



MINISTÈRE  
DES ARMÉES

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*

# PRESS KIT

## ORION 23



Armée française –  
Opérations militaires



Armée française –  
Opérations militaires



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@armeefrancaise

February 2023



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# 1. Exercise ORION 23

*An essential step in acquiring operational superiority*



In 2020, due to the changing international context, the French Defence Staff decided to organize a **new triennial military exercise cycle**. ORION will be the first exercise of this kind in 2023.

**ORION** stands for: Large-scale **O**peration for **R**esilient, **I**nteroperable, high-intensity combat-**O**riented and **I**Nnovative armed forces.



The objective is to **train French armed forces in a joint and combined framework, based on a realistic and demanding scenario** that takes into consideration the multiple domains of conventional (land, air sea, space) and hybrid warfare (influence, cyber, electronic).

ORION 23 aims to:

- ❖ **refocus** French military training on readiness to any type of event through large-scale multi-domain operations;
- ❖ **assess** France's ability to conduct a large-scale joint operation;
- ❖ **reinforce** interoperability with our allies;
- ❖ **test** new capabilities.



Since the publication of the Defence and National Security Strategic Review in 2017, which provided a framework for reflection and laid the foundations of France's Military Planning Law 2019-2025 ("LPM" dated 13 July 2018). The deterioration of the international context, which has rendered the traditional peace-crisis-war continuum obsolete, now requires us to envisage conflict in terms of a three-phase continuum of **competition/dispute/confrontation**.

In response, the French armed forces must be prepared for every possible type of engagement. The 2021 strategic update and the 2022 National Strategic Review highlighted the priority need for specific operational preparations.

The accelerated deterioration of the international environment in 2022 confirms the relevance of ORION initiated in 2021, as the change of scale and the widening of the spectrum of engagement meet the requirements of high-intensity combat.

French armed forces are adapting their operational readiness accordingly.



The volume of forces, the duration of training, the multi-domain dimension and the intensity of the exercise contribute directly to preparing our armed forces for operations that can extend all the way to high-intensity warfare. With this large-scale exercise, which combines our capabilities with those of our allies, **France is demonstrating its ability to prevent the imposition of a *fait accompli* wherever it considers necessary.**

