



NOVEMBER 2014

## Response Forces Galore

A guided tour

In the days leading up to the September 2014 NATO summit in Wales several initiatives, by several countries, with regard to response forces have been announced. As always, the force initiatives in question were given acronyms for names, however, politicians use [parts of] the full name, which often leads to an abundance of variations. Furthermore, the media gave free reins to their creativity in re-baptising the force initiatives with catchy nicknames, all of which led to a lack of clarity and even to misunderstanding amongst the public, media, and even politicians. Now the dust of the summit has settled, and [inter-]national discussions on the way ahead for the mentioned proposals are starting up, it is important to make sure that we discuss on the basis of the actual situation and not on the perception of what the proposals and forces are all about.

This information bulletin aims to render a short overview of the response forces, as well as other expeditionary forces, that have been part of the information flow the past weeks. In order, it will focus on NATO's response forces, the EU's response force, and lastly on other multinational [new] initiatives akin to response forces.

### NATO

The **NATO Response Force [NRF]** is an existing force package. After announcing the initiative in 2002 and launching it in 2003, the NRF reached Initial Operating Capability in 2004, to achieve Full Operating Capability in 2006. It has three constituting parts: *A command & control element, the Immediate Response Forces [IRF], and the Response Forces Pool [RFP].* The three parts add up to a total of approximately 25,000 troops. The IRF – the part of NRF that is commonly meant in media when talking about 'NRF' – consists of several components. Firstly a land component, being a combat unit of

brigade strength<sup>1</sup> including the combat support means. Secondly a maritime component with regular surface capacity as well as specific counter-mine capacity.<sup>2</sup> The IRF also have an air component, that possesses both air combat and air support capacity. Furthermore there are the Special Forces component and the CBRN<sup>3</sup> Task

1 The brigade in turn built from three battalion taskforces.

2 Drawn from the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 [of 2] and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1 [of 2].

3 Chemical, Biological, Radiological/Nuclear.

Force. Finally the IRF has a Joint Logistics Support Group for the overall sustainment. The complete C2 and IRF add up to some 14,000 troops. The size and nature of the RFP will depend upon what members, or partner nations, are willing to provide, taking into account ongoing operational commitments.

The NRF does not consist of permanent contributions. The IRF are filled, based on a rotational system, with the designated 'current' forces on stand-by for the duration of 12 months. The RFP allows for nations to contribute assets, from the wide pool of national deployable forces, for durations of their own choosing, and further terms and conditions are flexible. The NRF is also open to partner countries after approval by the North Atlantic Council.

Principally, the NRF may be employed anywhere in the world, thus providing a rapid military response to [emerging] crises, both for collective defence purposes [article 5] and for crisis response operations [non-article 5]. Specific possible tasks for the NRF are: operations in support of embargoes, non-combatant evacuation operations, quick-response operations in support of diplomacy, and counter-terrorism operations.

Currently, the first elements of the IRF are on a 5 day notice-to-move alert. This literally means that these will start deploying towards a crisis area no later than 5 days after the decision to employ the IRF has been made. The IRF will deploy with a guaranteed self-sustainability of 30 days. Employment of the NRF will always be based on a consensual political decision, taken on a case-by-case basis, by the members of the North Atlantic Council.

The **Very High Readiness Joint Task Force [VJTF]** is a recent initiative, that has been announced at the NATO Wales summit. It is unclear as yet which capabilities will be included in this force package. However, reconstructing from several issued statements, it is important to notice that the VJTF will mainly be created from capabilities that are already part of the IRF package in the NRF, and will consist of approximately 4,000 troops. However, US participation

has been announced, which would imply additional capabilities as the US is not contributing to the current roster of the IRF within the NRF. Ergo conclusio: the VJTF is an 'extra sharpened point', mostly in response time but also in available capabilities, of the IRF of the NRF, not something completely new and different. Since NATO will create the VJTF largely from within the NRF, it will not consist of permanent contributions either, but as with the IRF, it will most likely be filled on a rotational basis.

Primarily, the VJTF seems to be designated for employment on NATO's Eastern boundaries<sup>4</sup>, based on the announcement that it will be enabled by pre-positioned equipment and logistic stocks, located on military bases of NATO partners on the East-flank. In some statements there was the mentioning of its 'reach' growing in the future to that of the current NRF tasking, worldwide. It remains to be seen if that last intent is feasible, with materiel and stocks pre-positioned in such a specific area.

The notice-to-move for the VJTF is 48 hours, making it indeed a very rapid response force. In order to be able to actually achieve such timing, the above mentioned pre-positioning is a crucial building-block of the concept. The decision to employ the VJTF, as for the IRF, will be a consensual one by the North Atlantic Council.

