

# NORDEFCO

## Annual Report 2017



**NORDEFCO**

NORDIC DEFENCE COOPERATION

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ISBN: 978-951-663-022-2 print

ISBN: 978-951-663-023-9 pdf

Published by: Ministry of Defence, Finland

Cover photo: Kasper Veimo Hansen, the Norwegian Armed Forces

Photos: Ministry of Defence, the Finnish Defence Forces, Ruotuväki newspaper, the Danish Armed Forces, the Norwegian Armed Forces, the Swedish Armed Forces

Print: Lönnberg Print

## FOREWORD

By cooperating at the Nordic level, we all aim at strengthening our national defence and finding synergies to better address security concerns. These are NORDEFECO's guiding principles.

Finland's Chairmanship year 2017 focused on strengthening the Nordic Defence Cooperation by putting emphasis on fostering continuity, enhancing our ability to face times of crisis as well as continuing our regional security situation analysis. Finland also hosted the first NORDEFECO Table Top Discussion. Overall, the focus of the cooperation was put to progress in practical matters.

When it comes to continuity, finalizing the Memorandum of Understanding on Nordic Cooperation for Air Surveillance Information Exchange (NORECAS) was without a doubt one of the main achievements and proofs of the result-oriented Nordic defence cooperation in 2017. NORECAS MoU was finalized thanks to efforts made by all NORDEFECO member states. Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden signed the MoU at our Ministerial meeting in November 2017. The upcoming work that will be carried out at the technical and practical level under this MoU will contribute positively to situational awareness and flight safety.

As another milestone of the year 2017, I would like to highlight the Arctic Challenge Exercise, which is one of the largest air defence exercises in Europe. Finland led the exercise in 2017 and the aim is to take forward the development of the exercise into a European high quality flag level exercise. Also the Nordic Cooperation on Tactical Air Transport project is worth mentioning, as it became operational in 2017 and has been very successful both in cost reduction as well as in promoting operational effectiveness.

NORDEFECO provides the Nordic countries' defence administrations and defence forces a platform for strategic level discussion, exchange of information, and military cooperation. The NORDEFECO secure communication system established in 2016 especially promotes this target. In addition to excellent cooperation at the ministerial and the military level, NORDEFECO also enjoys strong political and public support in all five Nordic countries. Furthermore, NORDEFECO is not only a platform for projects covering all the defence fields, but a platform to exchange information and for discussion on topics of common interest. To deepen our dialogue, Finland hosted the first NORDEFECO Table Top Discussion.

During the Finnish Chairmanship 2017 NORDEFECO's defence policy dialogue was not only limited to a dialogue amongst us five. In connection with the fall NORDEFECO Ministerial meeting, Finland hosted a meeting between the Nordic and Baltic Ministers, and the Northern Group Ministers. One aim of the meeting was to strengthen the transatlantic cooperation and dialogue, and Finland invited the United States Secretary of Defense James Mattis to attend the Northern

Group Ministerial meeting. Mr. Mattis' presence was a concrete indicator that Europe and the US have a shared interest in the security situation of Northern Europe.

As another example of recent progress in practical matters, I would like to highlight defence material cooperation and Finland's initiative to deepen the cooperation in the fields of logistics and security of supply. The work with this initiative continues during 2018 under the Norwegian Chairmanship. Related to security of supply and resilience, Finland introduced the work of the recently inaugurated, Helsinki-based, Hybrid Center of Excellence to the Nordic Ministers.

At the end of 2017 a contract notice was published on a Nordic Combat Uniform which is a joint procurement by Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. I hope that in the future we will also save costs in similar procurements that are of mutual interest and appropriate to carry out as joint procurements.

During Finland's previous NORDEFECO Chairmanship in 2013, the Nordic countries agreed on a NORDEFECO Vision 2020. The Vision has served us well and many of the goals outlined in the Vision have been achieved. We are now approaching the next decade and our security environment has clearly changed. In light of these factors, it has become evident that there is a need to renew our Vision. Thus, at the fall 2017 Ministerial meeting the NORDEFECO Ministers decided to start the process to renew NORDEFECO's long-term vision. This work will be carried out during the Norwegian Chairmanship in 2018.