## An unprecedented exercise

### ➤ Change of scale

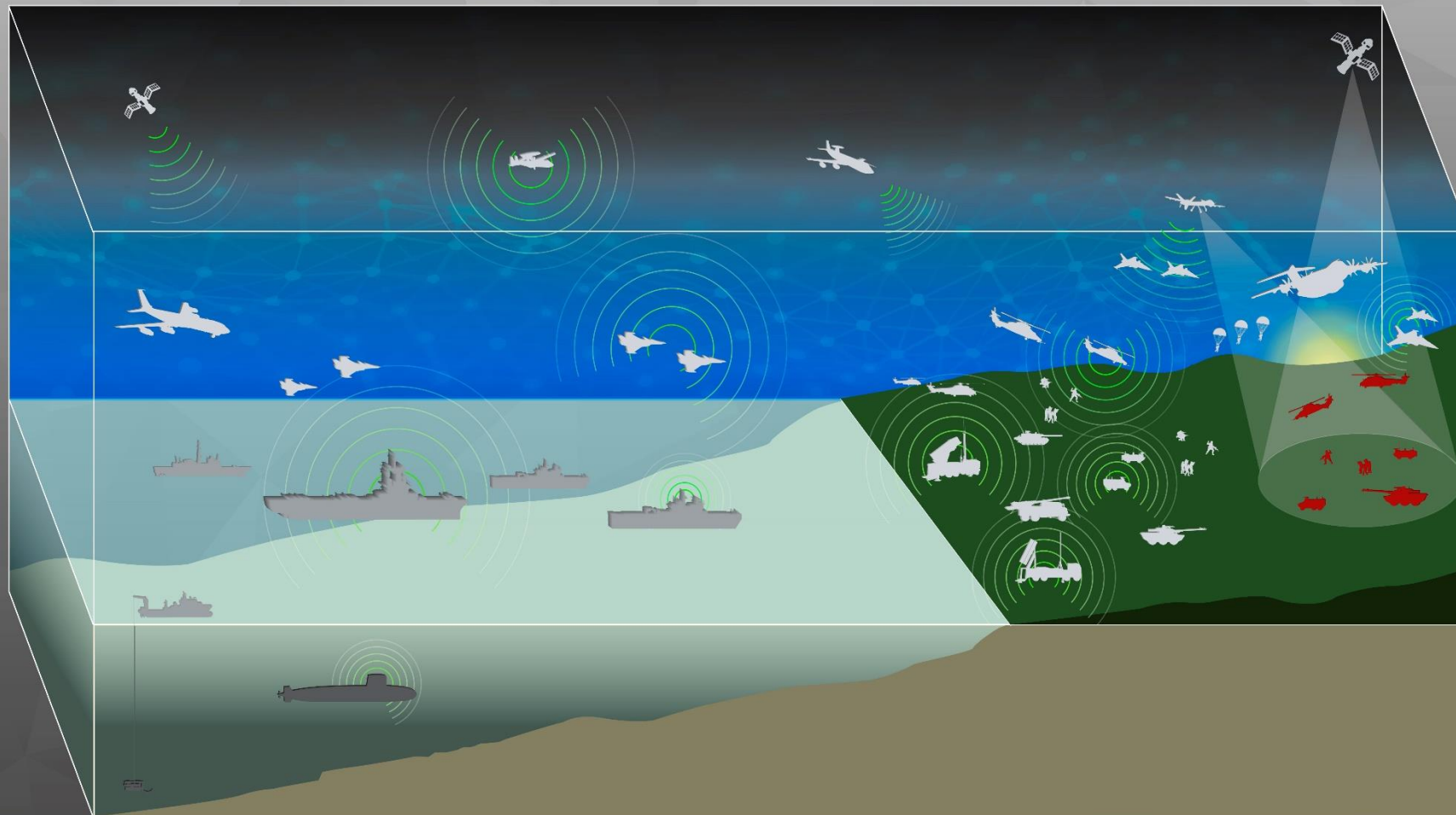
- ❖ in planning: high-level expertise in operational planning;
- ❖ in the field: politico-military training, division-level manoeuvres (on the ground) and at army corps level (for command headquarters) as well as amphibious manoeuvres with two amphibious helicopter carriers supported by the French Navy's carrier strike group; first entry operation from the national territory for acquiring and sustaining air superiority in a disputed environment; global air manoeuvre which consists of major airborne operations.
- ❖ in support: support capabilities (human, logistics, medical, etc.) for a major operation.

- **An exercise of an unprecedented type:** inter-army, inter-ministerial and international training in a context that mobilizes the entire nation.
- **Integration** of approximately 20 exercises that armed forces usually conduct separately.
- Consideration of all **conflict domains** (information, cyber, space, seabed...).

With its emphasis on **evaluation** and **experience feedback**, ORION 23 will directly contribute to enhancing military capability in a large-scale operational context, by identifying existing strengths and future avenues for improvement.



# ASSETS DEPLOYED



**1** DIVISION WITH **3** BRIGADES  
incl. **2** SIMULATED  
**2 300** VEHICLES  
incl. **400** COMBAT VEHICLES  
**40** HELICOPTERS  
**100** MILITARY DRONES



