



EU COUNCIL SECRETARIAT
~FACTSHEET~

EU BATTLEGROUPS

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Full Operational Capability 2007

The European Union is a global actor, ready to undertake its share of responsibility for global security. With the introduction of the Battlegroup Concept the Union has another military instrument at its disposal for early and rapid responses when necessary. Since January 2005, the EU Battlegroup Concept has reached its Initial Operational Capability. This means that the EU has at least one Battle Group on standby on a permanent basis. On 1 January 2007 the EU Battlegroup Concept reached Full Operational Capability. From that date the EU will be able to fulfil its ambition of having the capacity to undertake two concurrent single battlegroup-sized rapid response operations, including the ability to launch both such operations nearly simultaneously.

At the 1999 Helsinki European Council, Rapid Response was identified as an important aspect of EU crisis management. As a result, the Helsinki Headline Goal 2003 assigned to Member States the objective of being able to provide rapid response elements available and deployable at very high levels of readiness.

Subsequently an EU Military Rapid Response Concept was developed. In June 2003, the first EU autonomous military crisis management operation, Operation Artemis, was launched. It showed very successfully the EU's ability to operate with a rather small force at a distance of more than 6 000 km from Brussels. Moreover, it demonstrated the need for further development of rapid response capabilities. Subsequently, Operation 'Artemis' became a reference model for the development of a battlegroup-sized rapid response capability. In 2004, the Headline Goal 2010 aimed for the completion of the development of rapidly deployable battlegroups, including the identification of appropriate strategic lift, sustainability and debarkation assets by 2007.

P R E S S

Within this context and based on a French/British/German initiative, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) developed the Battlegroup Concept. In June 2004, the EU Military Committee (EUMC) agreed the Battlegroup Concept, and since then the work has been taken forward, based on an agreed roadmap. The work was concluded in October 2006 with the delivery of one single Battlegroup Concept document.

Basic features

The battlegroup is the minimum militarily effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package capable of stand-alone operations, or of being used for the initial phase of larger operations. It is based on a combined arms, battalion-sized force and reinforced with combat support and combat service support elements. In its generic composition, but depending on the mission, the battlegroups are about 1 500 personnel strong.

The battlegroups are based on the principle of multinationality and may be formed by a framework nation or by a multinational coalition of Member States for an autonomous EU operation. In all cases, interoperability and military effectiveness will be key criteria. A battlegroup is associated with a deployable force headquarters and pre-identified operational and strategic enablers, such as strategic lift and logistics. Member States may also contribute niche capabilities, providing specific elements with added value to the battlegroups. The battlegroups are sustainable for 30 days in initial operations, extendable to 120 days, if re-supplied appropriately.

Tasks

Battlegroups will be employable across the full range of tasks listed in Article 17.2 of the Treaty on European Union and those identified in the European Security Strategy, in particular in tasks of combat forces in crisis management, bearing in mind their size. Based on the Headline Goal 2010, which places the emphasis on rapid response and deployability, the EU has progressed well in further developing its military capability. As a basis for the capability development process, the following five illustrative scenarios have been used: conflict prevention, separation of parties by force, stabilisation, reconstruction and military advice to third countries, evacuation operations and assistance to humanitarian operations. Although the battlegroup capability could be used in all scenarios, the latter two scenarios in particular have specific requirements for rapid response. A possible option is for an EU battlegroup to be used in an EU autonomous initial operation in order to enable other organisations (e.g. the UN) to generate the necessary forces for a subsequent larger crisis management operation. The operation would as a rule be conducted under a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR), although operations could be envisaged where a UNSCR would not be necessary (e.g. evacuation of EU citizens). Standards, training and certification To qualify as an EU battlegroup, the battlegroup packages have to meet commonly defined and agreed military capability standards. Standards and criteria, set by Member States, form the basis for developing specific instructions to ensure coherence between the constituent parts of the battlegroup package, taking into account the demands for multinationality. A basic principle is that the battlegroup training is the responsibility of the Member States

concerned. The EU facilitates the coordination among Member States. The certification of battlegroups also remains a national responsibility of the contributing Member States. The EU Military Committee, assisted by the EU Military Staff, monitors the battlegroup certification process. Training is a key requirement for battlegroups. Member States are conducting a series of exercises in this context. For instance, exercise European Endeavour 06 was carried out in Germany in November 2006 to certify the German/Dutch/Finnish Battlegroup Force Headquarters. Exercise Quick Response conducted in Belgium in September 2006 also featured an EU battlegroup. Other examples include the Swedish-led exercise 'Illuminated Summer' in July 2007 in the context of the Nordic Battlegroup, and the Greek-led exercise EVROP II-07 in May 2007 for the 'HELBROC' Battlegroup. The certification of the battlegroup package by the Member States will provide the EU with the necessary assurance that it is ready for a possible mission. The Operation Commander, who will be appointed by the Council on a case-by-case basis, has the authority to tailor the command and control structure and the battlegroup package to the specific requirements of the operation. Battlegroup commitments The Member States conduct the generation of a battlegroup package and are responsible for offering a complete package. The battlegroup package has no fixed structure and thus provides Member States with the necessary flexibility to form their own battlegroup package. This could lead, for instance, to battlegroups with a mountain or amphibious capability. This flexibility facilitates a smoother force generation and a broader spectrum of capability. The Member States offer their battlegroup packages at the sixmonthly EUMS-chaired Battlegroup Coordination Conferences (BGCC). The planning horizon of the BGCC is five years. It is up to the Member States how they constitute a battlegroup package, for what time frame it will be offered, and how often. The last BGCC before Full Operational Capability was held on 27 October 2006. It confirmed that 2007 and 2008 are completely subscribed. MS have committed several other battlegroup packages for the period after these years. Operation headquarters are pre-identified for most of the battlegroup packages. At the beginning of 2007, the EU will welcome potential contributions from 25 Member States, one candidate state and one non-EU NATO country, filling over 20 time slots with battlegroup packages.

Role of the Battlegroup Concept

The Battlegroup Concept provides the EU with a specific tool in the range of rapid response capabilities, which contributes to making the EU more coherent, more active and more capable. The Battlegroup Concept enables the EU to respond rapidly to emerging crises with military means, taking into account the size and capabilities of the battlegroups on standby. The Battlegroup Concept also has the potential to be a driver for capability development and for making the armed forces of Member States more capable of undertaking rapid long-range deployments. Significantly, the need for additional strategic lift capabilities is underlined by the Battlegroup Concept. Furthermore, the Battlegroup Concept emphasises the need for accelerated decision-making. Not only do the EU bodies need to be ready but the national decision-making processes need to be synchronised to meet the demanding timelines. Setting up a battlegroup package is an opportunity for enhanced military co-operation between Member States. This improves mutual knowledge of each other's

capabilities with regard to military means and political decision-making. Finally, the Battlegroup Concept reinforces the EU's military identity in a concrete manner.

The European Union Battlegroups

Since the Battlegroup Concept was agreed in June 2004, much has been achieved. With the full commitment of the Member States, the Battlegroup Concept has already shown its potential value in securing increased co-operation and capability development among Member States. It has contributed to enhancing the EU's capability to deal with rapid response and will continue to do so.

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