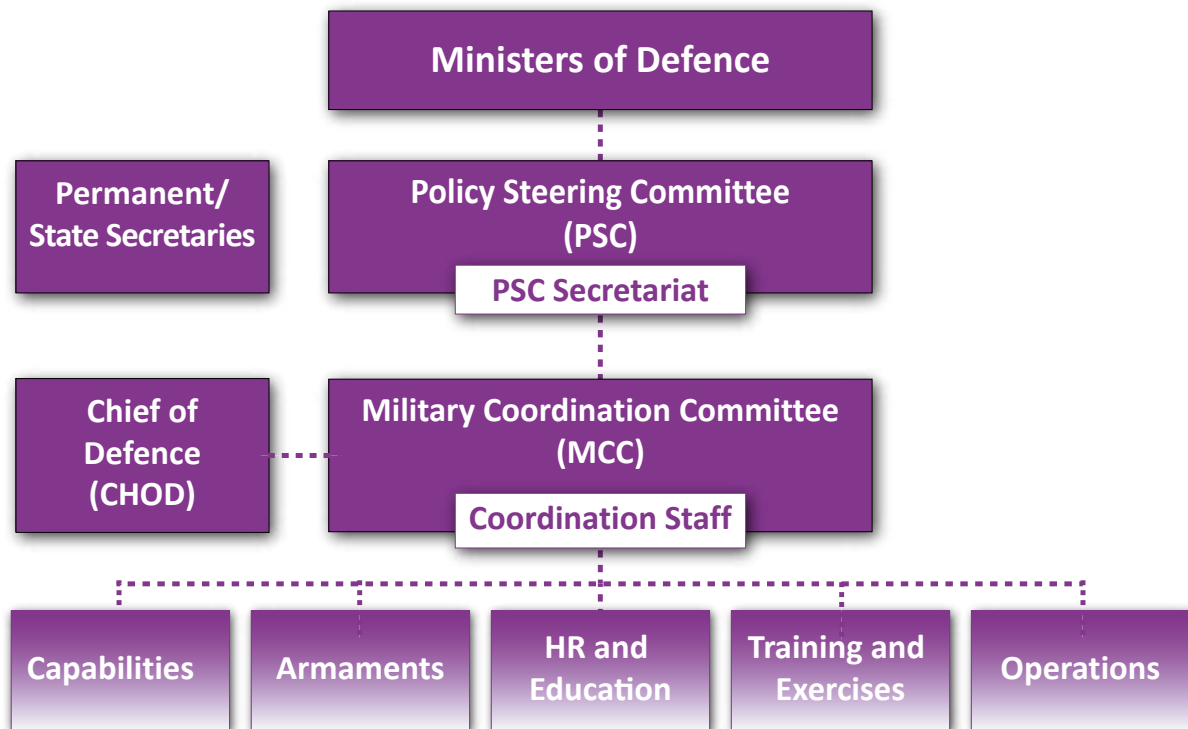
I would like to warmly thank my Nordic Colleagues and the NORDEFECO teams both at the ministerial and at the military levels for the excellent work carried out in advancing Nordic defence cooperation in 2017.



**Jussi Niinistö**  
Minister of Defence  
Finland

# NORDEFECO in a nutshell

## NORDEFECO Structure



- NORDEFECO has five member states: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden and the chairmanship rotates on an annual basis between Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Iceland participates in the political level cooperation whilst the other Nordic countries take part in both political and military level cooperation.
- NORDEFECO has a meeting structure with two yearly Ministerials. The Policy Steering Committee (PSC) consisting of Policy, Capability and Armament Directors of the Defence Ministries meets also twice a year. The PSC gives taskings to the Military Coordination Committee (MCC), which consists of defence forces' representatives.
- PSC Secretariat (PSC(S)) and Military Coordination Staff (CS) coordinate the work between the meetings and take forward the decisions in the line organizations. In addition, the Chiefs of Defence meet twice every year and Permanent/State Secretaries once a year.