**30** SHIPS  
incl. **1** AIRCRAFT CARRIER  
**2** AMPHIBIOUS HELICOPTER CARRIERS  
**50** AIRCRAFT



**10** AIRBASES  
**80** AIRCRAFT  
**2** MALE DRONE  
**6** RADAR DEFENCE SYSTEM  
**20** SPACEBORNE SENSORS

JOINT FORCE DIRECTORATES,  
DEPARTMENTS AND AUTHORITIES





## 2. A fictitious but credible scenario

*4 integrated phases to meet all the training objectives*

### Mission: restoring security in “Arnland”



A country called “Mercure” seeks to re-establish its regional influence over the state of “Arnland”. To do so, Mercure provides material and financial support to the “Tantale” militia, which destabilises the South of Arnland. Mercure is also deploying significant military forces at the country’s borders and maritime approaches, while employing “non-kinetic” methods of action (disruption of communication systems, disinformation as well as land, air and sea blockades). The state of Arnland is weakened. To prevent any further degradation of the situation and after a phase of planning (**ORION Phase 01**), France deploys its National Emergency Echelon (**ORION Phase 2**). A politico-military crisis management phase precedes (**ORION Phase 3**) a massive deployment in a coalition against Mercure (**ORION Phase 4**) as part of an operation under UN and NATO mandate.

### Credibility enhanced by a sizeable adversary force

- An adversary naval force (FORAD) with about ten warships, most of them from partner countries, including an aircraft-carrier and a submarine;
- An air threat that is initially reduced (isolated airborne means such as drones, aircraft, ground-air systems) and then complete and integrated (modern aircraft, integrated control and ground-air systems);
- An adversary land force, ranging from the Tantale militia to the Mercure division, played by units of the French army and representing more than 10% of the overall forces engaged in the exercise.



ORION 23 is based on a scenario developed by NATO to study the various phases of a modern conflict. Although the narrative is fictitious, the exercise remains credible.

The scenario enables all the components of a military force (land, air, navy, cyber, etc.) **to work together as a coordinated team** and **to achieve the various training objectives**. The intensity of the exercise further reinforces its realism.

For example, the exercise will include the participation of a sizeable adversary force (FORAD), armed by French and allied units.

## FOCUS

### Player and real life operator, a dual challenge!

*“Real Life” support is planned and coordinated by the Support Directorate, which is organized into domains of expertise and operates on a joint-force and inter-departmental basis in 3 distinct phases to ensure the smooth implementation of the exercise: a “build-up” phase, consisting of the preparation of the units taking part in the exercise, which must be gathered and equipped to launch Phase 2. During the latter, support is provided to all forces and personnel involved. Finally, Phase 3 consists of a disengagement, with the coordination of withdrawal movements, dismantling of sites and return of equipment.*

During ORION 23, several military services will provide Real Life Support while also participating in the scenario. For example, the joint logistics department will arm both the LOUTRE alert team, which is part of the Quick Reaction Force of the National Emergency Echelon and the local support services, such as the support groups of defence bases.

