



Occasional Paper

# Launching EU Battlegroups

## *A RUSI European Security Programme Study*

Contributions by Major General Graham Messervy-Whiting CBE and Tim Williams

Edited by Alastair Cameron





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The views expressed in this paper are the authors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of RUSI. Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Alastair Cameron - Head, European Security Programme, Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2ET, United Kingdom, or via email to [alastairc@rusi.org](mailto:alastairc@rusi.org)

## Launching EU Battlegroups

### Executive Summary

In association with the EU Military Staff, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Manpower Software, the Royal United Services Institute hosted a conference in June 2007 on "Launching EU Battlegroups". Discussions centered on the progress which has been made by the European Union in terms of the development of the Battlegroups, and the effect that these force packages will have on the Union's crisis-management capabilities.

Fully operational since the beginning of 2007, with two Battlegroups now on duty at any given time, these 'ready-to-go' forces of 1,500 troops are intended for rapid response to emerging crises within a 6,000 km radius of Brussels. Designed to be up and running within 15 days of an initial green light and no later than 10 days after a formal decision to launch an operation, the EU envisages being able to undertake two concurrent Battlegroup operations should it be required to do so.

Under current arrangements, Battlegroup generation is expected to be a relatively straightforward task. However, if a Battlegroup's deployment was to be succeeded by larger follow-on EU forces or be extended beyond its initial mandated time-line, then the EU might well need to think about a common, more responsive and more flexible approach to Battlegroup force generation. A more detailed EU-wide database of available forces than that provided by the current Forces Catalogue would therefore be of evident use and would facilitate the identification of relevant forces for a particular mission.

The true test as to whether or not these Battlegroups are effective military capabilities rather than just a new concept will be determined by the ability of these force packages to fight, to take and to accept loss of lives. Countries contributing to a Battlegroup are currently responsible for certifying their own commitments, and it is the framework nation's responsibility to certify the force package as a whole. To guide this process, the EU has developed a 'Standards & Criteria' checklist that provides benchmarks in nine areas. However, in order to be efficient a battalion, its combat support and combat service support elements need to be bound into a single, homogeneous force, and unless each Battlegroup offers broadly similar capabilities, then the force packages are unlikely to be able to execute equally challenging missions. The most effective solution to achieving a balanced and consistent Battlegroup roster would therefore be to develop a centralised certification process with the EU Military Committee, through the EU Military Staff, performing this task and assuming responsibility for declaring each Battlegroup ready for operational duty. Whilst this might be resisted politically by some Member States, a first step in this direction could help promote more transparency between partners and Battlegroups.

An essential first step within the EU has always been the production and approval of an overall concept for each particular Common Foreign and Security Policy action. This is required in terms of setting out what the EU seeks to achieve strategically in the relevant area or country; what it hopes to achieve by exerting any particular action; what instruments it should bring to bear in

order to do so; how the desired end-state would be measured; within a fixed duration and with a view of total estimated costs. A Battlegroup deployment would thus respond to well identified criteria, such as making a positive difference to the country the EU wanted to send it to rather than building Europe. Furthermore, if a deployment was anticipated to last for longer than four months, all elements of the EU decision-making machine, including the Member States, should have a clear understanding that any initial Battlegroup mission was only a first response whilst a longer-term solution is generated. The EU needs also identify what it should be doing next and be confident that this longer-term solution will be in place before the Battlegroup is due to withdraw.

Battlegroups should primarily be seen as a rung on the ladder of overall capability improvements within EU Member States. Whilst at the Head of State or Government level, the Battlegroup concept is unlikely to lead to an increase of the defence budget, at the Defence Ministerial level, there might well be room within the budget to redefine priorities and re-allocate funds. In the long term, Battlegroups will undoubtedly complement other NATO initiatives and, within the EU, the Defence Agency's tasks. The overall cumulative effect of these initiatives should finally be to foster a developing strategic culture in Europe which favours early, rapid and where necessary robust intervention.



## Introduction

On 25 June 2007, a 'Launching EU Battlegroups' conference was held at the Royal United Services Institute in London in association with the EU Military Staff, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Manpower Software. The event provided an opportunity to assess the EU's progress to-date in the development of the Battlegroups and the effect the force packages will have on the Union's crisis management capabilities, as well as future challenges and priorities.

Lieutenant General David Leakey, Director General of the EU Military Staff, delivered the keynote address: 'Using the Battlegroups'. Other speakers included: Vice Admiral Anthony K Dymock (UK Military Representative to NATO and the EU); Major General Bengt Andersson (Operations Commander, Nordic Battlegroup); Brigadier General Bruno Pinget (Commander, French-German Brigade); Andrew Mathewson (Director for Policy on International Organisations, UK Ministry of Defence); Ambassador Adam Kobieracki (Assistant Secretary General for Operations, NATO); Commodore James Fanshawe (Defence Advisor, Manpower Software); Roland Zinzus (Deputy Head, Civil-Military Cell, EU Military Staff); Colonel Martin Pazik (Deputy Head, NATO and EU Section, Security Policy Department, Czech Ministry of Defence); Graham Messervy-Whiting (Deputy Director, Centre for Studies in Security and Diplomacy, European Research Institute, University of Birmingham); and Dr Markus Kaim (Senior Research Associate, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik).

