



MINISTÈRE  
DES ARMÉES  
ET DES ANCIENS  
COMBATTANTS

Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité

# Press kit

## ORION 26

*Ready to act,  
determined to protect*



# 1. ORION 26: OVERVIEW

## ▪ A MAJOR OPERATIONAL TRAINING EVENT

As a major event for high-intensity operational preparation, ORION 2026 aims to prepare the French armed forces for the most complex situations in hybrid and contested environments.

**ORION stands for: Large-scale Operation for Resilient, Interoperable, high-intensity combat-Oriented, and iNnovative armies.**

## ▪ TRAINING OBJECTIVES:

### → Train:

- operational command to plan and conduct operations in all domains (Air, Land, Sea, Cyber, Space, Information, and Electromagnetic), even combined in hybrid high-intensity manoeuvres;
- forces and support chains in a high-intensity conflict context;
- cross-ministry coordination for the protection of the French territory and the Nation's resilience.



### → Strengthen:

- interoperability among allies;
- the Air and Space force capability to provide an alert force to NATO's ARF 26 (Allied Response Force), while the Army contributes by providing the LCC-level command post and the logistics component (JLSBG : Joint Logistic and Support Battle Group).



### → Promote innovation through experiments (drones, satellite jamming, simulation, AI, spectral weather vision and the use of the electromagnetic spectrum).

## ▪ A DEMANDING STRATEGIC CONTEXT:

Conceived in 2021 and subsequently adjusted, ORION 2026's scenario has confirmed itself as relevant in light of the ongoing deterioration of the international landscape and the evolution of threats.

Since 2022, France's strategic competitors have intensified their hybrid attacks aimed at testing national resilience and weakening our society model. These actions now pose an unprecedented threat to France's interests.

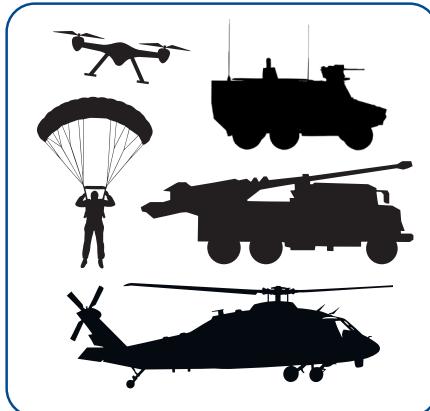
In response to these attacks, France is adapting its defence model to respond to the increasing hybrid nature of threats and the persistent risk of confrontation at Europe's frontiers. This evolution relies on mastering hybrid actions by being able to combine cyberspace, information, and electromagnetic domains as well as maintaining sufficient military resources to sustain long term actions.



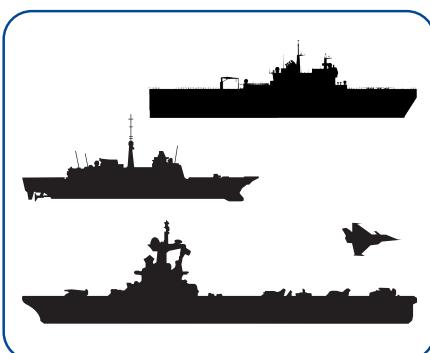
## ▪ ASSETS ENGAGED



ARMÉE DE TERRE



**1** army corps staff  
**3** combined arms brigades  
**2,150** tactical vehicles  
**40** helicopters  
**1,200** combat and speciality drones



**2** naval bases  
**1** Carrier Strike Group (CSG)  
**2** amphibious helicopters carriers  
**50** aircrafts  
**25** major combat units



**10** air bases  
**50** aircrafts  
**2** MALE drones  
**6** surface-to-air systems  
**20** space sensors

**Ministry of the Armed Forces and Veterans**  
**90 Directions, Services and Inter-Service Organization**

## 2. A FICTIONAL BUT CREDIBLE SCENARIO

ORION 2026 demonstrates France's determination to protect the Nation, its citizens and its interests in the long term by preparing for the most demanding military challenges.