## FOCUS ORIONIS

**Objectives** : managing technical aeronautic events in a high-intensity context

**Who** : state actors and industrial actors of the aeronautic MCO

**How** :

- a two-day on-paper exercise at the end of March
- a risk-focusing approach



# ORION: A 4 PHASE OPERATION

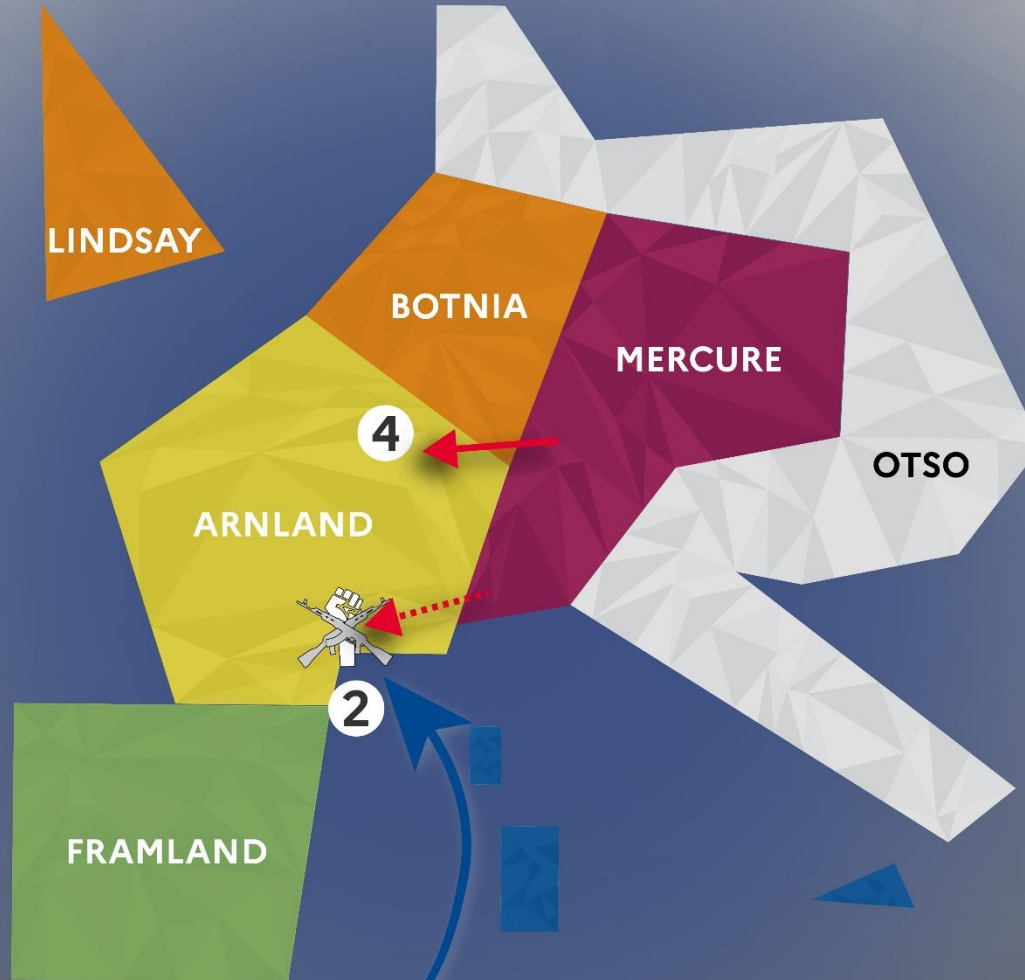
## KEY

-  Invasion
-  Support of TANTALE militias
-  Intervention
-  Interdepartmental crisis management

## INTERNATIONAL COALITION



1  
3



1

## OPERATIONAL PLANNING

PHASE 1  
MAY 2022 - FEBRUARY 2023

2

## INITIAL ENTRY

PHASE 2  
LATE FEBRUARY / MID-MARCH 2023

3

## INTER-MINISTERIAL CIVIL-MILITARY AFFAIRS

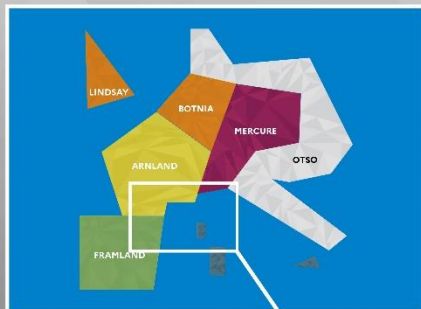
PHASE 3  
LATE MARCH 2023

4

## LARGE-SCALE OPERATION

PHASE 4  
MID-APRIL / EARLY MAY 2023





# JOINT INITIAL ENTRY OPERATION | PHASE 2



## OBJECTIVES

- To lead an initial entry naval air campaign in the context of access denial
- To project the joint National Reaction Force to conquer a maneuver space in a contested environment
- Coordinate actions in the immaterial domains

## KEY

- |                              |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Maritime area of operations  | Airborne operations             |
| Air area of operations       | Landing operations              |
| Maneuver space conquest area | Fight in the immaterial domains |