Six key themes were discussed at the conference – using the Battlegroups; generation, validation and lessons learned; Battlegroups and capability development; strategic planning and political will; and civil-military co-operation. The event reported on EU countries' achievements in developing the Battlegroups, the challenges that might arise when deploying the Battlegroups and the various ways in which current arrangements and procedures for the Battlegroups might be improved. This report draws on speakers' contributions to the debate and addresses both the *status quo* and the future of the Battlegroups and the EU's crisis management capabilities.

## Background to the Battlegroups and Capability Snapshot

Since its launch in 2004, the plan to develop Battlegroups, each 1,500 troops strong, has quickly become the focus of the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The Battlegroups became fully operational at the beginning of 2007, two are now on duty at any given time and the EU hopes to be able to undertake two concurrent Battlegroup operations should the need arise. These 'ready-to-go' forces are intended for particularly rapid deployment in response to crises and/or requests from the UN. They are designed to be in place and able to begin implementing their mission within 15 days of an initial green light, and no later than 10 days after the formal decision to launch an operation.

The EU Capabilities Commitment Conference of November 2004 provided a more detailed analysis of the military and strategic elements of the Battlegroup concept, concluding that Battlegroups are

the 'minimum military effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package capable of stand-alone operations, or for the initial phase of larger operations. The BG is based on a combined arms, battalion sized force and reinforced with Combat Support and Combat Service Support elements. A BG could be formed by a Framework Nation or by a multinational coalition of Member States. In all cases, interoperability and military effectiveness will be key criteria. A BG must be associated with a force headquarters (FHQ) and pre-identified operational and strategic enablers, such as strategic lift and logistics.'<sup>1</sup> Since the time of the November 2004 conference the option of a single nation Battlegroup was also added to the list, though on the current Battlegroup roster only one unilateral force appears – the UK in 2008.

As such, the Battlegroup concept is the cornerstone of the EU's current 'Headline Goal 2010' action plan to improve European military capabilities – but its origins lie in an earlier EU capability target, the Headline Goal 2003. The 2003 goal was set in 1999 and called upon EU countries to be able, by voluntary cooperation, rapidly to deploy, by 2003, forces in operations up to Corps level (up to 15 brigades or 50,000-60,000 persons) within 60 days and that would be sustainable for a year. The forces were intended to carry out humanitarian, peacekeeping and crisis management missions – the so-called Petersberg Tasks – but a Corps-level rapid-reaction capability proved difficult to generate. Consequently, by early 2004, EU leaders were in urgent need of a more visible,

rapidly deployable military capability to show for the years of political effort that had gone into ESDP. Drawing largely on existing forces and requiring less capability generation than the 2003 Goal, the Battlegroups appeared the perfect remedy to the EU's capability (and credibility) gap. Battlegroups were seen, in short, as the fast track to a genuine and fast boots-on-the-ground EU military capability - to enhance the ability of the EU to make a difference in the world, to act as a force for good.

But this was not the only objective behind the Battlegroup concept for there were specific 'added value' functions that such a capability would give the EU. The Battlegroups were intended to be quick response tools – quick to deploy but then to withdraw and hand the challenge on after an initial period of stabilization. In so doing they were designed to complement the other mechanisms available to the EU - as only one component of EU capabilities they are intended for deployment alongside non-military instruments, a reflection of the EU's balanced approach to managing crises. Battlegroups were also designed to act as a catalyst for defence reform in countries with less experience of expeditionary operations in order that the burden of rapid response should not fall unreasonably on three or four EU countries.

Battlegroups were conceived as formations capable of both the Petersberg Tasks and other European Security Strategy roles such as stabilization, reconstruction and military advice to third countries. They are to be rapidly deployable, held at high readiness so they can be on the move within five to ten days and able to serve either as a stand-alone force or as the initial phase of a

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<sup>1</sup>Military Capability Commitment Conference, *Declaration on European Military Capabilities* (Brussels, 22 November 2004)

larger operation. They should be sustainable in a foreign theatre of operations for 30 days, extendable to 120 days if re-supplied. Most of the declared Battlegroups are multinational configurations, though some are purely national packages, and a six-monthly rotation system is designed to ensure that two Battlegroups are on call at a time.

Although the Battlegroups are not a war-winning tool, some foreseen Battlegroup scenarios go beyond the soft end of military utility. These types of mission envisage combat operations that, while not top end warfighting, could involve intense combat and Battlegroups have been prepared with such tasks in mind. Consequently Battlegroups are reinforced with combat support and combat service support. With some Battlegroups' combat support intended to be provided by sea and air power, the total number of personnel in some of the force packages may now reach 3,000.