# Finnish Chairmanship

*Finland's starting point for the 2017 Chairmanship was to focus on fostering continuity and to take forward selected new initiatives. Finnish priorities were the following: enhancing ability to face time of crisis, continuing regional security situation analysis and testing NORDEF CO structures in a Table Top Discussion. In 2018 the rotational chairmanship was passed on to Norway.*



Photo: Tiina Takala, MoD, Finland

NORDEF CO Ministerial Meeting in Turku 3-4 May 2017.

## Fostering continuity

### Progress in ongoing projects

**NORECAS** (The Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance) started in 2012 and in 2017 a political agreement was reached. The Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish Ministers of Defence signed the NORECAS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the NORDEFECO Ministerial meeting on 6 November 2017. The MoU covers the exchange of air surveillance data in peacetime. As the next step a Technical Arrangement (TA) will be drafted at the military level with an aim to present a progress report at the fall 2018 Policy Steering Committee (PSC) meeting. The TA is expected to be finalized by the end of 2018. Parallel to this, work continues at the political level regarding possible future forms of cooperation on air surveillance within NORECAS.

**NORTAT:** The aim of the Nordic Cooperation on Tactical Air Transport (NORTAT) project has been to better utilize Nordic countries' air transport assets by exploring opportunities for collaboration within the areas of operational use, maintenance, training and exercises of air transport capabilities. The Nordic Air Chiefs signed the NORTAT Technical Arrangement (TA) in 2017. NORTAT thus became operational and the project was closed in the NORDEFECO structure. NORTAT has been a highly successful project both from the viewpoint of cost reduction and in promoting operational effectiveness. The NORTAT work continues in line organizations.

**Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE)** is one of the largest air defence exercises in Europe. In 2017 it was Finland's turn to lead the exercise. The further development of ACE was also agreed in 2017. This means further strengthening of this already important air exercise in the future. The new Letter of Intent (LOI) concerning this was signed with the US in October 2017. In the LOI the participants stated their aim to take forward the development of the ACE into a European high quality flag level exercise.



Photo: Louise Levin, The Swedish Armed Forces



Photo: Janne Karjalainen, Ruotuväki newspaper

The Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden signed the NORECAS MoU at the Ministerial meeting in Helsinki on 6 November 2017.

**The Easy Access Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** was signed by the Nordic Defence Ministers in November 2016 and thus in 2017 the Easy Access work focused on implementing the MoU. The NORDEFECO Easy Access project aims to develop arrangements to access each participants' air, land and sea territory and specific air, land and naval bases in peacetime. The overall aim is to improve the operational effect and quality of air, land and maritime operations and to lessen bureaucracy and ease border crossing by simplifying and harmonizing visit and transit procedures between the Nordic militaries.

The Easy Access (EA) Implementation plan project has been driven forward by two workshops during 2017 with participants from the policy and the military levels in a Joint Working Group. All Nordic nations have participated in the process. The Draft Easy Access Implementation plan produced during 2017 includes a number of elements for further development. These include for example extended use of annual permits, nominating single point of contacts and fine-tuning visiting procedures to reduce bureaucratic workload.

**The Alternate Landing Base (ALB) Concept** allows Nordic air forces to use each others' air bases as alternate landing bases in flight planning if for example poor weather conditions prevent a flight from landing at its original destination. The Air Chiefs of Denmark, Norway and Sweden signed the Technical Arrangement (TA) concerning the Alternate Landing Base Concept in 2016. The implementation of this TA, which currently includes unarmed state aircraft, is underway in the Nordic Air Forces. Finland joined the ALB TA in July 2017 and Iceland in November 2017. The Nordic Air Forces then signed the same ALB TA on 5 December 2017. This means that all the Nordic countries joined the ALB TA by the end of 2017.

**The Nordic Combat Uniform (NCU)** project involves the common procurement of a complete battle dress uniform system to the Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish militaries. The procurement project is well underway with the Technical Arrangement signed in 2016. The work is proceeding in schedule and a contract notice on the NCU was published in November 2017.