# 7 000

Troops deployed

# 7

Components in action

LAND – SEA – AIR –  
SPECIAL FORCES – CYBER  
– SPATIAL – LOGISTICS

# 19

Days of open terrain

January 2023



# Assets engaged during O2

## Entry mission



- 1 command centre (LCC - 11<sup>th</sup> Parachute Brigade)
- 1 ENU brigade, with:
  - o 1 airborne component (11<sup>th</sup> Parachute Brigade)
  - o 1 amphibious component (6<sup>th</sup> Light Armoured Brigade)
- An airmobile sub-group
- A logistic tactical group, which also includes a rescue surgery team and a joint support group with the mission of providing the logistical entry-point for the operating theatre, dedicated to supporting all deployed forces with a resuscitation and rescue surgery team.



The French Navy deploys approximately 30 ships and 50 aircraft. These units are essentially distributed between three sea forces:

- an amphibious force comprising 2 amphibious helicopter carriers and about 10 escort vessels, with a joint staff;
- the “GAN” carrier strike force, including the aircraft carrier, its embarked air group and 5 to 10 escort vessels under the command of the carrier task force;
- an adversary force (FORAD) with about ten warships.



From about ten air bases, the Air and Space Force engages :

- its air operation planning and control centre;
- more than 30 aircraft (fighters, transport, tankers);
- an airborne detection and command capability (AWACS) for *in situ* management of major air manoeuvres;
- a MALE drone capability (Reaper) for long-duration reconnaissance and fire support missions;
- ground/air defence systems (MAMBA, CROTALE and anti-drone).





## FOCUS "CYBER"

Phase 2 of ORION includes a cyber component whose main objective is to test the effectiveness and coherence of the Ministry of Armed forces' chains of command with regards to defensive cyber warfare. Besides, it aims to test our resilience in the face of numerous and varied cyber attacks. Like DEFNET 2022, ORION integrates the information environment in order to involve actors of the information warfare and test the coordination of our effects.

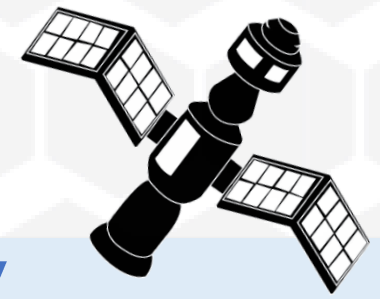


## FOCUS "SPACE"

The space component supports multi-domain operations for the benefit of all the armies, directorates and services. It concerns all operational units of the CDE.

Some 5,000 space objects will be simulated, including 20 sensors dedicated to space support for operations to deal with 10 different types of threats.

**Objectives:** to prepare units and directorates for military space operations, to contribute to the full integration of space in multi-domain operations and to integrate space industry and foreign partners.



# Manoeuvre timeline – O2

*Large-scale operation*

Build-up  
Preparatory phase prior to  
force projection

Up to  
20/02

**STARTEX**

21/02



Naval combat  
Conquest of air superiority  
Intelligence



Conquest of land area in  
disputed environments with  
maritime support



Securing of bridgehead, deployment of FIRI  
(immediate reaction joint force) and FIA  
(combined force), offensive for force  
projection

11/03

End of exercise

Experience-feedback  
stage before Phases  
3 and 4

**24 to 27/02**

Airborne and amphibious operations  
to establish a bridgehead

02/03

**VIP DAY**

For partner military decision-makers. Two key moments  
at Villacoublay and Sète (boarding on an amphibious  
helicopter carrier).