Having provided this brief explanation of both the emergence of the Battlegroups concept and a summary of the capability, this report will now assess in rather more detail the various stages in a Battlegroup operation. This begins with the generation of the force, the validation that it is capable of carrying out the specified roles, and the process of deploying to theatre. It will then go on to explore how the Battlegroups are also a rung on the ladder of capability improvement.

## Generation

Under current arrangements, Battlegroup generation is expected to be a relatively straightforward task. The Battlegroups rely, as far as possible, on pre-identified assets and capabilities so the most

significant element of the generation process will be the provision of pre-assigned forces by contributing countries. That said, some Battlegroup elements, such as operational and strategic enablers, will vary according to mission requirements and some form of generation process will therefore be required.

The Operation Commander, through his Operation HQ (OHQ), is responsible for force generation and the deployment of the Battlegroup and the detailed force generation methodology remains the business of the OHQ. It is likely that each OHQ will implement the system that best suits the needs of the particular Battlegroup in question. The Force Commander is charged with setting the order of arrival in theatre though it is the availability of strategic assets that will limit their rate of deployment and if the Battlegroup elements are dispersed then additional time and effort will be required to get them to the strategic airhead. Any such logistical difficulties are, however, likely to present relatively simple problems in comparison with some countries' national procedures for authorizing participation in Battlegroup operations.

In short, therefore, responsibilities for Battlegroup generation are largely split between contributing countries and the Operation Commander: participating nations are responsible for providing the assets and capabilities promised to the Battlegroup and the OHQ is charged with overseeing the process and generating operational and strategic enablers. As such, Battlegroup generation is largely separated from the EU structures (EU Military Committee, EU Military Staff etc). In addressing the question of whether this process could be improved

in the future, such considerations are intimately linked with the level of EU ambition.

If Battlegroups, in their current form, largely satisfy the EU's rapid-reaction land-force expeditionary ambitions then the existing generation process could prove sufficient for EU purposes though there will no doubt be valuable lessons learned from Battlegroup deployments that can be translated to the force packages. However, if Battlegroups are to grow into larger force configurations or if, as is more likely, their deployment will be succeeded by larger follow-on forces then the EU might well need to think about a common, more responsive and more flexible approach to force generation. Examination of the EU's stated objectives clearly suggest that the Battlegroups alone do not fulfill EU ambitions: the capability targets of Headline Goal 2003 have not been abandoned and one of the functions of the Battlegroups is as the 'initial phase of larger operations'.

It is true that a Battlegroup, in itself, is the 'minimum military effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package capable of stand-alone operations' but that does not mean that its generation should not allow for some flexibility in its make-up. Some Battlegroup missions may well require a rather different force package from others. Under usual circumstances a force designed to undertake a peacekeeping operation in an unstable environment would not, for example, look quite the same as one designed to provide military advice to third countries. Within the Battlegroup concept both types of mission are potential operations and the current generation process means that they could be undertaken by similar force packages. This rather contravenes a basic rule of

force planning: namely that capability should match requirement.

Such a situation is not ideal and suggests that a detailed EU-wide database of available forces might better suit the fulfilment of the roles ascribed to the Battlegroups. If an OHQ were able to generate a bespoke force from a common database the configuration produced will no doubt be better suited to the task at hand than a pre-designed, one-size-fits-all force. Existing arrangements might well prove to be sufficient for Battlegroups to execute their missions with sufficient success. However, if the EU aspires to improve the military capabilities at its disposal the provision of some flexibility in Battlegroup generation would be advisable.

Such an argument is supported by consideration of the potential time-lines of an operation. While Battlegroups are designed for a maximum of 120-day deployments, the full duration of a mission may not coincide with rotations of the Battlegroup roster, i.e. a Battlegroup mission may well continue beyond the sixth month duty period of the deployed Battlegroup. In such a scenario the provision of reserve or standby forces, or a follow-on Battlegroup, would be greatly aided by a comprehensive EU planning tool. If the EU Military Staff were to hold a more detailed database than the current Forces Catalogue, to include availability of EU forces, some of the potential difficulties created by the static nature of the Battlegroup roster might be overcome.

The case is further strengthened when follow-on forces are considered because, given the planning stipulation that a Battlegroup operation might form the initial phase of a larger mission, the force

packages cannot be seen in isolation. While a static, rotational approach to force generation could prove sufficient for the Battlegroups themselves, a more flexible, responsive method will be required for larger configurations designed for operations of differing duration. Indeed numerous other factors including proper co-ordination with civilian capabilities, joint ops and changing operational trends would all benefit from the employment of a common, dynamic force generation process.