In an environment where an engagement in a high-intensity conflict could become a reality, ORION 2026 meets the need to intensify and strengthen the level of preparation of the French armed forces. They are therefore training with rigor and realistically to be ready to conduct, if need be, the most complex and difficult future engagements in all areas of conflict.

This expectation serves to forge the moral strength of the military and the chains of command.

ORION 26 pits modern expertise and tactical and technological innovation against the challenges of high-intensity combat and the hybridity of threats.

### ■ SCENARIO

In Europe, Mercury, an expansionist country, seeks to destabilize its neighbor Arnland in order to maintain its influence in the region and prevent Arnland's from joining the European Union. Throughout 2025, Mercury has multiplied hybrid actions and increased its support for militias present in Arnland's territory. At the request of this ally, on January 6, 2026, France takes the lead of the ORION coalition to ensure its defence and preserve balance in Europe.

ORION 26 embodies this escalation, from invisible warfare to high-intensity combat.



ORION 26: a fictional but credible scenario, based on NATO standards, to recreate all forms of modern combat, from hybrid threats to high-intensity, and to test our forces in some of the most realistic combat conditions.

### 3. A LARGE-SCALE MULTI-DOMAIN EXERCISE

Through its scope, scale, and nature, ORION 26 trains the armed forces for high-intensity combat in a major engagement.

#### ORION 1 OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Translating a political decision into a credible, comprehensive and sustained military operation.

#### ORION 2 COALITION TROOPS DEPLOYMENT

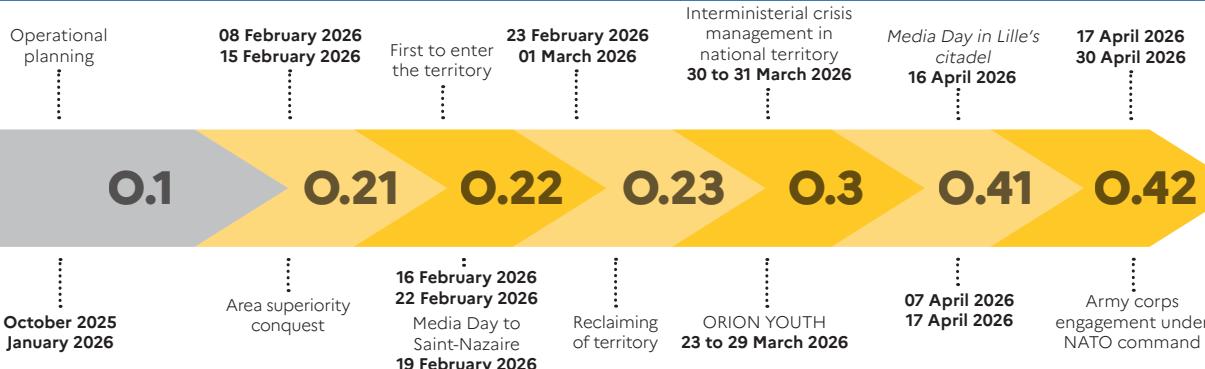
Demonstrating France's ability to be the first to engage and lead, alongside its allies, in a high-intensity operation.

#### ORION 4 NATO TROOPS DEPLOYMENT

Affirming France's capability to fully integrate into a NATO operation.

#### ORION 3 INTERMINISTERIAL WARGAME

Testing interministerial coordination in response to the domestic impacts of a major engagement of French armed forces abroad. At the same time, ORION YOUTH will offer awareness-raising activities and simulations focusing on defence issues.



\*Dates for reference only.

#### ▪ SPACE AND CYBER: FULLY INTEGRATED DOMAINS TO THE MANOEUVRES

##### → CYBER

The cyber aspect of ORION 26 is a key lever for operational readiness in the digital domain. It relies on demanding scenarios to train units and strengthen their integration of defensive, offensive and influence cyber capabilities at the heart of combined arms manoeuvring. By ensuring continuity between cyber incident management and their impacts in the digital information field, it mobilizes all cyber forces and allows the coordination of effects produced in a multi-domain setting to be tested. In this context, the armed forces will operate during ORION under constant cyber pressure, with real operational consequences. This is the very challenge the military cyber defence are facing: to maximize the protection of information systems and weapon systems, while being able to intervene quickly to restore the operational capability of deployed systems.