## ORION PHASE 3

- National support to the commitment of armed forces
- Rights and standards
- Human and reserve forces resources
- Security feedback on the national territory
- Public communication and information warfare



# INTERDEPARTMENTAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT | PHASE 3

## OBJECTIVES

- Train the political-military decision making during a decisive engagement
- Test the inter-ministerial capability to coordinate national defense in the event of a major engagement

## WHO

- General Secretariat for Defence and National Security
- Military staff
- Ministerial actors

## HOW

- 5 inter-ministerial working and discussion groups
- Restitution in the form of a Wargame by the end of March 2023

# 5

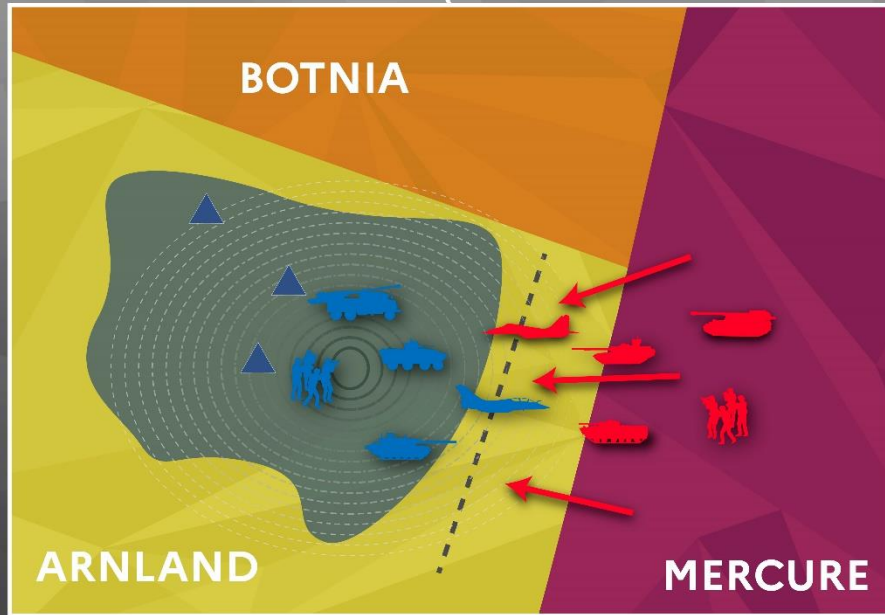
Inter-ministerial work and focus groups

# 1

Presentation day for military and civilian high authorities



# LARGE-SCALE OPERATION | PHASE 4



## OBJECTIVES

- To achieve air superiority prior to commencing land operations
- To commit a land component: multi-national division under French control

## KEY

- Multi-national division area of operations
- ▲ Military camps
- Multi-national division armed forces
- MERCURE armed forces
- Front line
- Invasion
- 🎯 Fight in the immaterial domains

# 12 000

Troops deployed

**1** Coordinating army corps  
Multinational division as player  
Evaluated brigade

**1** Operation simulated at the  
same time as the action on  
the ground

**3** Weeks of complex and  
delocalised air operations

# 19

Days of open terrain



# Assets engaged during O4

## *Large-scale operation*



- The command post of the 3<sup>rd</sup> division will supervise one multinational division comprising its units in the field (2<sup>nd</sup> armoured brigade) and simulated units from the 6<sup>th</sup> armoured brigade and a UK brigade;
- A divisional support group;
- The exercise will be under the command of the Rapid Response Corps - France.



Day and night, the Air and Space Force thanks to its Joint Operations Command will conduct approximately 30 joint missions.

Around 50 aircraft will be deployed to acquire air superiority. They will conduct reconnaissance and force projection missions. In addition, they will provide air support to protect ground forces.

Besides, ground-to-air defence assets as well as detection and control systems will be deployed.



A number of French Navy aircraft will be integrated in the air component. A multi-mission frigate will provide further land strike capability in addition to sea-launched cruise missiles.