To conclude, the idea of EU Battlegroups first emerged at the Franco-British Summit of 2003. The Summit declaration called for 'a catalogue of high utility packages that can be tailored to specific missions'. In short, while the EU has endorsed and subsequently developed such Battlegroups, it has not yet given them the means to be properly tailored in the way that the packages were first envisaged.

### Validation

The acid test of whether, in the Battlegroups, the EU has developed a useable military capability will be determined by the ability of the force packages (and the willingness of their political masters to allow them) to fight, to take lives and potentially to lose lives. This is not because the Battlegroups are intended to be a war-winning tool – they are not – but some of the Battlegroup scenarios go beyond the soft end of military utility and envisage the possibility of combat operations. As a consequence the focus of the Battlegroup is on combat capability – as the November 2004 Capabilities Commitment Conference concluded, 'The BG is based on a combined arms, battalion sized force and

reinforced with Combat Support and Combat Service Support elements.' The indication is that Battlegroup missions are expected to be testing, particularly for those countries with limited experience of expeditionary operations, and the EU has developed a system designed to validate the capability of the force packages, ensuring they are up to the job.

Countries contributing to a Battlegroup are responsible for certifying their commitments at the unit level and it is the responsibility of the framework nation to certify the force package as a whole. In addition the EU Military Committee, through the EU Military Staff, oversees the process by visiting Battlegroups preparing for duty and liaising closely with their Operation Commanders. To guide the certification process, the EU has developed a 'BG Standards & Criteria' checklist that provides benchmarks in nine areas: availability, flexibility, employability, deployability, readiness, connectivity, survivability, medical force protection and interoperability. And Battlegroups are also encouraged to rely on existing NATO standards wherever possible, to avoid duplication and promote interoperability.

The advantage of such a set of common standards is that they provide clarity on the objective in Battlegroup development by articulating a shared interpretation of the professional skills and equipment required by each force package. In so doing they allow for the capability of each force package to be measured – via national then framework nation certification. By declaring the agreed standards have been met, Operation Commanders are able to send a clear signal to the political authorities that the force package is ready and capable of executing Battlegroup missions.

And while the 'BG Standards & Criteria' set a challenging goal there is a practical requirement for training that goes beyond these EU benchmarks. A Battlegroup is based around its infantry battalion core and the key ingredient in its operational effectiveness will be the underpinning strength of the core battalion. The force packages have to be much more than a gathering of several individual companies and cannot rely upon common procedures or processes alone. Collective training is therefore critical to bind both the battalion and its combat support and combat service support elements into a single, homogeneous force and such training should also be extended to key operational enablers. Again, the responsibility to take a lead in this area rests with the framework nation though all Battlegroup contributors are free to shape the force package's training, as long as it leads to successful certification in accordance with the 'BG Standards and Criteria'.

Multinationality can weaken the bonds of military cohesiveness and brings an additional burden for training, logistics, command culture and national rules and regulations – challenges that must be overcome if the EU is serious about the delivery of effective military capability. Joint interaction can help develop common understanding and also uncover issues such as national caveats and regulations for the use of specified equipment, which can then be taken into account in planning and during deployments. Additionally the OHQ and Force Headquarters (FHQ) have training needs that should not be overlooked, both in terms of staff skills and the culture challenges of a multi-faceted environment.

In 2010, the British-Dutch Battlegroup will draw on the strong, long-standing relationship between the Royal Netherlands Marines and the UK's Royal Marine Commandos. This pre-existing British-Netherlands Amphibious Force (UKNLAF) conducts training and operations as a single force under unified command and is Europe's oldest integrated military unit. UKNLAF has gained an enormous operational experience in both Iraq conflicts and in the Balkans. Similarly the Franco-German Battlegroup, on duty in 2008, benefits from close peacetime training affiliations and procedures.

But not all Battlegroups have the advantage of longstanding co-operation between the contributing nations to draw upon. At present, the Battlegroup concept does not demand joint training in all these areas and, given that a number of Battlegroups are engaging in it, the future inclusion of a collective training requirement might be a prudent minimum standard. And this, in a rather circular manner, brings the question of validation to the forefront. As previously indicated, measurement of Battlegroup training and capability success is provided through national and framework nation certification – validation that is therefore underwritten by national military judgement that in turn is the product of a national military culture. There is no suggestion that the EU should attempt to develop a monolithic military culture but it is true that national cultures can colour, and even distort judgement, creating the possibility of significant differences in capability from one Battlegroup to another.

Not only could shortcomings in any one Battlegroup pose major operational risks but they could also undermine the entire

Battlegroup initiative. Should a Battlegroup encounter problems in theatre, or should there be serious doubts about a Battlegroup's effectiveness, European nations could well become reluctant to commit troops and equipment to the force packages – particularly those governments with limited experience of expeditionary operations. Battlegroups are considered the minimum deployable force package and because of their limited size and firepower the potential exists for a Battlegroup to get into difficulties in theatre. It is critical, therefore, that all the Battlegroups are, and are seen to be, coherent and credible formations both for their own safety and to ensure ongoing political commitment to the initiative.