##### → ESPACE

The annual military space exercise SparteX 2026, involving all units of the Space Command, is being coordinated this year with ORION 26. It enables testing the interoperability between the C2 (Command and Control) of space operations and other command structures, as well as validating the methods of collaboration and impacts on the ground. The space component provides essential support to multi-domain operations, necessary for operational success. The main objectives of SparteX are to strengthen the readiness of units for military space operations, to ensure full integration of space into multi-domain operations, to strengthen cooperation and interoperability with international partners, to deepen synergy with CNES (National Centre for Space Studies) and to develop commercial support for military space operations.

## ▪ ORION 26 : A 4 PHASES EXERCISE

### Phase O.1 : Major operational planning

#### → A RECOGNIZED FRENCH CAPABILITY

The political will is translated into a military campaign led by France, as the framework nation of a coalition.

As such, the build-up and conduct of ORION 26 are akin to a real military operation. For nearly twelve months, the exercise has mobilized and coordinated all the armed forces, departments and services, following a rigorous operational planning process, in line with NATO procedures.

#### MAIN OBJECTIVE

**Strengthen the training of the command and control (C2) structure at the strategic and operational levels to plan, under time constraints, a military campaign under national command in coordination with NATO and a host country, as well as operations on the metropolitan national territory and oversea.**

The strategic decisions marking this planning cycle may give rise to interactions up to the political-military (POLMIL) level.

From the strategic level down to the operational and tactical levels, the command structure plans and conducts a military campaign integrating all areas of conflict and mobilizing all support chains, including on national territory.

In practical terms, this aspect aims to produce a joint coordination order (JCO), aligned with the various phases of the coalition's plan. This order will ensure the coherence of actions between the three operational commands (Air Defence and Air Operations Command (CDAOA), Atlantic maritime zone Staff (CECLANT), Land Command Europe (CTE)), as well as the implementation of specific instructions from the strategic commands (Special Operations Command (COS), Cyber Defence Command (COMCYBER), Space Command (CDE)).

## ▪ OPERATIONAL COMMANDS

### AIR AND SPACE DEFENSE AND OPERATIONS COMMAND (CDAOA)



The CDAOA, a major command of the French Air and Space Force, under the command of Air Corps General (OF-8) Marc Le Bouil since August 2025, is responsible for the control and protection of French airspace. This permanent air safety readiness is ensured 24/7 across the entire territory. Ensuring command of the operations of the O21 component of the O2 phase of the exercise, it will conduct the air manoeuvre as well as ensure the protection of the facilities with surface-to-air defences from the five air bases.

## ATLANTIC MARITIME ZONE STAFF (CECLANT).



The maritime prefect, Vice Admiral (OF-8) Jean-François QUÉRAT, combines his civil duties with those of commander of the maritime zone and district. He exercises operational command of naval and aeronautical forces on the Atlantic coast, ensuring maritime security, protection of national interests, combating illicit trafficking, and the safety of people and property at sea. He coordinates operations 24/7 with the armed forces, state services, and international partners.

As part of the ORION 26 exercise, the Atlantic maritime prefecture, through its operational command, coordinates and supervises the mobilization of naval and aeronautical forces on the Atlantic coast during the O22 component of the O2 phase. It ensures the planning and conduct of operations, the securing of maritime areas, and the protection of sensitive ships and infrastructure in the zone.

## LAND COMMAND EUROPE (CTE)

Based within the Land Forces and Operations Command (CFOT) in Lille, under the authority of General de Corps d'Armée (OF-8) Philippe Geay de Montenon, **the CTE is a new French operational staff created on October 16 2023.**



It fulfills three main missions:

- Command the forces of the French Army deployed in Europe for NATO, the European Union, or during one-off exercises;
- Ensure the build-up of deployed forces and provide their logistical support on a European scale, according to the needs of France or NATO;
- Act as the preferred interlocutor for NATO, the European Union, and partner countries on all land-dominant issues in the European region.;

As part of the exercise, it will engage an allied force during the O23 component of phase O2. It will then demonstrate its ability to integrate into a NATO command and control (C2) structure during phase O4. All components, as well as support, will be fully integrated into the manoeuvre.