Photo: Janne Karjalainen, Ruotuväki newspaper



Iceland (on the left) and Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden (on the right) signing the Technical Arrangement (TA) for the NORDEFECO Alternate Landing Base Concept which now includes all the five NORDEFECO countries.

## Enhancing our ability to face times of crisis

In today's strained security situation, NORDEFECO countries have a common interest in enhancing the ability to face crises - nationally and in cooperation. During the Finnish Chairmanship this theme was introduced both at the Ministerial level as well as at the PSC. In addition, a Nordic seminar was organized in the spring 2017 followed by a recommendation to deepen the logistical preparedness and cooperation. One recommendation was to launch regular meetings between the Nordic Chiefs of Logistics. As a part of the preparedness and resilience, also the discussion on hybrid threats was included in the discussions. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) hosted by Finland gave several briefings at different NORDEFECO meetings during the year.

An important element of the Nordic Security of Supply discussion, that has been on the table for years, is the Nordic Defence Materiel Cooperation Agreement's annex on Security of Supply. During 2017 progress was made and the work continues in 2018 with an aim to finalize the annex. Likewise, the annex on export control is in progress with an aim to be signed in the course of 2018.

## Regional security situation analysis and information exchange

NORDEFECO serves as an excellent platform for information sharing and situational awareness. During 2017 NORDEFECO continued a deep and active dialogue on the security environment and the challenges arising therefrom. Utilizing the NORDEFECO systems for secure communication established in 2016 enabled a platform for convenient and timely exchange of information. In addition to the focus on the developments in the Baltic Sea area, the geographical scope was broadened to cover developments also in the High North. In addition, NORDEFECO-transatlantic ministerial dialogue was deepened. It culminated in the Northern Group Ministerial meeting in November where the United States Secretary of Defense James Mattis attended to discuss regional security with the Nordic, Baltic and other Northern Group countries Ministers.

## Table Top Discussion

As one of the concrete targets for the year 2017 Finland initiated a NORDEFECO Table Top Discussion (TTD). In other fora, TTD's have proven their value as a means for reaching greater understanding of cooperation and developing it further. The TTD was organized in connection with the NORDEFECO PSC meeting in October 2017. The participants of the TTD included the Policy Directors and the MCC representatives from each Nordic country.

The TTD reinforced the value of NORDEFECO as a forum for consultations and sharing situational awareness, also in a time of crisis.



Photo: Tiina Takala, MoD, Finland



## Renewing NORDEFECO's Vision

A joint vision called NORDEFECO Vision 2020 was created for the Nordic Defence Cooperation during Finland's previous Chairmanship in 2013. Vision 2020 was created in order to form a policy-level guidance for the cooperation. Since its approval in 2013 the NORDEFECO Vision 2020 has served the cooperation well and many of the goals outlined in the Vision have been achieved. Since 2013 also the security situation has changed.

In the fall 2017 Finland presented a suggested way forward to renew the NORDEFECO Vision. The Ministers decided at their fall 2017 Ministerial meeting to task the PSC to start the work on renewing the NORDEFECO Vision with an aim to present a revised document at the fall Ministerial meeting in 2018. The new vision will be prepared during the Norwegian Chairmanship in 2018 in close cooperation with the Military Coordination Committee. The goal is to create a joint Vision that will give long-term guidance for the NORDEFECO cooperation beyond 2020.

## NORDEFECO Cooperation in operations and Nordic Baltic Assistance Programme (NBAP)

In 2017 NORDEFECO cooperation related to operations continued between the participating Ministries of Defence under the Joint Working Group on Operations (JWG OPS). The work focused on information sharing and mapping possibilities for cooperation focusing especially on possibilities to support UN peacekeeping missions.

The Nordic-Baltic Assistance Programme (NBAP) is an umbrella for Nordic-Baltic defence capacity building in third countries. In 2017 NBAP cooperation continued in three clusters:

- Support to The Joint Training and Evaluation Centre (JTEC) in Georgia (Coordinator Norway)
- Cyber support to Georgia and Ukraine with main focus in Georgia (Coordinator Estonia)
- Anti-corruption support to Ukraine (Coordinator Denmark)

Activities in Georgia under the JTEC are part of NATO's Defence Capacity Building (DCB) efforts. In Ukraine the NBAP anti-corruption project is carried out in cooperation with other countries and NATO. In addition, NBAP investigated possibilities to support different DCB efforts and activities in the Middle East and Africa.