Unless each Battlegroup offers broadly similar capabilities, the force packages are unlikely to be able to execute equally challenging missions. This, in turn, leads to an unbalanced roster and reduces the flexibility, responsiveness and utility of the concept as a whole. The first stage in ensuring some consistency in the Battlegroup capability is for all EU governments to recognize and accept the Battlegroup tasks and the challenges they represent in terms of delivering military competence.

However, rather than follow this course, some governments have suggested that certain Battlegroups should be considered only for lower intensity Petersberg and European Security Strategy tasks, e.g. humanitarian aid and rescue missions. This is no solution to the capability challenge. Such proposals are unfair to those countries that have worked hard to provide Battlegroups capable of the full range of operations and solidarity must be a feature of the Battlegroup initiative if it is to retain support in the longer term.

Additionally, should a requirement arise at a given time and the Battlegroup on duty deemed not to be up to the task, the credibility of the EU will be brought into question. For reasons such as this, the Battlegroup concept documents are quite clear that each and every force package on the roster must be able to undertake the full range of tasks. If all EU governments endorse the full range of Battlegroup missions, training goals can be improved over time and the baseline for Battlegroup capability raised.

The most effective solution to the problem of achieving a balanced and consistent Battlegroup roster would be to develop a centralized certification process for the Battlegroups. The EU Military Committee, through the EU Military Staff, could perform this task and assume the responsibility for declaring each Battlegroup ready for operational duty. This would provide a level of confidence that all Battlegroup contributors are pulling their weight and that the EU will be able to respond properly in the event of an emergency. Indeed without such a process the measurement of whether a Battlegroup meets the 'BG Standards & Criteria' will remain a subjective one (drawing upon the military judgement of those responsible for the delivery of the product).

In the eyes of some governments, however, a centralized certification process might be a move too far at this stage. A first step in this direction would be to promote transparency between partners and Battlegroups. Differing military cultures mean that countries have varying levels of competence and capabilities across the military spectrum. No one nation has a monopoly on experience or good ideas and the exchange of information, sharing of skills

and promotion of best practice could be intensified. The provision of observers or participants to exercises, study periods and certification activities would be one of the ways in which such practices could be established.

But in the longer-term it might prove inevitable that the EU will have to think about centralized certification. As is the case with force generation, the EU's approach to Battlegroup validation is linked to its level of ambition. Validating a pre-identified force that has been preparing for a duty period is one thing, but certifying an *ad hoc* force that is following on from a Battlegroup deployment as the larger phase of an operation is quite another. And the ability to deliver such capabilities to foreign theatres is, of course, the EU's stated ambition. In this context EU governments must continue to develop deployable, sustainable, flexible and interoperable armed forces for a range of missions and the creation of the Battlegroups should reinforce, and not detract from, these efforts.

Larger, *ad hoc* formations are unlikely to have had the same opportunities for joint training that identified Battlegroups will have and consequently it is of paramount importance that these *ad hoc* force packages are properly validated prior to deployment. Without centralized certification it is difficult to see how the EU will ensure minimum standards are, and are seen to be met. Of course, a necessary pre-cursor for this is European governments' clear endorsement of EU missions in order that training goals can be both harmonized and improved over time. As previously indicated, this is something that should be taking place in the context of Battlegroup development

and, given this wider relevance, should be considered all-the-more important.

## Deployment

This section will not examine the technical aspects of deployment<sup>2</sup> but rather attempt to look forward to the politico-military process which would lead to a Battlegroup being deployed.

It is quite natural for a student of the Battlegroup issue sitting outside the EU politico-military (pol-mil) machinery to seek to examine it as a discrete military subject, analysing the criteria which should determine its selection as the appropriate tool, then its mission, duration, handover and extraction.

But the machinery in practice doesn't work like that. The EU's pol-mil 'moving parts' include, from bottom up: the Civilian and Military Staffs, the Joint Situation Centre, the Military Committee and the Political and Security Committee. They continuously analyze, assess and review developing situations around the world which bear on the EU's Security Strategy and its derived priorities. From these, they will identify situations which will (or may) require the application of the EU's appropriate External Relations tools, including those outside the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) arena, such as foreign trade and development assistance. Within the CFSP arena, the ESDP toolkit includes both civilian and military instruments. Indeed, of the seventeen or so missions that have been mounted in ESDP's first seven years, twelve have been largely non-military in flavour, ranging from judicial reform to police training.

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<sup>2</sup> For an analysis of these, see Gustav Lindstrom's 'Enter the EU Battlegroups' (ISS Chaillot Paper No 97, February 2007).

