisis.

The Nordic countries are bound together by geography, history, culture and values, we share a common responsibility to maintain peace and stability in our neighbourhood. We are mutually dependent on the supply of goods, access to ports, functional and interlinked infrastructure and transport routes that cross our borders. A secure Northern Europe is our common interest.

“In order to meet our common responsibility for the security in our region, we must continue to strengthen our capabilities to act together.”

We are living in unpredictable times with new challenges and threats bringing about a sense of uncertainty in our societies. Therefore, we must be prepared to defend our democratic societies. If a major security crisis would occur in the Nordic region, it would affect us all. In order to meet our common responsibility for the security in our region, we must continue to strengthen our capabilities to act together. At today's defence ministerial meeting, we are therefore endorsing a NORDEFECO crisis consultation mechanism with the aim to enhance our information sharing and consultation during crisis and conflict, to be more prepared if a crisis would occur.

The purpose of the Nordic Defence Cooperation is to strengthen the participants' national defence, explore synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions. This has guided our work from the outset, and still forms the basis for the Nordic Defence Cooperation.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea 2014 and the ongoing aggression in eastern Ukraine, has deteriorated the international security situation and has led to a military build-up in our region. Russia's behavior continues to increase international tensions. Cyberattacks, information operations and intelligence activities are other security challenges we all face. The security situation at hand has had an impact on all our countries as well as on the Nordic defence cooperation.

We all have a responsibility to maintain peace and stability in our region. This has made our cooperation even more necessary.

As we are celebrating the NORDEFECO ten-year anniversary it is clear that our collective effort has led to many concrete and successful results. Initially our prime focus was on creating efficient and cost-effective solutions of mutual interest, not only in our immediate vicinity but also in the international arena. We established cooperation on Nordic Tactical Air Transport (NORTAT) and deepened our cooperation in international military operations such as in Afghanistan. More recently this cooperation has continued in Mali. Taking advantage of the Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish air space in the North, we developed the successful exercise concept Cross Border Training.

Since 2014 our cooperation has become more operational and focused on the security situation in our close vicinity. During the past few years, we have established secure communication between our capitals, we have facilitated easy access to each other's

territories, and we have taken measures to improve our common situational awareness by developing capability to exchange of air surveillance information. We have also agreed on arrangements which enables Nordic aircrafts to use landing bases in another Nordic country, for example when required by weather conditions. Another example of our close cooperation is the air exercise Arctic Challenge Exercise which was conducted as a European high-quality flag level exercise this year, in close cooperation with the USA. These Nordic exercises complement our ongoing security and defence cooperation between NATO allies and partners, such as Trident Juncture 2018 last year.

“By establishing the NORDEFECO Crisis Consultation Mechanism we strengthen our abilities to cooperate also if a crisis would occur.”

The NORDEFECO vision 2025 that we agreed upon in 2018 guides our further work. It reflects the common understanding that a serious security crisis in the Nordic region would affect us all, and that we need to be prepared and equipped to act together in peace, crisis and conflict.

By establishing the NORDEFECO Crisis Consultation Mechanism we strengthen our abilities to cooperate also if a crisis would occur. This new mechanism will enable us to reach a common situational awareness during crisis and conflict. The NORDEFECO members may consult each other whenever the regional stability, their territorial integrity or security is threatened. The mechanism may also be used to exchange views and coordinate positions on unfolding international events with implications for the security in the Nordic region or where the Nordic countries have a common security interest.

We will continue the efforts to strengthen NORDEFECO as a platform for security and defence policy dialogue and effective practical cooperation. A close Nordic defence cooperation increases our military capabilities and strengthens our ability to act together. When we train and exercise together, we strengthen our national capabilities and our ability to act jointly. At the same time, we send a strong signal to potential aggressors that we will defend ourselves if needed.

Peter Hultqvist Minister for Defence Sweden
Frank Bakke-Jensen Minister of Defence Norway
Trine Bramsen Minister of Defence Denmark
Antti Kaikkonen Minister of Defence Finland
Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson Minister for Foreign Affairs Iceland

Danish Chairmanship 2020

In 2020, Denmark will assume the chairmanship of NORDEFECO from Sweden and further implement Vision 2025, based on the successful work done by Sweden in 2019. Denmark looks forward to taking on this important role.

The point of departure for the Danish chairmanship is the firm belief that a strong Nordic Defence Cooperation is an important contribution to security and stability in the Nordic Region and to the overall security of Europe. NORDEFECO can also support Europe in its effort to strengthen its own security and defence. Improving the ability for the Nordic countries to act together in peace, crisis and conflict will be an important part of such an effort. During the Danish chairmanship, we will continue this important work. Furthermore, we will work towards enhancing Nordic-Transatlantic relations and cooperation and dialogue with the Baltic countries. In light of the changing security environment, we will further strengthen NORDEFECO as a forum for political and military dialogue, especially regarding the Arctic. We will consolidate ongoing projects but also explore new areas of collaboration within cyber security and green defence. Lastly, we will explore possibilities for Nordic armaments and defence industry cooperation including in regard to the European Defence Fund.

Thus, the Danish chairmanship priorities in 2020 are to:

- Enhance Nordic-Transatlantic relations further as well as the cooperation and dialogue with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- Develop knowledge and explore possibilities for cooperation within the area of cyber security with the aim to improve our resilience against dangers from growing cyber threats.
- Share information and discuss approaches to promote green defence. A particular focus area will be to explore reduction of the carbon footprint in deployments.
- Continue to strengthen NORDEFECO as a forum for political and military dialogue on security and defence with enhanced focus on the Arctic.
- Continue to improve our ability to act together in peace, crisis and conflict.
- Consolidate the newly established mechanism for crisis consultations.
- Explore possibilities for Nordic armaments and defence industry cooperation inherent in the European Defence fund as well as other relevant forums and instruments. The Nordic Defence Industry Seminar 2020 will serve as a platform to promote dialogue.

Furthermore, we will consolidate and further develop on-going cooperation and action plans.

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