

REYNOLDS RECAPS ON EUCAP MISSION MANDATE IN SOMALIA



EUCAP Head of Mission, Chris Reynolds (far left), pictured with high representatives of other EU missions operating in Somalia, during a meeting aboard Operation ATALANTA flagship, ESPS Navarra, in the Indian Ocean in September 2021.

The former Director of the Ireland's Coast Guard became the first Irish head of an EU Mission in 2019 when he was appointed to lead EUCAP (EU's Capacity Building mission) in Somalia. Chris Reynolds talks to Deirdre O'Flynn about the mission's mandate to support the build-up of Somali security forces and institutions, in view of a gradual takeover of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission.

In August 2021, Chris Reynolds brought the curtain down on a 42-year career serving his country – first with the Navy, then the Irish Coast Guard, the last ten of them as its Director.

Reynolds had been on secondment to the EU since 2016 with the EUCAP (EU Capacity Building) Mission in Somalia. He worked as Head of Operations until 2017, returning to the Irish Coast Guard in late-2017. At the end of 2018, he applied to return as Deputy Head of Mission and, in 2019, became the first Irish Head of an EU Mission.

EUCAP Somalia is a Council of Europe Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission. In December 2020, the Council announced that the mandate of EUCAP Somalia, its civilian capacity-building mission, EUTM Somalia, a military training mission, and Operation ATALANTA, the EU's executive military maritime operation, will now run until 31 December 2022.



Chris Reynolds in discussion with mission members including Muntaziyah M. Jimale, Director of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden during Joint EUCAP Somalia-EUNAVFOR meeting held in Mogadishu in November 2020.



Chris Reynolds takes part in an inspection of a dormitory refurbishment site at General Kahye Police Academy in Mogadishu. Once refurbished, the dormitory aims to support an additional 240 police cadets, including Darwishi police cadets, to study at the Academy.

BUILDING SOMALIA POLICE CAPACITY
Essentially, the mandate of EUCAP Somalia and EUTM Somalia is to support the build-up of Somali security forces and institutions, in view of a gradual takeover of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission in Somalia, in line with the revised Somali Transition Plan.

“We have one foot on land and one on sea,” said Reynolds, who is based in EUCAP’s headquarters in

Mogadishu. “We’re state building from the very basics.” The mission is supporting the strengthening of the Somali maritime law enforcement capacity at federal level and also has field offices in Puntland and Somaliland. It is also assisting Somalia in strengthening police capacity, including developing the Federal Darwishi and strengthening the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in Mogadishu.



EUCAP Liaison Officer to EU Delegation in Somalia Alex Borum (in blue body armour) and other EU team members with Lieutenant Colonel Anwar in front of the Somali Maritime Police HQ building, funded by EU and implemented by UNOPS, during a joint inspection visit in May 2021.



“I would like to bring the non-state forces, often called the State Darwish, into the overall governance structure. In the last two years, we have brought Somalia back into the family of INTERPOL – that’s important in terms of bringing home Somali nationals who are jailed abroad and exchanging data with security institutions about terrorism and terrorists.” – Chris Reynolds, Head of EUCAP Somalia Mission

“It’s a great opportunity to make a difference. Here in Somalia, I have twice the staff and the budget is more flexible, so I can do a lot more than within the structures at home.” On his arrival in 2016, the Somali Navy had collapsed, “the maritime police unit was living under the hull of a wreck, and the Somaliland Coast Guard in the north in the Gulf of Aden was embryonic”.

MARITIME HQ IN MOGADISHU

Now, a maritime HQ has been built in Mogadishu, with boats and jetties that will be fully operational in two years. Training of police, including maritime police, has also commenced, a new maritime police headquarters has been built, and the Somaliland Coast Guard now has patrol capacity.

“Somalia is federalised,” said Reynolds, so negotiations and capacity building are undertaken on a regional level. “We have developed plans to work with Operation ATALANTA, the EU’s executive military maritime operation, EUTM and the UN to develop naval and coast guard institutions.

