



Speech by M. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic, during his visit to the Franco-German Tiger Helicopter Training School

Le Luc-en-Provence, 19 April 2005

Allow me, first of all, to tell you what a pleasure it is for me to be here at this magnificent Franco-German training school for Tiger helicopter crews.

I would like to thank Colonel Salendre for his warm welcome and all the men and women who, with him, have worked so hard to make this day a success. I would also like to thank the State Secretary [Minister of State], Hans Georg Wagner, and Brigadier General Bolz, Director of Army Aviation, who have paid us the honour of coming especially from Germany to demonstrate the value we place on the entente between Germany and France, the driving forces behind European defence.

The presentations I saw this morning highlight the originality of this Franco-German school's structure and operation. As the commander-in-chief of the French armed forces, I applaud the desire for excellence that characterizes the training process and, in particular, the use of the most sophisticated and advanced simulation techniques.

I know how important the new Tiger helicopter is for our army. This aircraft is the very example of what an army should do to rank among the foremost in the world. A first-rate platform, the Tiger is also an illustration of what Europeans can achieve together when they combine their efforts in order to achieve world perfection.

These young institutions – your school, the Franco-German school for training Tiger helicopter pilots in Le Luc, and the Franco-German training centre for maintenance personnel in Fassberg – demonstrate Germany and France's shared ambition in the area of defence, and what they can do together for the common good. They are both a strong symbol and a concrete example of the determination that motivates us to build Europe in all its aspects.

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Indeed defence is one of the essential aspects of the European enterprise. Europe would be incomplete if it did not respond to the first aspiration of its peoples, namely peace and security.

This ambition is fully in keeping with the European project that has been developing for more than half a century.

From the outset, the European project was intended to guarantee our joint security by ruling out the possibility of war on our continent, first and foremost between Germany and France.

This was the inspiration behind the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which, in 1951, pooled production of those two commodities, then crucial to the



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manufacture of weapons of war.

This was the inspiration of Europe's founders, who were determined to overturn the legacy of history and rebuild the continent on new and peaceful foundations.

Since that time, beyond the trade, agricultural, industrial, economic and monetary achievements, the European project has taken on a new dimension, a strategic dimension. The world has changed immensely. The Cold War era is over. Now threats are multiple and multiform; regional crises are more frequent, often feeding on each other and reverberating in distant or unexpected parts of the world.

Europe is naturally destined to be a centre of power contributing to peace and security in the world. To do so, Europe must develop not just a common foreign policy but also a defence policy.

For almost 20 years, Germany and France have been side by side in advocating that ambition of a Europe able to speak with a single voice in the international arena, a Europe with the requisite military capabilities for its political credibility and action in favour of peace in Europe and the world. Maastricht, Amsterdam, Saint-Malo, Cologne and Helsinki are some of the turning points where Europeans have together taken forward this great project, this idea of a Europe fully able to shoulder its international responsibilities.

Establishing peace and democracy irreversibly on our continent, constantly improving the security of the peoples of Europe and giving Europe the means of exercising its responsibilities in the world are our objectives.

Peace is never permanently achieved. Countries that are tempted to lower their guard thoughtlessly will sooner or later pay the price. Europe will remain at peace and contribute to peace in the world only if it can organize its own defence credibly and autonomously.

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We are already firmly committed to this project. There has been continuous progress for several years now. Significant achievements have already been accomplished.

In 2003 the European Union carried out its first operation in Macedonia, taking over from a NATO operation.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Operation Artemis demonstrated the European Union's ability to conduct autonomous emergency peacekeeping operations, in a difficult environment, several thousands of kilometres from its borders.

In 2004 the European Union took over from NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And still today, from the Western Balkans to Georgia and Congo, the EU is conducting missions to promote peace and the rule of law.

Alongside the operations, the European Union is continuing to reinforce its defence structures and tools.

The European Union Military Staff is being strengthened and is gradually setting up an operations centre for conducting, autonomously, crisis-management operations like Artemis.

In order to give the EU its own situation-assessment capability, which is an essential prerequisite for its credibility in international crisis-management, we are deploying earth observation satellites with our Spanish, Italian, Belgian, Greek and German partners.



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The European Battle Groups, each 1,500-strong, in which you participate, are now operational. They give the European Union a military rapid reaction capability, enabling it to deploy troops anywhere in the world, under a United Nations mandate.

In the same spirit, following a French proposal, Europe can now deploy a gendarmerie force, which is headquartered in Vicenza, Italy. The European Gendarmerie Force can be deployed in post-crisis situations to follow on from military operations.