**ORION is also unprecedented in its format. During Phase 4, and for the first time at this level of engagement, the exercise will include simulated French and international units, up to division level, combined with units in open terrain. This technical and tactical challenge will increase the level of training. The conduct of the exercise will be assumed by the Rapid Response Corps - France.**

# Manoeuvre timeline – O4

*Large-scale operation*



**19/04  
STARTEX**

New attack  
by Mercure

**ENGAGEMENT and OUTFLANK  
of MERCURE**

**22 to 27/04**  
**Battles of Mailly, Mourmelon and Suippes**  
Asymmetrical combat in the rear zone  
Multi-domain offensive by Mercure

**BLOCK AND SHAPE**  
Defence of the zone

Asymmetrical fighting in the hinterland  
Multi-domain offensive by Mercure  
Air operations to project and protect forces  
on the ground

**COUNTERATTACK**

**30/04**

**SECURING**

**02/05**

**05/05**  
End of exercise





### 3. A major operational planning

#### *A well-known French expertise*

The preparation and conduct of ORION 23 over 18 months is like a real military operation, involving the coordination and synchronization of all branches directions and services. All active participants in the exercise undertake a rigorous process of operational planning in conformity with NATO procedures.

Consequently, ORION 23 will enable France to position itself as one of the few European nations **able to master this level of expertise in the planning and conduct of a large-scale military exercise. ORION 2023 demonstrates the willingness to fully integrate the multi-domain aspect of the engagement in an operation.**



#### Joint Operations Command (CPOIA)

CPOIA is the key node of the French Defence Staff at operational level and is responsible for preparing and conducting phases O1 and O2.

**Divisional General Le Nen** has been commander of CPOIA since 2020 and will assume the role of Phase 2 exercise director, working from a projected operational command post at the Lyon Mont Verdun base.



#### "Troop Deployment" Division of Joint Defence Staff

DIV-EMP, commanded by **Divisional General Metayer** since summer 2021, will be responsible for matching operational ambitions to the deployable capacity of the armed forces.

In particular, one of its missions will be to define the policy for joint forces operational preparation and the resulting strategic choices.

DIV-EMP is in charge of the overall conception of ORION 23, guaranteeing its end-to-end coherence and, in coordination with SGDSN\*, is responsible for Phase 3's planning and conduct.



#### Rapid Reaction Corps-France (CRR-Fr)

As the only French corps-level command to meet NATO standards, Headquarters RRC-FRA will conduct the planning and build-up stages of Phase 4. Its expertise in this field is recognized in France and internationally.

**Corps General Gaulin**, who has commanded RRC-FRA since 2022, will assume the role of exercise director and army corps director from his projected headquarters in Mailly-le-camp.

\* SGDSN: *Secrétariat Général de la Défense et de la Sécurité Nationale* (General Secretariat for Defence and National Security)

## 4. A multinational force under French command

*A combined exercise meeting the challenges of the international context*

Although the French armed forces preserve the capability to act alone, the normal framework of their deployment outside France is in combined action with its allies. The accelerated risk of conflict and expanding domains of confrontation confirm the need for strategic alliances and for the principle of solidarity that structures them. Putting this strategic solidarity into practice, France shares its experience feedback with its allies and in turn benefits from their shared experience.

Several international partners have confirmed their participation in the different phases of the exercise, either as simulation players or as participants with the coalition or adversary forces in the field. This multi-national dimension is vital and will help to train the French command structures in integrating allied units and optimizing interoperability with our allies. This integration reinforces the credibility of our defence alliance while also demonstrating France's capability to train our partners and, in an operational perspective, to undertake the role of framework nation in a coalition force. It is confirmation that France has the resources, expertise and operational experience to command or join an international coalition.

**Powerful, modern, trained, interoperable and certified armed forces enable France to meet the needs of the collective defence.**



### Is this a NATO exercise?

No, it is a French exercise, but it is **participating to the collective defence** of NATO. Its planning and implementation are inspired by our experience of the major exercises of the Alliance.