“There are issues with clans and the politics of Somalia and we are

looking at what the future structure of the integrated police force will look like, both at the federal level and on the ground.”

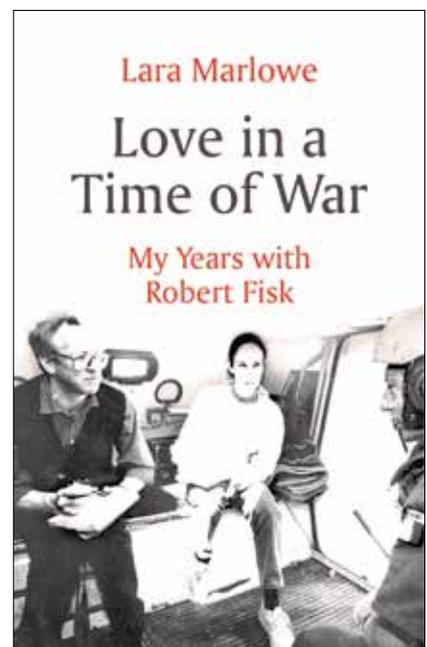
At the time of writing, parliamentary elections were due to conclude in Somalia on 25 November, to be followed by presidential elections. “It could take 10 weeks for a new government to be formed – federal politics requires a mature political apparatus to work”, so any political impasse and delays in filling political roles will present challenges for the work of EUCAP.

INTEGRATED POLICING MODEL

On Reynolds’ wish list is a functioning integrated policing model in Somalia, to include the Command, Control and Communications (C3), rule of law, and human resources elements.

“On the maritime side, I’d like to progress the development of the Somali Navy and Coast Guard, so that the country could exercise sovereignty in its waters, and be able to bring in various laws and enforce them in its waters.” This is vital given the history of piracy in Somali waters.

At a EUCAP level, Reynolds sees the CSDP two-year cycle as an issue: “The Somalis don’t think in terms of



Chris Reynolds pictured with Lara Marlowe (*The Irish Times* correspondent in Paris) and war correspondent Robert Fisk in Lebanon during the ‘Grapes of Wrath’ war in 1996. Lara Marlowe’s new book ‘Love in a Time of War – My Years with Robert Fisk’ is her memoir of the 20 years she spent with her former husband, from 1983 until they separated in 2003.

two years”, adding that the shorter EU policy cycle can make negotiating for the longer term conditionalities difficult. In addition, finding people with maritime experience to develop Somalia’s maritime capacity can be problematic as maritime people “would not see CSDP as career development”.

Reynolds also believes that greater integration of the European representation in Somalia would be beneficial. “The Team European toolbox could be harmonised, in terms of the EU Delegation, ambassador, and Missions,” he said. In terms of a legacy of his time in Somalia when his term is completed, Reynolds would like to see a plan to have the Somali Navy in the water: a third country is currently training naval officers and non-commissioned

officers. “If we were able to work with the Puntland Maritime Police Force [in north-eastern Somalia], we would have the Gulf of Aden covered by maritime police.

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THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Today, Somalia is on the road to recovery, with hotels springing up in a country with the longest coastline in mainland Africa (over 3,000km). “Terrorism activity has remained

relatively stable, though remote-controlled bombs and targeted assassinations are regular incidents.”

The jihadi insurgent group, Al-Shabaab, is still active, though “it is not in a place to take over. They are not akin to the Taliban in Afghanistan at all and have a relatively small base of support,” noted Reynolds.

In terms of development, it’s about starting small. “Often, Somalis hark back to the days of Russian and Italian infrastructure and, in some ways, want to go back there tomorrow. However, the country cannot afford to make that happen, so it is about what Somalia can afford to happen in the near term.

“What’s needed now is a fully functioning modern law enforcement capacity at sea and on land. It takes time, but Somalia will get there.”