## EU

The **EU Battle Group [EUBG]** is an existing force package, stemming from the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. The European Council identified the necessity of having rapid response assets for crisis management as early as 1999, leading to a concept available in 2003 and Full Operating Capability of the EUBG per 2007. The realisation of the EUBGs was largely influenced by the first autonomous EU military operation Artemis in Congo in

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4 Or better: to prevent the necessity of employment on the Eastern boundaries by rendering a credible and robust deterrence.

2003. At the request of the United Nations an EU Battlegroup type formation intervened in Eastern Congo to restore security in and around the city of Bunia before the UN blue helmets arrived in order to guarantee longer-term security.

Since 2007, the EU has the potential to employ 2 EUBGs, but, on a side note, there has never been an actual employment of even one of the EUBGs. An EUBG is a combined-arms manoeuvre unit of battalion taskforce size, typically built with an infantry battalion as its nucleus, and reinforced with combat support and combat service support<sup>5</sup> assets. In theory, this would add up to a basic constellation of approximately 1,500 troops, however in practice the current EUBG 2014-2 has almost 3,500 troops including all enablers.

The EUBGs, like the NATO NRF, do not consist of permanent contributions. They are filled, based on a roster that is continually updated for 6 years ahead, with the 'current' forces on stand-by for the duration of 6 months.<sup>6</sup> Next to the actual battlegroup, also operational level and strategic level enabling capability [e.g. strategic airlift] is pre-planned. Obviously the contributing nations are EU members, the lead nation may invite others, an example being the participation of FYROM in the Belgian led 'current' EUBG 2014-2.

The EUBGs are principally intended to be deployed within a 6,000 km radius from Brussels, providing a military instrument for early and rapid responses for the EU. The EUBGs may be employed for a maximum of two separate missions, or as element within a mission. EUBGs can perform all of the so-called Petersberg Tasks: humanitarian & rescue tasks, conflict prevention & peacekeeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management including peace-making, joint disarmament operations,

military advice & assistance tasks, and post-conflict stabilisation tasks.<sup>7</sup>

Currently, the EUBGs are on a 10 days alert schedule, meaning that the first elements of the EUBG will begin implementation of the mission in the designated Joint Operations Area no later than 10 days after the decision to launch an operation. The EUBGs will deploy with a guaranteed sustainability of 30 days, and, with additional supplies, could be operational for a maximum of 120 days. Employment of the EUBGs will always be based on a consensual political decision, taken on a case-by-case basis, by the members of the European Council.

## Multinational forces

The **Combined Joint Expeditionary Force [CJEF]** is an existing force package. It has a land-, air-, and maritime component, as well as command & control elements from the strategic down to the tactical level, and finally a Combined Logistic Support Group. This initiative was announced in 2010, with exercises starting in 2011. The Full Operating Capability is projected to be achieved in 2016.

The CJEF is based on co-operation between the United Kingdom and France, under the 2010 Defence Cooperation Treaty [Lancaster House], both providing elements to all components including the command & control. It does not contain 'standing forces', both countries have put their assets 'at notice' to be available. It may include other nations on a case by case approach.

Employability of the CJEF appears to be principally world-wide, and for a wide range of scenario's, including high intensity combat operations as an early entry force. Specific tasks deemed most likely by the two constituting nations are: Crisis management including early entry, protection of shared national interests abroad, extraction operations, non-combatant evacuation

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5 CS: engineering, artillery, CMI and intelligence units. CSS: transport, supply, maintenance, and medical units.

6 In theory, contributing nations may prolong for full blocks of 6 months.

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7 The rendered overview is the adapted list of Petersberg Tasks since the Lisbon Treaty.

operations, temporary strengthening of existing Peace Keeping operations, and support to emergency humanitarian assistance.

No specifics are given for response times<sup>8</sup>, for the whole of the CJEF, the term ‘rapidly deployable’ is used. Sustainability of the CJEF is up to three months of operations in theatre for a stand-alone mission.

Employment is based on decision by both partners. The CJEF may be used for bilateral missions, or offered to NATO, EU, UN, or other organisations.

The **Joint Expeditionary Force [JEF]** is an initiative of the United Kingdom, also announced at the September 2014 NATO summit in Wales, aiming to provide flexible and rapid response forces. It will consist of land-, air-, and maritime components, and will have approximately 10,000 troops. In the Letter of Intent, as signed by the nations that have confirmed their willingness to join this initiative, the JEF is projected to achieve Full Operating Capability no later than 2018. The British framework [including some existing partners’ units] could be used as of immediately however.