## RAPID REACTION CORPS - FRANCE (CRR-FR)



The CRR-FR, commanded by Army Corps General (OF-8) Benoît Desmeulles, was created on July 1 2005. It is the largest multinational, operational and deployable staff of the French Army, ready to be deployed within a French, European Union, or NATO framework as needed. France is the framework nation, and it is open to all EU and NATO countries. Multinational cooperation is an integral part of the daily work of its 450 military personnel and 200 reservists from 14 different nations.

The CRR-FR is capable of commanding operations ranging from low to high intensity in an international, complex and multi-domain environment across all theatres of operation worldwide. It can deploy quickly and can serve as a first responder in case of crisis or conflict.

As part of the Orion exercise, the corps is in charge of the phase 4 setup, during which it be engaged as a strategic reserve corps in support of NATO's first line of defence. It will thus command, during an exercise that is both simulated by digital means and involving the deployment of troops on the ground, a volume of four divisions. This deployment will mark the validation of its new command post system.

## ▪ THREE STRATEGIC COMMANDS

### SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (COS)

The COS is a strategic operational command under the Chief of Armies Staff, defined by the decree of January 5 2017. Created in 1992, based on the experience of the First Gulf War and the heritage of the Allied special forces of World War II, it has been federating the special forces of the three armies for over 30 years to conduct high-level special operations and play a driving role in strategic anticipation and future preparation.



As part of the ORION26 exercise, it will participate in phase O2 by conducting special operations that will produce effects in support of the overall manoeuvre and complementary or disruptive operational effects with strategic value in a distinct framework from that of conventional forces.

## SPAC COMMAND (CDE)



Space Command (CDE), under the command of Air Division General (OF-7) Vincent Chusseau since the summer of 2025, is an organization under the command of the Air and Space Force serving a joint purpose. It embodies the implementation of the space defence strategy, contributes to the conception of military space policies and their Implementation. It plays a crucial role in the development of defence space capabilities. As the bearer of the military space expertise of the ministry, the CDE is responsible, on behalf of the Chief of Armies Staff, for providing space support to operations and for conducting military operations in, from, and to Space. Fully integrated into ORION 26, in which it constitutes the space component through SparteX 26, the CDE conducts its operational space planning from Toulouse, while deploying personnel to the joint facility of the CDAOA. Military space operations are thus perfectly coordinated to produce the results aimed for..

## CYBER DEFENCE COMMAND (COMCYBER)



The Cyber Defence Command (COMCYBER), under the command of Air Division General (OF-7) Emmanuel NAEGELEN, was created in 2017. COMCYBER is both a command level, orientation, design, and operations management (cyber defence general staff), as well as an operational center of action and expertise (cyber defence group of the armed forces). It brings together the entire cyber community of the armed forces, with units from all three branches. It coordinates all military operations in cyberspace: its participation in ORION 26 will consist of contributing to strategic planning, supporting planning work and operational manoeuvre with its expertise, and conducting its own defensive, offensive, and influence operations in cyberspace.

## ▪ OPERATIONAL LEVEL REFERENT FOR THE ARMED FORCES STAFF

### JOINT COMMAND EXPERT CENTER (CECIA)



The Joint Command Expert Center (CECIA), under the command of Vice-Admiral (OF-7) Royer de Véricourt, was created on July 1 2024. It continues the work of previous structures (EMIA-PO, EMFEIA, EMIA-FE, CPOIA, and EMFIA), building on their experience and expertise.

This creation is part of the dynamic transformation of command and control (C2) of the armed forces desired by the Chief of Armies Staff. It aims to provide the armed forces, departments, and services with a reference center for inter-service command at the operational level, expert in integrating multi-environment and multi-domain effects. In this capacity, the CECIA performs the function of officer conducting the exercise (OCE) as well as the overall direction of the ORION 26 exercise. It thus ensures the overall coherence of the exercise, from scenario design to communication, based on a broad and recognized inter-service expertise.