Photo: Torbjørn Kjosvold, The Norwegian Armed Forces

## NORDEFCO Meetings in 2017

At Ministerial level two meetings were held in 2017; the Nordic Defence Ministers met in Turku on the 3-4 May and again in Helsinki on the 6-7 November. At the Ministerial meeting in Turku, the Ministers discussed the regional security situation, as well as got an introduction to the work of the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. Other themes of the meeting included air force training cooperation, defence materiel cooperation and Nordic cooperation in international operations.

The second Ministerial meeting in Helsinki in November included also meetings between Nordic-Baltic and Northern Group countries. The Northern Group meeting consisting of Nordic and Baltic countries, Germany, Netherlands, Poland and United Kingdom had a transatlantic focus this year. Mr. James Mattis, the Secretary of Defense of the United States participated in the meeting which focused on addressing the security situation in the Baltic Sea and North Atlantic, capability gaps and defence cooperation in Europe.

The Policy Steering Committee (PSC) met twice in 2017. In addition, several VTC's were organized during the year. The first meeting took place in Helsinki on 22-23 March and the second on 10-11 October in Helsinki. The second meeting also included a Nordic-Baltic PSC meeting as well as a Nordic-Baltic session with Georgia. The Nordic-Baltic Assistance Programme (NBAP) contributes to the Joint Training and Evaluation Centre (JTEC) in Georgia.

At the military level the Chiefs of Defence convened in 2017 twice in January and in August. The latter meeting was organized together with the Armament Directors of the NORDEFCO countries. NORDEFCO Military Coordination Committee (MCC) representatives met twice in the course of 2017, first in March and the second time in September in Helsinki.

In addition, also meetings at the Policy Steering Committee Secretariat (PSC(S)) level and at the Coordination Staff of the Military Coordination Committee level were organized in order to coordinate and take forward the ongoing work in line organizations.



Photo: Janne Karjalainen, Ruutuväki newspaper



Photo: Tiina Takala, MoD, Finland

The Northern Group Ministers met on 6-7 November 2017. The US Secretary of Defense James Mattis participated as an invited guest.

# NORDEFSCO

## meetings

### 2017

Date	Meeting	Place
26-27 January	Chiefs of Defence Nordic-Baltic Meeting	Vantaa
7-8 March	Chiefs of Defence-Military Coordination Committee Meeting	Helsinki
22-23 March	Policy Steering Committee Meeting	Helsinki
3-4 May	Ministerial Meeting	Turku
13 June	State/Permanent Secretary Meeting	Vantaa
18 August	Chiefs of Defence and National Armament Directors Meeting	Helsinki
19-20 September	Military Coordination Committee Meeting with the Baltic States	Helsinki
9 October	Military Coordination Committee	Helsinki
10-11 October	Policy Steering Committee Meeting	Helsinki
11 October	Nordic-Baltic Director General level meeting	Helsinki
6-7 November	Ministerial Meeting (NORDEFSCO, NB8 and Norther Group)	Helsinki

# Communications Network

The Communications Network is a combined political and military–strategic level group of Nordic public affairs officers.

The Communications Network tasks include conducting the annual NORDEFECO COMMS PLAN and updating and developing the NORDEFECO website ([www.nordefco.org](http://www.nordefco.org)) as well as coordinating NORDEFECO media events.

During 2017 several articles covering the new Nordic arrangements, exercises, and political and military level meetings within the Nordic Defence Cooperation have been published on [nordefco.org](http://nordefco.org) and on national platforms (web pages, and internal magazines). During its chairmanship, Finland actively took advantage of all its social media channels in order to promote NORDEFECO key messages.

External media has shown significant interest in NORDEFECO issues. Media coverage during and after both Ministerial Meetings in 2017 was extensive. Especially the signing of the NORECAS MoU was widely publicized in various media.



