

## EU army plans continue

*Extract of an article by David Banks, Veterans for Britain*

A senior EU Commission official boasted in January that the EU “has done more in defence in the last seven months than in the previous decades”.

It certainly looks like they have stepped up the pace since the Brexit vote.

Two major plans outlining military union were released in November and approved by EU Governments in December, including the UK under advice from Sir Ivan Rogers, who was until January the top UK diplomat in Brussels who was so admired by pro-EU politicians.

Anyone who thinks these plans won't affect the UK could be in for a nasty surprise.

The plans create a central EU defence budget for the first time, make a grab for defence industries and procurement strategy, they plan for the acquisition of EU assets in space and surveillance, they invite EU member states to conjoin their defence forces permanently under an EU banner, they place obligations on member states' intelligence services and they assert the “defence autonomy of the EU from NATO”.

The EU is turning the plans to reality, which is advancing daily and involves the EU Parliament, think tanks, defence industry and the EU's deep reach into member states' defence structures.

*Veterans for Britain* first spotted what was happening when on 15th November 2016. Federica Mogherini presented the first of the plans, known as the Security and Defence Implementation Plan, to a combined

EU Council meeting of foreign ministers and defence ministers. The UK, represented by Sir Michael Fallon and Boris Johnson, approved this plan to “avoid playing dog in a manger”, i.e. avoid preventing other countries from participating when the UK had no desire to do so.

There are a few immediate problems with this stance.

Firstly, agreement places obligations on signatories to be involved – even if the UK has no desire to be involved it will be involved at least for the duration of its remaining membership.

Secondly, when we unpick what was said by ministers in the days after the EU Council agreement, we find that Foreign Office minister Sir Alan Duncan had written to MPs saying that the UK had signed not because it didn't want to be involved, but because it might want to be involved – a clear contradiction to what Boris had said on the day of the agreement.

Thirdly, the agreement has certain repercussions for the UK beyond Brexit in 2019, most notably UK defence industries and control of defence procurement, while other post-Brexit implications in intelligence, military structure, funding and assets are only ‘likely’ to affect the UK, but depend on the UK Government's desire in 2019 to claw back the control it has just given away.

Fourthly, the EU is not considering special exemptions or caveats for the UK. All the talk of a combined EU defence output includes figures which could only include the UK, such as a 100-billion-euro defence industry.

When Mogherini's SDIP was approved by the UK, the defence correspondents of national newspapers had all been conveniently flown to Iraq for a week by Sir Michael Fallon's MOD, to be embedded with UK forces. Any defence journalists who were still in the country on 15th November might have been forgiven for thinking that SDIP hadn't been approved by the UK at all. At *Veterans for Britain*, we weren't sure so we phoned the EU Council's staff to find out. They told us that Sir Michael Fallon and Boris Johnson had indeed subscribed to the plan because they had offered no objection to the joint conclusions that the UK representative Sir Ivan Rogers had co-authored with his counterparts. In EU Council contexts, joint conclusions by member states in support of a document constitute agreement.

It's useful to look at some of the details of Ms Mogherini's SDIP. It calls for EU member states to enter ‘Permanent Structured Cooperation’ in defence (PESCO), an idea which has been lurking in the Lisbon Treaty and is described by its EU federalist architects as “the foundation for an integrated EU Armed Forces”. SDIP also calls on member states' to propose new ways their intelligence services might correspond with a new central EU intelligence agency known as the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), and proposes a new focus on the EU's military intelligence body known as INTCEN.

Two weeks after SDIP was announced and approved, the EU

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Commission released a report, titled the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), which includes an explanation for how EU officials propose to fund Ms Mogherini's plans.

An EU Defence Fund will divert cash towards joint EU military units and EU defence research. It will be funded by the European Investment Bank, in which the UK is joint top shareholder. The EU Commission will also invite member states to contribute, with the promise that any such payments will not be governed by EU-imposed austerity rules. Apparently a great way for poorer EU nations to divert cash from their own militaries and still meet the NATO 2% requirement.

Mr Juncker's EDAP describes EU's push "towards Defence Union" and the creation of a single market for military equipment, which sounds fine until you realise it comes with the imposition of centrally-coordinated defence industry strategy and points to the removal of the member states' current right to build their own ships and safeguard domestic defence supply.

Even more worrying is that Juncker's EU Defence Fund (starting at five billion euros) will be in a position to offer free money to UK companies who want to participate in EU-led procurement projects, therefore putting a financial incentive on UK defence industries to demand involvement in the EU-controlled 'defence single market'.

Mogherini's SDIP and Juncker's EDAP appeared on the agenda of the 12th December EU Council heads of government meeting, as point number 2 under the more generalised topic of 'Security'.

The 28 heads of government including PM Theresa May were asked if they agreed with the previous agreement made by their foreign and defence ministers and Mr Juncker's EDAP. They all did agree. Once again,

there were no complaints, exemptions or caveats for the UK.

The UK's approval means it has signed up to at least two years of military integration with the EU and faces an ever bigger task after exit to unravel itself from the EU military equipment market or prevent UK intelligence services' relationship with the Five Eyes network being compromised by demands to provide information to the EU's SIAC intelligence service. There has so far been no statement from defence ministers to explain how the UK will extricate itself from EU decision making in two years' time or whether it will resist potentially far-reaching changes in military structure, procurement, intelligence and funding between 2017 and 2019.

These plans had been preceded by three statements which created the mood music around defence union: the Merkel-Hollande-Renzi joint statement on the deck of an Italian aircraft carrier; a Mogherini statement in July on the forthcoming EU Global Strategy; and Juncker's State of the Union address which alluded to a desire to expand the EU's role in defence.

The EU Commission's activity since SDIP and EDAP reflect their intention for an "unprecedented level of engagement". In January, they appointed administrative teams to implement every strand of the two plans and liaise with military and defence industry counterparts.

Ms Mogherini, who simultaneously acts as Vice President of the EU Commission, head of the European Defence Agency and head of the European External Action Service (the EU's 'foreign ministry') is expected to announce the first EU member states participating Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) on the 25th March, the 60th anniversary of the 1957 Treaty of Rome which created the European Community.

At the end of January, the EU Parliament carried out a flanking operation in support of PESCO in which MEPs called on their national parliaments to be involved. In the same breath they went several steps further, calling for the 'technically-intergovernmental' European Defence Agency and the forthcoming PESCO to be annexed under the EU Commission's remit. They also called for the EU Battle-groups to be considered part of PESCO, which will be worrying for the UK as British forces have participated four times as a lead nation on a rolling deployment since 2005.

What is happening in the UK following SDIP and EDAP?

The EU has named two 'hubs' in the UK as part of the EU Network of Defence-Related Regions (ENDR) and one of them 'Marine South East' will specialise in 'dual use' robotics and maritime technology. Marine South East has been paid by the EU Commission to host an event in April featuring EU Commission, MOD and defence industry staff to explore what 'More Europe in Defence' will look like.

At the same time, pro-EU groups in the UK such as the Centre for European Reform and the (EU Commission-funded) Royal United Services Institute are going into overdrive either promoting the case for Defence Union or running down the UK's prospects in defence autonomy.

Meanwhile, MPs will eventually hear a snapshot of what is contained in the EU's military union plans when they are discussed by the Foreign Affairs Committee, Defence Select Committee and Exiting the EU Committee in the weeks ahead. They will have this opportunity because Sir Alan Duncan's aforementioned note was escalated and marked as 'politically important' by Sir Bill Cash's European Scrutiny Committee.