An ambition of this magnitude requires long and rigorous preparation. The first work began as early as September 2023 and intensified from December 2024, in order to anticipate and take into account all updated operational

## Phase O.2 : Conquest of area superiority: deployment of coalition troops



**10,000** deployed military personnel

**7** domains involved

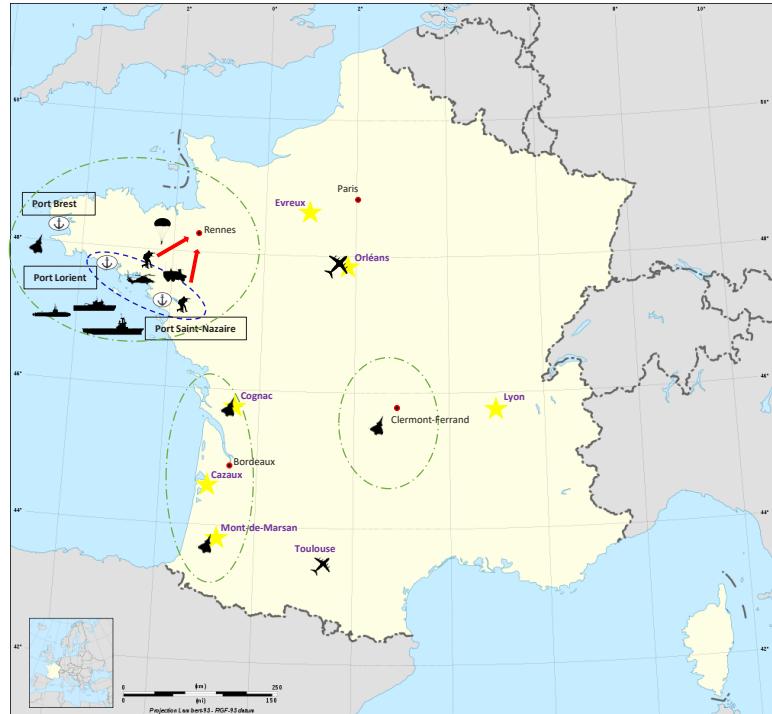
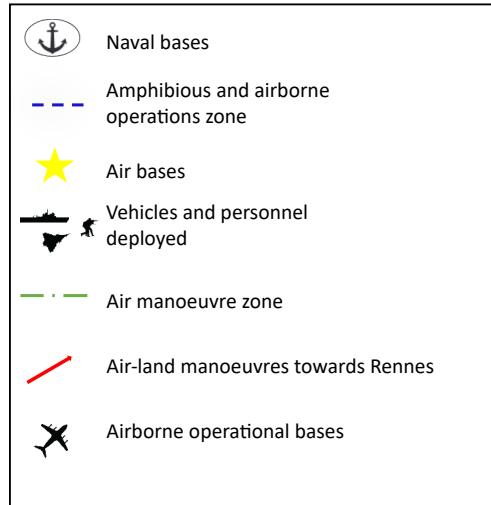
LAND - SEA - AIR  
SPECIAL FORCES - CYBER  
SPACE - LOGISTICS

**21** days of open-ground training

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

Strengthen the training of the national command structure at the operational and tactical levels to conduct a first entry campaign, taking into account all aspects of the fields and environments.