If the EU does assess, in relation to a particular developing situation, that some form of CFSP action is required, then it brings its comprehensive crisis-management procedures into play. These may be applied in whole or in part, dependent on the complexity of the situation and the timelines involved. But the essential first step has always, to date, been the production and approval by the EU pol-mil machine of an overall concept for the CFSP action which, as a minimum, sets out: what it is that the EU seeks to achieve strategically, in the longer term, in the relevant area or country; within this framework, what it will seek to achieve by this discrete CFSP action; what instruments it will wish to bring to bear in order to do so; how the desired end-state will be measured; a fixed duration; and the estimated costs. This approved overarching EU concept governing this proposed intervention is then the starting point for more detailed military planning if the use of a military ESDP instrument, such as a Battlegroup, is under consideration.

Thus, there would be no danger, within the EU system and its very tight political control over the use of its ESDP instruments, both civil and military, of a Battlegroup deployment being made without consideration of criteria, raised in discussion at the Battlegroups conference, such as:

- Is the EU making a positive contribution to solving current problems?
- Is the deployment true to the original quick-response concept - quickly in and quickly out?
- The Battlegroup should not be used to the exclusion of the EU's other tools and, in particular, should

not become the default military response;

- There should be a real contribution to burden sharing;
- Is a Battlegroup deployment the right response in the country the EU wants to send it to? This should be about making a difference to the wider world, not building Europe.

Indeed, there might well be an opposite danger that the criteria surrounding the deployment of an EU Battlegroup would be so constraining in practice that it may prove difficult to achieve a first-ever BG deployment.

There is indeed the presumption, again raised in the conference, that BG missions will be of short duration, either:

- As a preamble to a full-scale military or civil-military mission (essentially allowing the EU time for force generation);
- Or to allow time for the UN to generate a force to provide longer-term stabilization; the EU's second military operation, ARTEMIS in the Summer of 2003, fell into this category and indeed provided one template for the development of the BG Concept<sup>3</sup>.
- Or for a discrete, time-limited task such as providing stability in the run-up to elections, as with EUFOR RDC in Kinshasa in 2006, or for a mission to evacuate EU citizens.

If a deployment is anticipated to last longer than four months, all elements of the EU pol-mil machine, including the Member States, should have a clear understanding that any initial Battlegroup

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<sup>3</sup> See op cit (p10 et seq) for an account of ARTEMIS' influence on the BG Concept.

mission is only a first response whilst a longer-term solution is generated. The EU needs to know what it is going to do next and be confident that this longer-term solution is going to be in place before the Battlegroup is due to withdraw<sup>4</sup>.

### Future Capabilities

This section seeks to develop the theme, discussed during the Conference, that Battlegroups were not only be seen as addressing the Helsinki Headline Goal requirement 'to provide [within the Goal] smaller rapid response elements available and deployable at very high readiness' but also as a rung on the ladder of overall capability improvement within EU Member States.

NATO HQ, from Secretary-Generals downwards, have been engaged in encouraging, cajoling (and even occasional bullying) the NATO nations to improve their capability speedily to deploy effective expeditionary armed forces since at least the late 1980s. A resuscitated Western European Union tried to do the same for its European members and partners in the late 1990s, with the EU taking over the baton from 2000 onwards. NATO also redoubled its efforts at the turn of the millennium, creating its Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and bringing to fruition its rapid-reaction NATO Response Force (NRF). The EU in turn created its European Defence Agency (EDA) and brought to fruition its rapid-reaction Battlegroups. The EU-NATO Capability Group is one of several mechanisms that are designed to ensure transparency and coherence between EU

and NATO in the European capability development process.

How do all these initiatives play within an individual Member State and its 'one set of forces'? At Head of State or Government level, they are unlikely to lead to a decision to increase the slice of the national budget allocated to defence, except perhaps in certain specific circumstances, such as additional expenditure linked to a perceived new priority like 'homeland resilience'. At Defence Minister level, however, there may well be room, within his or her budget, to redefine priorities and re-allocate funds. This will tend to be at the margins in the short-to-medium term, since most defence expenditure is already likely to be committed to personnel and equipment programme costs. It is only in the long term that any major decisions on new personnel structures and new equipment programmes are likely to bear fruit.

So what part might the Battlegroups play in all of this? For the long term, they will undoubtedly reinforce the NATO initiatives and, within the EU, the Defence Agency's role in:

- Developing defence capabilities in the field of crisis management
- Promoting and enhancing European armaments co-operation
- Strengthening the European defence industrial and technological base
- and creating a competitive European defence equipment market.

Battlegroups could also in due course help to provide impetus to the provisions on

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<sup>4</sup> See op cit (p53 et seq) for an analysis of reserve force requirements.

‘structured co-operation’ in the EU’s draft Reform Treaty<sup>5</sup>.

In the short to medium-term, they could develop an influence, within the armed forces of Member States, through activities such as:

- Culture change
- Education and training
- Combined joint exercising
- Smarter information technology and communications (ITC).

