

Brigadier General Guillaume PONCHIN  
France, born December 1st 1971 in Marseille



Inspector of the French Army, General Guillaume Ponchin is currently responsible for steering the reorganisation of the French Army's operations in Africa. From July to December 2023, he was Chief of Staff of the MINUSMA Force in Mali, and oversaw the withdrawal of the 12,000 troops of this UN peacekeeping operation, in accordance with Resolution 2690.

General Ponchin spent the early years of his career in the French land forces, with significant operational involvement in Europe and Africa. In addition to his UN commitment in Mali, he has carried out numerous operations under national banner (Senegal 2000, Licorne ICR 2003 and 2007, Epervier Chad 2010 and 2013), NATO (SFOR 1999 and 2001, ISAF 2011), and the European Union (ECMM Albania 1998, EUFOR RCA 2014). These operations have enabled him to exercise command responsibilities in complex political and operational situations, with a global approach, notably as head of an operational monitoring and liaison team in Afghanistan, Chief of Joint Operations in Chad, and Commander of a Multinational Battalion in the Central African Republic. During his deployments in ICR and CAR, he cooperated closely with the peacekeeping force components deployed in the vicinity of his area of operations (ONUCI, MINUSCA).

In addition, the first part of his career was marked by two key experiences. First, a six-year posting to Donaueschingen (Germany) gave him the opportunity to immerse himself in a foreign culture and work on a daily basis in a multinational environment. This experience shaped his ability to develop a methodical approach to crisis management. He then undertook a period of command in Brive-la Gaillarde (2013 to 2015), where he combined the duties of commanding officer of a combat regiment, Departmental Military Delegate and Defense Base Commander. This sequence enabled him to become part of an interministerial and interarmy dynamic, while strengthening the Armies-Nation link in his area of responsibility.

General Ponchin then acquired experience and responsibilities within the Joint Staff Headquarters, where he has held a number of exposed positions. He was appointed Military Adviser to the Director of the Gendarmerie Nationale from 2015 to 2017, and fostered interministerial cooperation to address the threat posed by terrorism in France. He was head of office at the Armed Forces General Staff from 2019 to 2021, time during which he set up and ran the MoD's first COVID ministerial platform. He led a wide-ranging reflection on the Armed Forces' response to hybrid strategies, resulting in an innovative ministerial concept. He spent a year as Chief of Staff of the Franco-British Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), working to revise its concept of engagement to make it applicable from the outset.

Appointed in 2021 as Executive Assistant to the Chief of Joint operations, he supported this senior authority for two years, both in France and in operational duties abroad. This particularly busy period (war in Ukraine, withdrawal of Barkhane, Operation Sagittaire in Sudan, etc.) enabled him to be involved in all national operational decisions, both tangible and intangible.

Former Cadet at the Saint-Cyr Military Academy, he is a graduate of the Ecole de Guerre, the Centre des Hautes Etudes du Ministère de l'Intérieur (CHEMI) and the Institut National des Hautes Etudes de Sécurité et de Justice (INHESJ). He is an Officer of the Legion of Honour, a Knight of the National Order of Merit and holds the Military Valour Cross with three commendations.

General Ponchin is married to Nathalie, a civil servant at the Ministry of Justice. Together they have four children, all of whom are now working.