#### → ASSETS ENGAGED FOR O2



#### Land Command Europe (CTE)



**9<sup>th</sup>** infantry marines brigade

**11<sup>th</sup>** airborne brigade

**4<sup>th</sup>** air combat brigade

**350** tactical vehicles, including from the SCORPION line-up

**400** specialty and combat drones



#### Atlantic Maritime Zone Staff (CECLANT)

**1** naval aviation group armed with around 20 RAFALE fighter

**1** amphibian group

**25** major combat units



#### AIR AND SPACE DEFENSE AND OPERATIONS COMMAND (CAPCOPA)

**6** air bases

**40** aircrafts, including around twenty fighter jets

At least 2 surface-to-air systems as well as drones

#### → SEQUENCES OF THE MANOEUVRE - O2 - Coalition engagement

Build-up / Preparation for the deployment of forces

**STARTEX**

Conquest of air superiority C-A2AD: ensuring the freedom to manoeuvre for the forces



Intelligence / In-depth offensive counter-attacking air operation

Until 07 February 2026

08 February 2026

Conquest of maritime superiority



Amphibian operation for bridge control



Intensification of ground operations  
Airborne operation to consolidate and expand the bridgehead

19 February VIP DAY  
Key moments in Saint-Nazaire (boarding in an amphibious helicopter carrier)

**ENDEX**  
O2  
Authority transfer to NATO

01 March 2026  
Lessons learned sequence before phases 3 and 4

## Phase O.3 : Strengthen the collective defence capabilities of the territory

ORION 26 is part of a comprehensive approach to collective defence, based on the involvement of the entire Nation. The exercise brings together state actors, local authorities, and civil actors to strengthen national resilience against threats, including hybrid threats, that may target the national territory.

The O3 phase, conducted throughout the exercise, simulates the scaling up of state organizations in a scenario of major engagement in Europe involving NATO. It meets two complementary requirements. The first aims to control the effects and feedback on the national territory of an operation conducted abroad. The second concerns France's support role as a host nation, for the benefit of allied forces called upon to transit through its territory. This phase aims to test the State's ability to organize itself over time to ensure an effective overall response and protect the national territory. This dynamic is implemented at the zonal level, in the seven metropolitan defence zones as well as overseas, notably within the French Armed Forces in French Guiana (FAG)..

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen coordination between ministries in planning their support for the build-up of armed forces in the event of a major engagement;**
- Assess the responsiveness, mobilisation capacity and coordination of civilian and military actors, as well as France's ability to support the build-up of its forces in a feedback context.**

### 12 MINISTRIES INVOLVED



### COORDINATION

Four interministerial working groups will be launched as early as September 2025 to prepare coordination and scenarios.

By the end of March 2026, a restitution day in the form of a wargame will allow testing of these scenarios.



Under the direction of the Chief of the Armed Forces Staff (EMA) and the Secretariat-General for National Defence and Security (SGDSN).►

◀ Lead by EMIA-TN (EMIA-TN).



**SGDSN**

## Phase O.4 : Deployment of troops in NATO

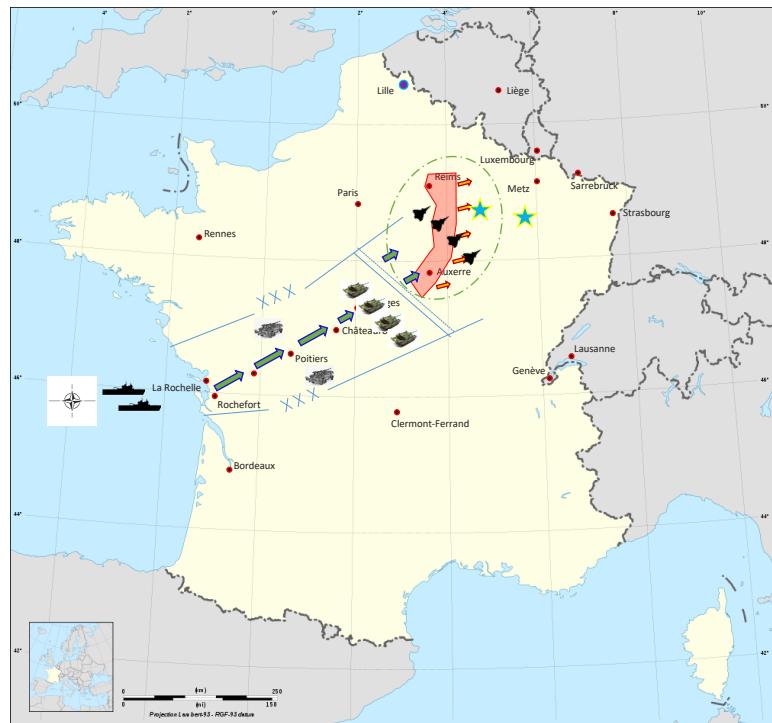
Phase O4 of the ORION exercise illustrates France's commitment within NATO in a collective defence scenario (Article 5), demonstrating its ability to lead and command a high-intensity allied operation.