Battlegroups should be a reinforcing driver for smarter ITC both at the EU and Member State levels. Within the EU Military Structures, the requirement to handle, speedily and securely, changing packets of data about the Member States armed forces, a requirement which already exists in the shape of the Headline Forces Catalogue, has become even more complex with the development and implementation of the Battlegroup concept. The absence of a single, permanent command and control structure from EU HQ, down through Operation and Force HQs, to a deployed BG should also be a powerful driver for smart ITC; so should the requirements posed by intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) feeds to enable the conduct of effects-based operations. Within Member States, there is likely to be a continuing trend to standardize and render fully compatible not only the compilation of such data but also the near real-time tracking of discrete aspects of capability, including the vital force multipliers such as key personnel, key communications and key logistics, as

they transit through the preparation, deployment, and recovery cycles.

Battlegroups should also be a driver for combined joint exercising (thereby enhancing the capability in due course to conduct combined joint operations) within the EU. From 2000 onwards, the EU’s top priority for combined (i.e. multinational) exercising has been its new pol-mil machinery, down to and including its Operation and Force HQs. This will need to continue. But for the first time in 2007, the EU also conducted a military exercise (MILEX 07), which involved a Battlegroup’s command and control chain. This was the Nordic BG, with Sweden as the framework nation, which is one of the BGs rostered for the first half of 2008. Significantly, MILEX 07 was due to be followed in late 2007 by a live Nordic BG exercise, organized by the framework nation in northern Sweden and including forces from the BG’s five troop-contributors (Sweden, Finland, Norway<sup>6</sup>, Estonia and Ireland). This pattern of pre-roster multinational exercising could well be developed over time. Combined joint (i.e. multi-service as well as multinational) exercising can be more challenging to schedule: the relatively small numbers of high-value maritime and air platforms tend to be in short supply for such exercises (they are often heavily committed operationally); and their running costs tend to be high. This is perhaps more of a challenge for the larger NATO Response Force, which is designed as a truly ‘joint’ force with integral maritime and air components, than for the smaller EU Battlegroups, where maritime and air capabilities are seen as *‘à la carte’* supporting strategic enablers. But work on developing rapid-response

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing, these are in draft Protocol No4, pursuant to draft Articles 27(6) and 31 (See CIG 2/1/07 REV 1).

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<sup>6</sup> The EU Battlegroups are open to contributions from non- Member States.

maritime and air assets is currently ongoing in the EU and the 'joint' exercising issue will undoubtedly return to the fore downstream.

The education and training of EU Member States' armed forces in the field of rapid-response deployability should also be reinforced by the Battlegroup initiative. Under the education heading, four courses on ESDP are on offer for the academic year 2007-2008 by the European Security and Defence College, a 'virtual' EU college for which colleges in EU States host modules<sup>7</sup>. Another 75 national courses are on offer outside the ESDC framework. Under the training heading, some 16 of the 27 Member States now offer access to training facilities listed in an annually revised catalogue published by the EU<sup>8</sup>. For example, the UK, under the maritime heading, is offering access to all courses run under the Royal Navy's International Defence Training scheme.

The cumulative effect of all these initiatives should foster a developing strategic culture in Europe favouring early, rapid and where necessary robust intervention. NATO should also continue to play a vital role in this 'transformation' field:

First and foremost, in largely unsung 'nuts and bolts' areas, not widely known outside Alliance *cognoscenti*, such as operational and tactical-level command, control and communications; doctrine and procedures; interoperability and standardization. These are areas where the EU has so far taken the deliberate

decision not to attempt any unnecessary duplication, because NATO has done it so well.

And secondly, through projects like Allied Command Transformation and the NATO Response Force, not only in the transformation of European armed forces into being truly rapidly deployable on combined joint operations but also in continuing to foster some interoperability between European and US forces.

### Conclusion & Summary of Recommendations

The Battlegroup concept is the cornerstone of the EU's current action plan to improve European military capabilities.

Under current arrangements, Battlegroup generation is expected to be a relatively straightforward task. However, if a Battlegroup's deployment is to be succeeded by larger follow-on EU forces or be extended beyond its initial mandated time-line, then the EU might well need to think about a common, more responsive and more flexible approach to BG force generation. A more detailed EU-wide database of available forces than that provided by the current Forces Catalogue might be needed; this would also assist some 'tailoring to mission', as initially envisaged in the developing BG concept.

Turning to validation, the acid test of whether, in the Battlegroups, the EU has developed a useable military capability will be determined by the ability of the force packages (and the willingness of their political masters to allow them) to fight, to take and to lose lives. Countries contributing to a Battlegroup are currently responsible for certifying their commitments and it is the responsibility

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<sup>7</sup> See

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/INTERNET2007-2008.pdf> for details.