Photos: Janne Karjalainen, Ruotuväki newspaper



Photo: Tiina Takala, MoD, Finland

A photograph of a fighter jet on a runway at night. The sky is dark blue with a vibrant green aurora borealis (Northern Lights) visible. The jet is in the foreground, and other aircraft are visible in the background. The text "Main activities by the Cooperation Areas in 2017" is overlaid on the image.

# Main activities by the Cooperation Areas in 2017

Photo: The Finnish Air Force

With the Nordic Defence Ministers' vision setting the political stage for Nordic armaments cooperation, COPA ARMA aims to achieve financial, technical and/or industrial benefits for all the member countries within the field of acquisition and life cycle support.

This is primarily achieved through the screening process. This means that NORDEFECO nations by transparent and mutual exchange of information on planned national procurement identify possibilities for common development programs, procurement and maintenance of existing and emerging capabilities.

COPA ARMA is mandated to initiate and administrate working groups in any area that is deemed beneficial for Nordic armaments cooperation. Currently, altogether twelve Working Groups are operating with experts from all Nordic countries' line organisations, such as Defence Headquarters, Logistics Organisations, Defence Ministries, Services, etc.

For additional details on COPA ARMA's work during 2017, please see the COPA ARMA Yearbook 2017 which is available via the NORDEFECO website (<http://www.nordefco.org/COPA-ARMA-Yearbook-20162>).

## Status COPA ARMA 2017 Screening Process

In 2017 the Nordic nations offered a total of 58 inputs/projects to the screening process. All in all the inputs resulted in 5 new possible cooperation areas that were sent to the national line organizations (capability managers) for further national staffing. A number of inputs were moved to next year's process as they were not mature enough for Nordic cooperation at this stage. Also a number of inputs turned out to be not suitable for Nordic cooperation due to various reasons (timeline, budget, fixed vendor etc.). In addition, some inputs were transferred to other COPA's or will be handled in existing working groups. The following possible cooperation areas are undergoing further review:

- Long Range Air Defence.
- Soldier Equipment and Clothing.
- Night Vision Equipment.
- Small Arms and Ammunition.
- LEO2 Chassis Bridges.



Photos: The Finnish Defence Forces



## Cooperation Area Human Resources and Education

## COPA HRE

The purpose of the cooperation area Human Resources and Education is to probe, explore and recognize possible common Nordic activities in the field of HR&E to gain operational benefits and optimized resources and to avoid duplication in order to achieve cost savings in the long term.

COPA HRE also works as a hub to coordinate and facilitate platforms for experts of different areas to meet regularly and to exchange information and best practices in certain fields of expertise, e.g. advanced distributed learning, veteran issues, diversity and foreign languages. Common Nordic basics in education at all levels shall lay a firm foundation for further cooperation in everyday work, work in multinational environment and operations.

### Main activities and achievements 2017

One of the main achievements of the COPA HRE has been the Professional Military Education Exchange Program, a project which is now ready to be handed over to the line organizations. The Technical Arrangement between the participating institutions, the Baltic Defence College, the Royal Danish Defence College, the Finnish National Defence University, the Norwegian Defence University College, and the Swedish Defence University was signed in 2017. First courses have already been offered and bilateral cooperation has started with high hopes of expanding the work in the future.



Other fields of cooperation in COPA HRE include working groups such as advanced distributed learning, veteran issues, diversity and foreign languages, which continue to function as venues for professional exchange. Annual conferences are being arranged and exchange of information continues on a regular basis.



Photos: The Finnish Defence Forces

COPA CAPA addresses development plans and processes with the aim of identifying areas for cooperation. The main task is to discover, discuss and propose possible areas for capability cooperation. Based on common needs and mutual benefit, COPA CAPA also explores the possibilities of reducing costs and promoting operational effectiveness. Research and Technology (R&T) is an integral part of the capability development process in COPA CAPA, also adding to the strategic long-term dimension of the work. COPA CAPA conducts screening of national studies and development plans, with the aim of finding new areas for cooperation.



