Brussels, 29th November 2018

BELGIUM **NAVAL & ROBOTICS**

PRESS RELEASE

ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM established to contribute to Belgian naval mine clearance excellence

The French company ECA GROUP presented its brand-new Belgian subsidiary, ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM, at an event in Brussels. ECA GROUP comes to Belgium with the ambition and in partnership with NAVAL GROUP, to provide ships equipped with drones. This decision has been made in response to a consultation launched by the Belgian government as part of a Belgian-Dutch cooperation for the supply of twelve mine hunters. (see press release of 9 October 2018).

A consortium between NAVAL GROUP and ECA ROBOTICS, known as BELGIUM NAVAL & ROBOTICS, has been specifically set up to participate in the tender. ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM will carry out and coordinate all ECA GROUP activities in Belgium related to unmanned systems to be deployed by mine hunters, as part of the Belgian government programme.

Consolidating a collaboration of more than 30 years

On the occasion of this event, Guénaël GUILLERME, Chief Executive of ECA GROUP, said: "*We are looking forward to the idea of strengthening our cooperation with the Belgian Defence, industry and academic world. I remember visiting several Belgian partners involved in the production of the PAP-robot 20 years ago. The development of this new subsidiary will therefore consolidate more than 30 years collaboration with Belgium in terms of robotics and mine clearance at sea that started with the mine clearance robots PAP on CMT - Tripartite Mine Hunters - then built for France by NAVAL GROUP. ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM will contribute to Belgian excellence in terms of mine counter measures*".

BELGIUM NAVAL & ROBOTICS

BELGIUM NAVAL & ROBOTICS therefore falls within the direct heritage of the consortium that resulted in Tripartite Mine Hunters, combining the expertise in naval robotics from ECA GROUP with physical and functional integration of drones aboard and protection of military ships against impacts and follow-up of the ships during their entire life cycle provided by NAVAL GROUP.
Both companies have also acquired extensive partnership experience with client navies from many countries around the world by getting locally involved with industries in these countries.

Strategic autonomy & MCM technology excellence in Brussels and Zeebrugge

ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM and NAVAL GROUP will give Belgium strategic autonomy with regard to unmanned systems and the evolution of the programme:

- The programme management for unmanned systems will be implemented in Belgium as from the start of the programme. NAVAL GROUP Belgium in Brussels will control the entire programme.

- The Research & Development structure of ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM, in connection with ECA ROBOTICS, will perform as from 2019 all adaptations on the drones and implement the systems required for the programme, in particular for the two key elements of the drone system: USV (unmanned surface vehicle) and the software suite C2 MCM UMISOFT™.

  These two components are the most critical elements and those that will be most likely to evolve in the lifetime of the ships. Controlling this development in Belgium is essential for the Belgium's strategic autonomy in terms of under mine clearance. In order to manage the developments of the USV in an optimal way, the naval architecture subsidiary of ECA GROUP, MAURIC, will join ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM on site for the design and developments of the platform and the surface drones.

- All underwater drones and the USV in the programme will be produced in Belgium, with the participation of a range of partners established throughout the Belgian territory. Some of these companies have been partners of ECA GROUP for over 40 years.

The choice to establish ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM in Zeebrugge is particularly strategic. This centre, associated with a number of Belgian suppliers and partners, will gradually master the various skills related to the drones as the production of the programme progresses.

These skills will therefore be available near ships and maintenance workshops of the naval base. ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM will thus be able to respond very fast and use its skills and experience for the maintenance of the drones. Besides, this location is also close to FLANDERS SHIP REPAIR (FSR) (see press release of 14 /11/2018), the partner of NAVAL GROUP looking after all maintenance activities in Belgium with regard to ships and navy maintenance workshops. This proximity will ensure better coordination between maintenance of platforms and maintenance of drones.

BELGIUM **NAVAL** & **ROBOTICS**

Belgium will export its mine warfare expertise

ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM and the Belgian subsidiary of NAVAL GROUP will export these mine counter measures solutions from Belgium, including drones that have been supplied as part of the programme. This export activity will benefit from the experience and the excellent export reputation of the Belgian and Dutch navies with regard to mine clearance at sea, in particular because of their role within the NATO. All of the mine action systems and the associated drones sold abroad will be produced in Belgium.

These unmanned systems will follow the technological developments and evolve accordingly. ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM has set up partnerships with the academic world and industry in Belgium for this development, in particular in key areas such as artificial intelligence. The technological developments of drones and the system that allow a better decision-making autonomy of the drones, a better detection of the mines... will be managed and controlled in Belgium for the future development of unmanned systems for remote mine clearance intended for the Belgian and Dutch navies as well as for navies abroad.

A start in 2019

ECA ROBOTICS BELGIUM will have two principal places of business:

- The site in Brussels will be responsible for the management of the programmes as well as for research and development related to unmanned systems. The site should open as soon as the programme starts and be extended in 2019.

- The second site is supposed to be mainly a production unit. This production site in Zeebrugge would be in charge of the production and maintenance of the Toolbox subsets. The site will therefore coordinate the relations with the Belgian suppliers and partners that have been selected to cooperate in the programme. The production site should open its doors in the second half of 2020, in accordance with the programme's schedule. Zeebrugge will also be in charge of the qualifications and sea trials due to changes made to the drones and the system for both the programme and the export.

About Belgium Naval & Robotics

BELGIUM NAVAL & ROBOTICS is the name of the Naval Group-ECA Group consortium as a part of the response to the Belgian-Dutch consultation for the replacement and initial support of their mine warfare capability. www.belgium-naval-and-robotics.be

About Naval Group

Naval Group is the European leader in naval defense. A high-tech company, Naval Group uses its exceptional know-how, unique industrial resources and ability to establish innovative strategic partnerships to meet its clients' requirements. The Group designs, produces and maintains submarines and surface vessels. It also provides services for naval shipyards and bases. Always at the forefront of innovation, in recent years the company has led various developments regarding drones, their integration and their supervision on vessels. Committed to corporate social responsibility challenges, Naval Group is a member of the United Nations Global Compact. In 2017, the Group generated revenue of €3.7 billion and had 13,429 employees. www.naval-group.com

About ECA Group

ECA Group ECA Group is an expert in naval drones and unmanned systems and one of the global leaders in this sector for the last 50 years. Moreover, the beginnings of ECA Group in naval robotics took place alongside Naval Group: ECA Group had been tasked with creating a free submarine model at the end of the 60s, which was implemented by Naval Group in St-Tropez. Following that, Naval Group and ECA Group collaborated on developing the first MIDS (Mine Identification and Destruction System) in the world, the PAP guided self-propelled mine clearance ROV. Still used by the French Navy, this robot has been sold in several hundred copies across more than 30 countries.

Today, ECA Group masters underwater drones just as well as surface or air drones, enabling it to offer a very wide and complete range of UMIS™ drone systems suited to all types and sizes of military vessels. www.ecagroup.com

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