<sup>8</sup> See

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?id=1223&lang=en](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=1223&lang=en) for details.

of the framework nation to certify the force package as a whole. To guide this process, the EU has developed a 'BG Standards & Criteria' checklist that provides benchmarks in nine areas. But there is a practical requirement for combined (i.e. multinational) training that goes beyond these EU benchmarks; a battalion and its combat support and combat service support elements need to be bound into a single, homogeneous force. Unless each Battlegroup offers broadly similar capabilities, the force packages are unlikely to be able to execute equally challenging missions. The most effective solution to the problem of achieving a balanced and consistent Battlegroup roster would be to develop a centralized certification process; the EU Military Committee, through the EU Military Staff, could perform this task and assume the responsibility for declaring each Battlegroup ready for operational duty. This might be resisted politically by some Member States but a first step in this direction could be to promote more transparency between partners and Battlegroups.

Focussing on deployment, the essential first step has always, to date, been the production and approval by the EU pol-mil machine of an overall concept for a particular CFSP action which, as a minimum, sets out: what it is that the EU seeks to achieve strategically in the longer term in the relevant area or country; within this framework, what it will seek to achieve by this discrete CFSP action; what instruments it will wish to bring to bear in order to do so; how the desired end-state will be measured; a fixed duration; and the estimated costs. Thus, there should be no danger, within the EU system and its very tight political control over the use of its ESDP instruments, both civil and military, of a Battlegroup

deployment being made without consideration of criteria, raised in discussion at the Battlegroups conference, such as: is a Battlegroup deployment the right response in the country the EU wants to send it to - this should be about making a difference to the wider world, not building Europe. If a deployment is anticipated to last for longer than four months, all elements of the EU pol-mil machine, including the Member States, should have a clear understanding that any initial Battlegroup mission is only a first response whilst a longer-term solution is generated. The EU needs to know what it is going to do next and be confident that this longer-term solution is going to be in place before the Battlegroup is due to withdraw.

Turning to the theme, discussed during the Conference, that Battlegroups were also to be seen as a rung on the ladder of overall capability improvement within EU Member States, at Head of State or Government level, the BG concept was unlikely to lead to a decision to increase the slice of a national budget allocated to defence. At Defence Minister level, however, there may well be room, within his or her budget, to redefine priorities and re-allocate funds. For the long term, Battlegroups will undoubtedly reinforce the various NATO initiatives and, within the EU, the Defence Agency's tasks. They could also in due course help to provide impetus to the provisions on 'structured co-operation' in the EU's draft Reform Treaty. In the short to medium-term though, they could well develop an influence, within the armed forces of Member States, through activities such as: culture change; education and training; combined joint exercising; and smarter information technology and communications (ITC). In the ITC field, there is likely to be a continuing trend to

standardize and render fully compatible not only the compilation of data about offered forces but also the near real-time tracking of discrete aspects of capability, including the vital force multipliers such as key personnel, key communications and key logistics, as they transit through the preparation, deployment, and recovery cycles. Battlegroups should also be a driver for combined joint exercising within the EU. The pattern of pre-roster multinational exercising established in 2007 by the Swedes, as framework nation, for their five-nation BG, could well be

developed as a template over time. Work on developing rapid-response maritime and air assets is currently ongoing in the EU and the 'joint' exercising issue will undoubtedly return to the fore downstream. The education and training of EU Member States' armed forces in the field of rapid-response deployability should also be reinforced by the Battlegroup initiative. The cumulative effect of all these initiatives should foster a developing strategic culture in Europe favouring early, rapid and where necessary robust intervention.



## About RUSI

RUSI was founded in 1831, the oldest such institute in the world, at the initiative of the Duke of Wellington. Its original mission was to study naval and military science, what Clausewitz called 'the art of war'.

It still does so: developments in military doctrine, defence management and defence procurement remain central elements in the Institute's work. But in recent years RUSI has broadened its remit to include all issues of defence and security, including terrorism and the ideologies which foster it, and the challenges which we face from other man-made or man-assisted threats and natural disasters.

RUSI is a British institution, but operates with an international perspective. It has amassed over the years an unequalled expertise in its field and an outstanding reputation for quality and objectivity. RUSI's heritage and reputation, its location close to the Ministry of Defence and other ministries in Whitehall and its range of contacts with key opinion formers both inside and outside government, gives unique insight and authority.

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The Corporate Level Membership packages have been designed both for organisations in the public sector, such as government departments, embassies and high commissions and universities; as well as for private sector companies which trade in the defence and security markets and whose business interests are affected by developments in the international security field.

In partnership with the EU Military Staff, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Manpower Software, RUSI held a conference in June 2007 called 'Launching EU Battlegroups'. The event provided an opportunity to assess the EU's progress to-date in the development of the Battlegroups and the effect that these force packages will have on the Union's crisis management capabilities, as well as future challenges and priorities.

This European Security Programme Study is the final report supporting the findings of the conference.

The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) is the leading professional forum in the United Kingdom for those concerned with national and international defence and security.