**12,500** military personnel deployed  
**1** army corps staff  
**3** multinational divisions

**3** weeks of multi-domain operations  
**20** days of open-ground training

### → ASSETS ENGAGED FOR O4



**3** brigades deployed  
**1,800** tactical vehicles  
**30** helicopters  
**800** combat and specialty drones



**Land forces support:**  
- Ensure maritime superiority  
- Ensure in-depth strikes by the means of naval cruise missiles



**1<sup>st</sup> division support:**  
- deploying a protection bubble for surface-to-air defence (2 platoons MAMBA, CMD3D, fighter jets)

### → SEQUENCES OF THE MANŒUVRE – O4 – Allied engagement

**07 April 2026**  
**STARTEX**  
**O4.1**  
**Command post exercise**  
Focus on the French Army Corps, as NATO's strategic reserve.

**16 April 2026**  
**VIP DAY in Lille**  
**O4.2**  
**Exercice in open ground**  
Focusing on division and brigade.

**30 April 2026:**  
**ENDEX**  
And beginning off the lessons learned phase.

Resumption of the opposing offensive.

**07 to 10 April 2026**  
Halting of the enemy offensive and relief of the first NATO echelon by the French corps.

**11 to 18 April 2026**  
Launch of the counter-attack operation and consolidation of the positions gained.

**18 April 2026**  
Continuation of the counter-attack operation with the troops deployed in open-ground.

**20 to 30 April**  
Offensive exploitation, crossing (Loire, Seine, Aube), retaking key positions and live firing of ammunitions.