## 5. An exercise in the heart of France

### *The return of large-scale manoeuvres in open terrain*

ORION 23 is a milestone exercise that seeks to create the intensity and realism of a large-scale operation. To meet this demand, the forces concerned must deploy on sea, in the air and on “open terrain” as well as in military camps or in zones reserved for manoeuvres. This is because every military engagement will require an understanding of the constraints of the terrain, the distances involved, the specific characteristics of an urban area and the consideration of local life or local economic activities (fishing, air traffic, etc.).

ORION 23 marks the return of large-scale military drills on French soil after several decades of absence. It will provide a unique opportunity for the population to meet its army, discover its equipment and gain a better understanding of its action. The connection between the military and the nation is vital for our armed forces. The support of the population, nurtured by a confirmed and resilient national cohesion, is one of the keys to the success of a major intervention to protect our sovereignty.

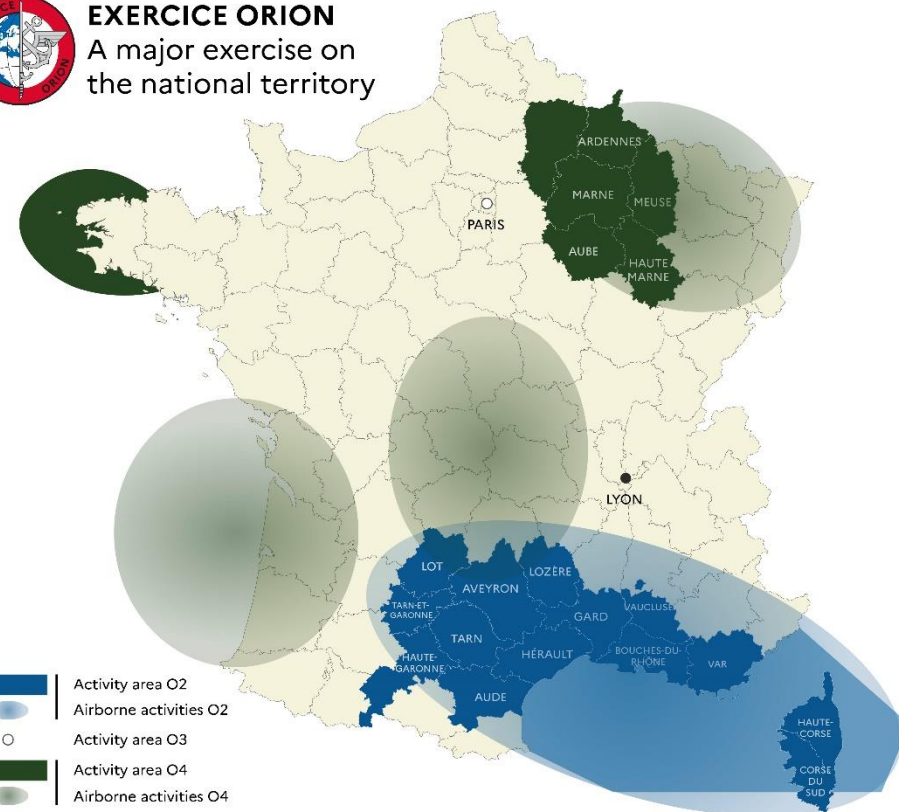
**By deploying in almost 20 mainland-France counties and over the entire western Mediterranean during the “open terrain” phases, ORION 23 demonstrates the full engagement of French armed forces on sea, in the air and on French soil.**

To be effective, the operational preparation must ensure that troops can train with their equipment under **realistic conditions**. The various training centres, simulation resources and the organization of exercises both on military training grounds and on “open terrain”, under conditions close to reality, are keys to providing **operational preparation that satisfies stringent quality standards and is suitable to meet new threats**.

**To enhance and protect the security of French citizens, the armed forces must train together and prepare according to credible scenarii and in realistic battlespaces.**



**EXERCICE ORION**  
A major exercise on  
the national territory





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HEMEX  
**ORION**



2023