With a view to optimizing our military spending, engineers and military personnel are working together on the design of our future defence equipment, within the framework of the European Armaments Agency. Through this structure we will gradually be able to make better use of our research and development efforts, because these are pooled.

A European Security and Defence College has been established with an original organization. At the College, officers of all nationalities are laying the foundations for a genuine European defence culture.

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After these initial successes, we must continue steadfastly and determinedly to establish the requisite tools for the EU defence policy. We still need to go further.

I saw for myself the motivation of your air force comrades during my visit last year to the Cazaux airbase, the Franco-Belgian pilots' school, which is the first stage of a future network for training European combat pilots.

I can see your motivation here today in Le Luc, where cooperation between German and French military personnel in training Tiger pilots is seamless.

Open, of course, to all our partners, these initiatives are contributing to the convergence of European defence capabilities, which is a guarantee of efficiency. I would like us together to move even further ahead on pooling our soldiers' training. This is a promising path, which must be explored at every opportunity. It is also entrenching democracy and peace on our continent. Here too we must tirelessly pursue the path of cooperation in order to meet military equipment needs for European armed forces. Cooperation will enable us to make the best use of the financial resources that our nations allocate to defence.

The Tiger helicopter, developed by Germany, Spain and France, is a good example of what we can and must do. An example of global excellence. Increasingly, our armed forces will be equipped with common platforms. This will be the case tomorrow, with the Airbus A 400M military transport aircraft, NH 90 transport helicopters, manufactured by four European countries, and multi-mission European frigates developed through a French-Italian cooperation project. For the same reason, I made the fundamental decision to collaborate very closely with our British friends on building France's second aircraft carrier.

We must already start thinking about the possibility of pooling the training of crews, maintenance and logistics for each of these new platforms. This is the way forward for the future.

Many cooperation projects are under way. We must now complete them. Defence Europe must be consolidated and expanded.

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The Constitutional Treaty asserts the ambition of a common project for peace



and security. It endorses the views that France and Germany, joined by the United Kingdom, have been advocating for several years. The Constitutional Treaty will provide a solid base for Defence Europe, giving it a fresh impetus. Indeed, the Constitution makes critically important headway on defence. Because Europe is now a community of destiny, the Constitution asserts for the first time the principle of solidarity and mutual assistance between European Union member States. This means that, in the event of armed aggression, after the Constitution's ratification, the EU States will owe each other assistance. These commitments are, of course, perfectly compatible with those made within the Atlantic Alliance for the past 50 years, an Alliance that remains the foundation of our collective defence.

To respond to the consequences of a terrorist attack – sadly always possible or a natural or industrial disaster, the solidarity clause provided for by the Constitution will enable the mobilization of all appropriate civilian and military resources. The clause will enhance the security of our populations and be an effective instrument for the prevention of terrorist threats.

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The Constitutional Treaty also offers an opportunity to highly motivated States, such as France, Germany and their Eurocorps partners, to come together in the European Union framework in order to move further and faster towards the establishment of Defence Europe.

This is the full meaning of the "structured cooperation" open to States that agree to participate in the main European military procurement programmes and to make troops immediately available to the EU.

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Lastly, the Constitution makes reinforcement of the industrial and technological base of the European defence industry and definition of a genuine European armaments policy, i.e. of our strategic autonomy and our independence, the overarching goal of the newly established European Defence Agency. This is a fundamental issue in many respects. Not only in order to optimize the resources we allocate to military procurement, but also to remain at the cutting edge of technological progress in the military sphere.

It also contributes to the dynamism of our economies as a whole because of the knock-on effect of the defence industry, which we all know is very important: the defence industry stimulates research and technological development and creates high value-added jobs in our country, which are therefore far less exposed to international competition from low-wage countries.

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By moving forward on Defence Europe, we are improving security for all French people and are true to France's calling to serve world peace and stability. It is by uniting our forces with those of our European partners that we can carry more weight in the international arena, for the benefit of our country, the security of our continent, and balance throughout the world, at the service of our universal values that unite us and to which we aspire.

For you, these are not just new challenges, they also herald new ambitions and new achievements. It is in this framework that you are already practising your fine profession as soldiers and will continue to do so.

With this in mind, I expect not only initiative and imagination from each of you, but also generosity and enthusiasm, which alone will enable us to go even



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further forward.

Together with my confidence, I would like to express to you my gratitude, my esteem and my friendship.

Thank you./.

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