## → ARMIES ENGAGED AT THE HEART OF THE TERRITORIES

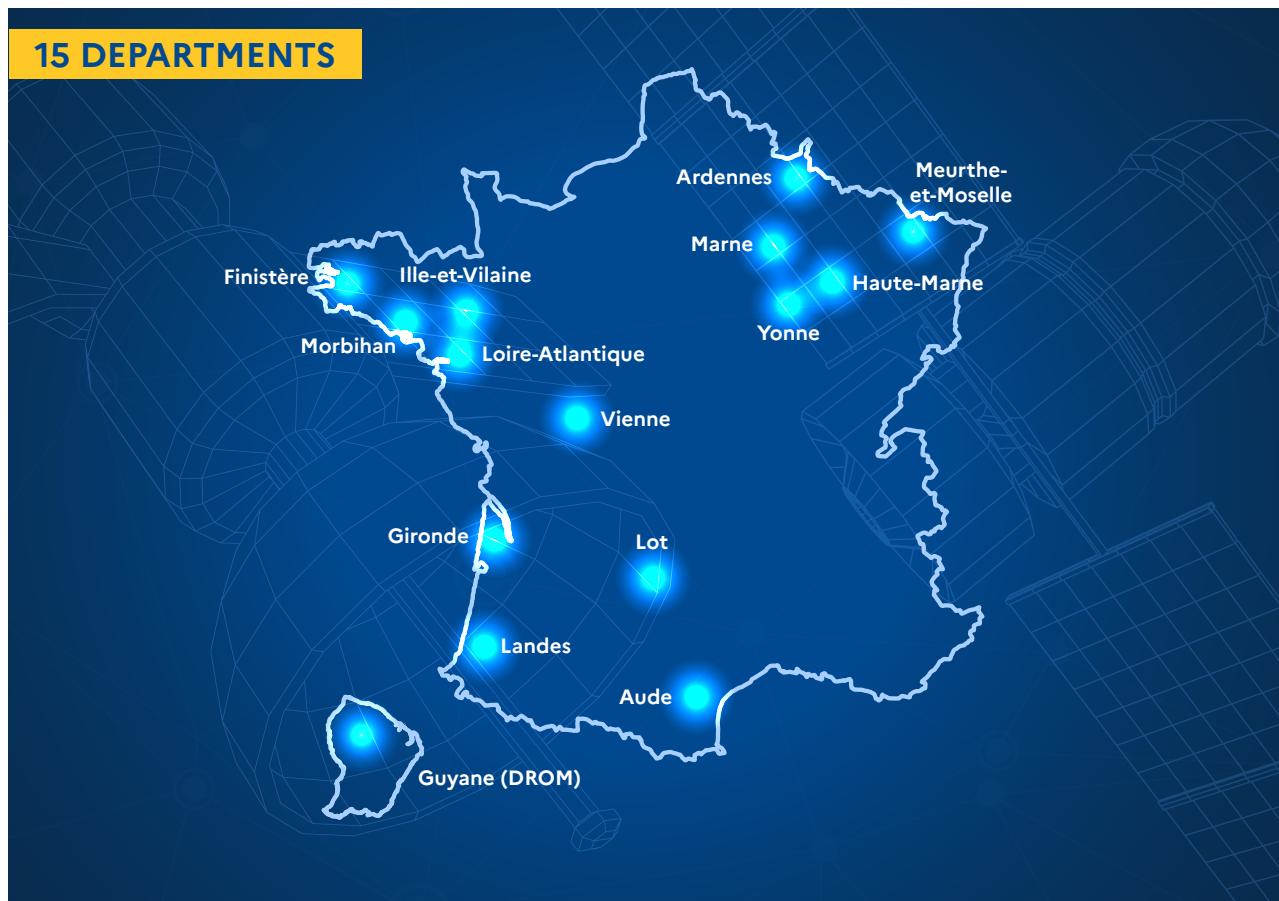
To better ensure France's security, the military must train together in realistic conditions. To meet this requirement, the armies will deploy at sea, in the air and in "open-ground", in addition to military camps or reserved manoeuvre areas.

Indeed, to be effective, operational readiness must allow soldiers to train with their equipment and in realistic conditions: on land in military or free terrain, at sea offshore and in coastal areas, in the air in general air traffic zones.

These three environments are essential to conduct demanding, **high-quality operational readiness adapted to new threats.**

### – A strong national network:

15 metropolitan departments and 1 DROM (overseas) will be mobilized for an unprecedented national exercise.



The armed forces train in the heart of the territories. Each manoeuvre strengthens their mastery of the terrain.

This is a unique opportunity for the population to discover the armies from the inside, to observe the equipment, to exchange with the military and to better understand their missions.

- ORION 26 will also allow the training of reservists from all branches of the military and services to face the challenges of high intensity and to strengthen the bond with an engaged population, imbued with the spirit of defence in the service of the Nation.
- An opening to youth is integrated through "ORION YOUTH" carried out in parallel with phase 3, with awareness-raising actions and situational exercises allowing young people to discover the challenges of defence.
- ORION 2026 also aims to be a driving force for national cohesion. It embodies the spirit of defence that animates the French: in the face of challenges and threats, everyone has a role to play in preserving the interests of France, its citizens, and their values.

## → MULTINATIONAL EXERCISE UNDER FRENCH COMMAND.

### — An allied mobilization – Partner countries:

#### A COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT BASED ON SOLIDARITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY:

As a founding member of the European Union and NATO, France remains a reliable, credible, and supportive partner.

Several foreign partners have confirmed their participation in the various phases of the exercise as players within the coalition or within the opposing forces. This multinational dimension allows all French command structures to train in integrating allied units and maintaining interoperability with them. This integration strengthens the credibility of our defence apparatus. Indeed, France has the means, expertise, and operational experience to lead or integrate into an international coalition.



ORION 26 demonstrates the French armed forces' ability to be the first to enter an operational theatre, to command a coalition, to unite and integrate European and allied partners to conduct major operational engagements, with the common goal of ensuring the security and stability of Europe.

## Notes



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