Contrary to the response forces as described under NATO and EU, the JEF will have permanent members contributing. The lead nation will be the United Kingdom, and the JEF will be developed around its existing high readiness units, providing the lead commando, airborne, armoured, aviation, air, and maritime task groups. The other participating nations are Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Norway [with Canada interested in joining at this time]. These will contribute special troops and units<sup>9</sup> in addition.

The JEF will be employable anywhere in the world in any kind of environment, according to British statements. As it looks now, the task range will cover operations throughout the full spectrum. To meet this high standard, it will hold regular, and frequent, exercises in Europe and elsewhere.

No details have been given regarding notice-to-move, other than the intent to create a ‘high readiness’ force. Likewise, the sustainability [duration of actual operations] has not been specified so far. Statements mention NATO, the UN, and the OSCE as possible International Organisations that could be offered the use of the JEF in crises. It seems that the employment of the JEF would be a decision by each member for its own contribution, necessitating national decision-making processes before the offering of the JEF to such International Organisations for actual employment.

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8 Except for the air component which harbours an expeditionary air wing that is at 10 day notice-to-move.

9 For the Netherlands, an obvious contribution would be the units of the Royal Netherlands’ Marine Corps, that are already co-operating with the United Kingdom in the UKD/NLD Amphibious Force.

## Comparing overview

	NRF	VJTF	EUBG	CJEF	JEF
<b>Participation</b>	NATO members and partner countries after North Atlantic Council approval	NATO members	EU members and invitees	France United Kingdom and invitees	Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, [Canada]
<b>Composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Command &amp; Control – C2</li> <li>Immediate Response Forces – IRF</li> <li>Response Forces Pool – RFP</li> </ul>	Part of the NRF's IRF. Additional USA capabilities announced, but not yet defined	2, separately employable, taskforces, built around a manoeuvre battalion, including supporting capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Command &amp; Control</li> <li>Land-, Air-, Maritime components</li> <li>Combined Joint Logistics Group</li> </ul>	Lead commando, airborne, aviation, armoured, air and maritime task groups from the UK. Other nations providing special troops and units
<b>Dimensions</b>	Overall: 25,000 troops  C2 & IRF: 14,000 troops [Land-, Air-, Maritime-, Special Forces-, CBRN-components]	4,000 troops  Officially not specified, but NATO HQ sources talk about a Brigade sized land forces-unit	Approximately 2 times 1,500 troops; BEL EUBG 2014-2 totals at almost 3,500 troops all inclusive	Not specified, can be drawn from all readiness forces of the participants	Not specified yet, could be drawn from all readiness forces of the participants
<b>Standing / Rotational</b>	Rotation; C2/IRF on stand-by for 12 months	Rotation; Part of the NRF-IRF system	Rotation; On stand-by for 6 months	Tailor-made	Tailor-made
<b>Reach</b>	Worldwide	NATO's Eastern boundaries	6,000 km radius around Brussels	Worldwide	Worldwide, in any environment
<b>Employment</b>	Article 5 and Non-article 5 missions Operations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support of Embargoes</li> <li>Non-combatant Evacuation</li> <li>Quick response in support of diplomacy</li> <li>Counter-terrorism</li> </ul>	Pre-dominantly Article 5 intent, but possibly also for non-Article 5 missions	All updated Petersberg-tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humanitarian and Rescue</li> <li>Conflict prevention and peacekeeping</li> <li>Crisis management including peace-making</li> <li>Disarmament</li> <li>Military advice &amp; assistance</li> <li>Post-conflict stabilisation tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crisis management operations incl. early entry</li> <li>Protection of shared national interests abroad</li> <li>Extraction operations</li> <li>Non-combatant evacuation</li> <li>Temporary strengthening of existing Peace-keeping operations</li> <li>Support to emergency humanitarian assistance</li> </ul>	Can be employed as part of a coalition, or on behalf of international organisations such as the UN and NATO
<b>Notice to Move</b>	Lead-elements: 5 days	48 hours	10 days	"Rapid", tailor-made	"Rapid", tailor-made
<b>Self-Sustainability</b>	30 days	30 days	30 days	Tailor-made	Tailor-made
<b>Decision to employ</b>	Consensual political decision by North Atlantic Council	Consensual political decision by North Atlantic Council	Consensual political decision by European Council	National decision by participating nations	National decision by participating nations
<b>NOTE</b>	Full Operating Capability: 2006  C2 & IRF are mostly what is meant in media when referring to NRF	Full Operating Capability: 2016  Includes pre-positioning of materiel and stocks along NATO's Eastern boundary	Full Operating Capability: 2007  An EUBG is max. 120 days employable with resupply system in place	Full Operating Capability: 2016  CJEF is employable up to 3 months of operations in-theatre for a stand-alone mission	Full Operating Capability: 2018  The UK's contribution seems to be identical to the one they have in the CJEF

## About Clingendael

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