



The commanders of the Special Intervention Units (SIUs) of the EU Law Enforcement, met for the first time on 15 October 2001 in Brussels. They agreed on developing operational collaboration and a secure communication platform. The national heads of police ratified these proposals on 30 and 31 October. The ATLAS network was launched and has since been supported by the European Commission. Since November 2018, ATLAS has been affiliated to Europol with the establishment of the ATLAS Support Office within the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC).

AIMS

"To share & prepare" - The ATLAS network conducts regular meetings, workshops, trainings and exercises. The aim of these meetings is to intensify cooperation and mutual support between European SIUs in preparation for joint operations in the field of combating terrorism as well as serious and organised crime.

ATLAS itself does not go into operational action but creates the prerequisites for a multinational alignment of the performance spectra of the SIUs of the EU based on organisational foundations and further development in tactics and technology. The exchange of experience, the pooling of resources and the concentration of police competencies in connection with the fight against terrorism and serious/organised crime improves performance at national and international level.



COMPOSITION

With the enlargement process of the European Union, SIUs from the new member states have also joined the ATLAS network. The prerequisite is that they are authorised to deal with police-relevant crisis situations at national level. With a few exceptions, each country appoints one representing SIU for the ATLAS cooperation.

France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Romania and Germany are these mentioned exceptions. For reasons of national task allocation and/or differentiation between gendarmerie and police forces, each of these EU MS is represented by two SIUs. At present, 38 SIUs from 27 EU MS belong to ATLAS. The SIUs from Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom are acting as associate members.



MEETINGS & COOPERATIONS

Each year two meetings of the ATLAS network are foreseen at commanders' level that are organised in turn by the participating SIUs.

Additional ATLAS management board meetings are also held. The management board is composed of the heads of the various expert groups, forums and projects as well as the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

The mentioned expert groups deal with the following subject fields:

- Buildings and critical infrastructure
- Maritime objects
- Public means of transport
- Aircraft objects

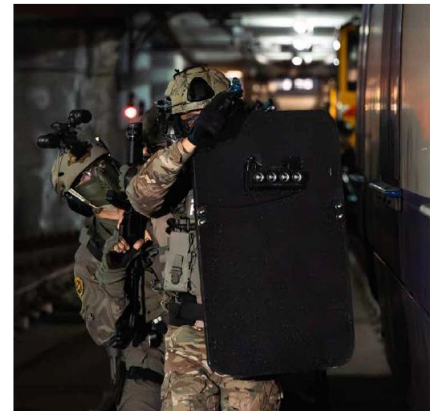
The contents for the forums cover rapid response, sniping, breaching technologies, innovation, command/control/communication/coordination, medic, silent team and negotiations. This set-up was chosen to ensure proper tactical/technical development and to facilitate the transfer of knowledge. In order to gain a higher degree of efficiency, the expert groups and forums act in accordance with the principles of project management.

ACTIVITIES:

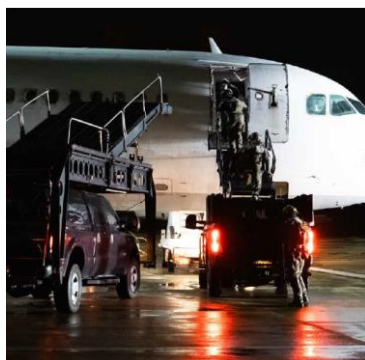
In order to establish the ability to act over and beyond the national borders, joint exercises were and are organised. In the framework of the expert groups the network has implemented in the past years several large scale exercises in different training areas. A few of them are mentioned here as an example of cross border or multinational training activities:

ATLAS Common Challenge (ACC2023) – Four major activities of the 2023 work program (Aircraft – Building – Naval – Transport) were part of the „ATLAS Common Challenge 2023" (ACC 2023). In the third edition of this transnational exercise, the European network of law enforcement special intervention units focused on preparing complex operations where communication, cooperation and mutual support are key to success. As in previous editions, the large-scale trainings covered a wide range of possible operational scenarios, and all 38 ATLAS SIUs were able to demonstrate to the European public their capabilities in the fight against terrorism and serious organised crime.

Expert Group “Building” Training Sessions in Slovakia – The EG Building organised 2 training sessions in Slovakia. The first one took place in May in cooperation with EKO Cobra and was conducted in the catacombs of the Komarno fortress at the Danube River. Various contents were trained in different scenarios and joint teams. The second exercise was part of the ATLAS Common Challenge 2023 with the focus on solving hostage situations in buildings and transport assets. A total of 160 ATLAS operators from 18 ATLAS SIUs participated in these two complex training scenarios involving Europol representatives.



Expert Group “Transport” - As part of the ACC 2023, the EG Transport organised a training scenario in the Madrid metro, which was carried out by the Spanish SIU GEO. 14 ATLAS SIUs, in total more than 50 operators, were given the opportunity to develop their skills in working on metro trains in a variety of tactical settings with the involvement of command post structures through NEOS.



Expert Group „Aircraft“ – The EG Aircraft workshop, as part of the ACC 2023, was held in Oct 2023 at the ATLAS Centre of Excellence (CoE) Aircraft in S.Piero a Grado and at Rome International Airport. In addition to the organising SIU GIS, 10 ATLAS SIUs came to this workshop to train together the assault of a passenger aircraft with the involvement of sniper teams and under joint situation management with regard to command, control, communication and coordination. A total of 72 ATLAS operators as well as representatives of Europol and the EIFS network were involved.

Expert Group “Naval” Exercise “Black Esox 2023” in The Netherlands – In 2023, the EG Naval focused on further developing its rapid response capabilities in the maritime sector. Therefore, the EG organised a boat driver course to prepare 34 specialists from 7 different SIUs for the relevant operational situations and to familiarise them with the procedures applicable to joint operations.

During the "Black Esox" exercise, more than 200 operators from a total of 10 SIUs were given the opportunity to test their respective operational procedures in various scenarios on the Dutch coast. The training week concluded with a large-scale exercise as part of the ACC 2023, in which the assault on a hijacked ferry was practised.



Forum C4 (Command/Control/Communication/Coordination) Exercise "Firestorm" – In 2023, the C4 Forum supported by the European Surveillance Group (ESG) and Europol, organised the Exercise Firestorm. A joint exercise for intervention and surveillance teams with the focus on training handover/takeover procedures at border crossings with intervention and surveillance forces. The exercise was conducted under real-life conditions with the participation of more than 300 operators in 9 different countries. It started in Ireland and culminated with multiple simultaneous interventions in The Netherlands and Luxemburg.

ACTIVITIES	COUNTRIES	SIU's	OPERATORS TRAINED
70	31	38	1.700+