Photos: The Finnish Defence Forces

### Main activities and achievements 2017

The year 2017 brought an intense array of activities. New promising projects were assumed and some projects finalized in COPA CAPA and moved into the line organization for implementation. One of such projects is the Nordic Cooperation on Tactical Air Transport (NORTAT). NORTAT will increase the operational capability in the area of air transport by providing access to a Nordic pool of transport aircraft. Cooperation on logistics and maintenance has also potential for cost savings. An enhanced cooperation in this field can provide economic efficiency and operational effectiveness.

A COPA CAPA project which has been taken forward during 2017 is Nordic Enhanced Cooperation on Air Surveillance (NORECAS). In November 2017 the NORECAS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation for air surveillance information exchange was signed by the Nordic Defence Ministers.

The aim of NORECAS is to enhance and strengthen air surveillance cooperation between the participants by providing improved situational awareness in the Nordic region. Apart from significantly strengthening Nordic defence cooperation, it will provide enhanced radar coverage.





COPA OPS' overall objective is to deliver an increased operational effect in support of ongoing operations, domestic and abroad. Cooperation Area Operations (COPA OPS) coordinates and prepares Nordic force contributions, deployment/redeployment and logistics support. COPA OPS maintains the Nordic network and dialogue in order to create the basis for common contributions leading to operational gains and/or cost-efficient solutions. The main vehicle to achieve this objective is information sharing in order to find possible coordination and cooperation within ongoing or future operations. COPA OPS also is a platform for exchange of best practices.

COPA OPS is able to initiate prudent military planning, based on political guidance, and coordinate required activities through the respective countries' line organizations. These include planning, coordination and preparation of force contributions, subsequent deployments and redeployments, and logistics support.

### Main activities and achievements 2017

COPA OPS is an event driven COPA. In 2017 COPA OPS continued to maintain the Nordic network, the dialogue and monitor the situation in areas where crisis management operations are ongoing.

During 2017 COPA OPS has conducted two studies and compiled a report on Nordic force contributions to ongoing Crisis Management Operations.



Photo: Sigurd Tønning-Olsen, The Norwegian Armed Forces



Photo: Torbjørn Kjosvold, The Norwegian Armed Forces

# Cooperation Area Training and Exercises

## COPA TEX

COPA TEX aims at continuously identifying possibilities to coordinate and harmonize military training activities among the Nordic nations and facilitate a combined and joint exercise program for a continuation of five years.

COPA TEX task is also to identify hindrances for exercises and training in all areas, thereby supporting the ongoing work on reducing bureaucracy and allowing deeper cooperation in the area of training and exercises. COPA TEX has also been tasked to support other COPAs with studies and actions related to education, exercises, training and evaluation.

### Main activities and achievements 2017

Main effort for the COPA TEX in 2017 has been to ensure that planned training and exercise tasks could be executed in accordance with the current action plan. COPA TEX had planned seven tasks for the action plan 2017-2020. These tasks were to refine the Combined Joint Nordic

Baltic Exercise Program (CJNBEP), to study FAC, to study Arctic Winter Training, to study Military Dog Service, to study CBRN, to monitor USMC training in the northern part of Norway and to look into the further development of the Arctic Challenge Exercise (ACE).

The most significant achievements were the termination of the CJNBEP, and the development of the ACE and the study of Arctic Training during the year 2017. CJNBEP activity was terminated by the end of the year 2017 due to that fact that the countries exercises in the future will be planned by using the Military Training and Exercise Program (MTEP).

The development of the ACE lead to the decision of developing the exercise to become a flag type exercise in the future. The responsibility of the development was tasked to the line organisations of respective air commands of the nations. COPA TEX will monitor the further development.

The study of Arctic Winter Training continues to be developed in the line organizations and monitored by COPA TEX.



Photo: The Danish Armed Forces



Photo: Janne Karjalainen, Ruotuväki newspaper

NORDEFCO has a rotational Chairmanship. Finland chaired NORDEFCO in 2017 followed by the Norwegian Chairmanship in 2018.





**NORDEFCO**

NORDIC DEFENCE COOPERATION