



NATO
+
OTAN

NATO
Response Force



briefing

SEPTEMBER 2006

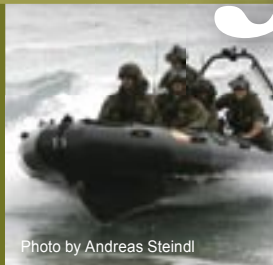
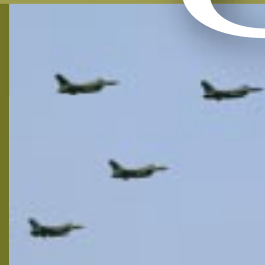


Photo by Andreas Steindl

Extended
reach



Expeditionary
capability

Ready to react rapidly to crises worldwide

“The NRF is the most important tool to show how NATO has transformed and is transforming”

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

NATO has created a permanently available, multinational joint force at very high readiness – the NATO Response Force – consisting of land, air and sea components, as well as performing various specialist functions. With around 25 000 troops, the NATO Response Force (NRF) is able to start to deploy after a political decision to do so and sustain itself for operations during 30 days and more if re-supplied. With this force, the Alliance has given itself the means to respond rapidly to various types of crises across the globe, as decided by the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s principal decision-making body. Election support in Afghanistan and humanitarian relief in Pakistan are among the missions that have already been conducted by elements of the NATO Response Force.



The NATO Response Force, which is expected to reach full operational capability by end 2006, is a key element of the transformation of NATO's force structure. It also complements two other major initiatives agreed by Heads of State and Government at the Alliance's Prague Summit in November

2002: the streamlining of the military command structure and the improvement in the military capabilities of member countries.

This package of measures aims to gear the Alliance to respond to prevailing threats, ranging from ethnic tensions to

terrorism and the use of weapons of mass destruction. As General James Jones, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) has stated, the NATO Response Force is "... an important recognition on the part of the Alliance that the international security environment has changed dramatically". It is the way ahead and puts the spirit of the Prague Summit into practical application.

Extended reach

In the past, NATO relied too much on large numbers of troops that had little deployability, mobility and out of area sustainability. In the words of General James Jones, speaking on the NATO Response Force: "... NATO will no longer have the large, massed units that were necessary for the Cold War, but



©SHAPE

“The NRF will be, and indeed it is already, a highly ready and technologically advanced force that the Alliance can deploy quickly wherever it is needed”

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

will have agile and capable forces at graduated readiness levels that will better prepare the Alliance to meet any threat that it is likely to face in this 21st century”.

Indeed, the process leading up to the NRF full operational capability dates back to NATO’s reaction to the violent terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001. Only eight months after 9/11, NATO made a far-reaching declaration during the meeting of foreign ministers in Reykjavik that would usher in the beginning of a new era for the Alliance. It would conduct operations when and where necessary, as decided by the North Atlantic Council, to fight terrorism.

In September 2002, the US Secretary for Defense Donald Rumsfeld put forward a proposal to create a rapid reaction force. The launch of the NATO Response Force initiative was announced at the Prague Summit in November 2002, together with the

other major military transformation initiatives – the revision of the NATO military command structure and the Prague Capabilities Commitment – and its concept was approved by defence ministers in Brussels in June 2003. Initial operational capability was declared for the NATO Response Force in October 2004, during an informal meeting of defence ministers in Romania.

Learning by doing

Prototype rotations of the NATO Response Force have been activated and used to test the concept and fine-tune the practices of the force. Exercise Steadfast Jaguar 2006, held in the Cape Verde islands from 15 to 28 June 2006, represented the first major test of the NATO Response Force. Conducted by NRF 7 as part of its training, the exercise proved NATO’s ability to

project a joint force at a strategic distance from Europe and maintain it in an austere environment. As part of the exercise scenario, elements of the NATO Response Force helped evacuate residents of the Cape Verdean island of Fogo as its volcano threatened to erupt, and were engaged in a demonstration including attacks against mock terrorist camps, a helicopter assault by special forces and bombardments of enemy positions. “You see here the new NATO, a NATO which has the possibility to be expeditionary, to project stability”, said NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer after witnessing this demonstration at Flamingo Bay on the Cape Verdean island of São Vicente.

Prior to exercise Steadfast Jaguar 2006, the NRF prototypes were trained ►

Range of missions

The NATO Response Force, which is driven by the underlying principle: “first force in, first force out”, has different missions which are determined on a case-by-case basis by the North Atlantic Council, without any preset geographical limit:

- deploy as a stand-alone force for Article 5 (collective defence) or non-Article 5 crisis response operations such as evacuation operations; support disaster consequence

management (including chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear events); humanitarian crisis situations and counter-terrorism operations;

- deploy as an initial entry force facilitating the arrival of larger follow-on forces;
- deploy as a demonstrative force to show NATO’s determination and solidarity to deter crises (quick response operations to support diplomacy as required). ■

NATO Response Force rotations

The initial rotations up to NRF 6 were viewed as prototypes. NRF rotations to date filled the “on-call” periods outlined below.

- NRF 1: 15 October – end 2003 (Joint Force Command, Brunssum, the Netherlands)
- NRF 2: January – mid-July 2004 (Brunssum)
- NRF 3: 15 July – end 2004 (Joint Force Command, Naples, Italy)
- NRF 4: January – mid-July 2005 (Naples)
- NRF 5: 15 July – end 2005 (Joint Headquarters Lisbon, Portugal)
- NRF 6: January – July 2006 (Lisbon)
- NRF 7: mid – end 2006 (Joint Force Command, Brunssum)
- NRF 8: January – mid-July 2007 (Brunssum)

The command of rotations is shared between these three headquarters (Joint Force Command, Brunssum, the Netherlands; Joint Force Command, Naples, Italy; and Joint Headquarters, Lisbon, Portugal), under the overall command of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. ■



through exercises such as Allied Response 2003, organised at Doğanbey, Turkey, in November 2003, and Allied Action 2004 in Italy in May 2004. Doctrine, organisation, training, certification procedures, and command and control functions were among the features that were assessed during the initial trial period. Allied Action 2005, conducted in the Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger, Norway, and Allied Warrior 2005 were carried out as certification exercises for the entire NRF 5 and the NRF 6 Land Component Command respectively.

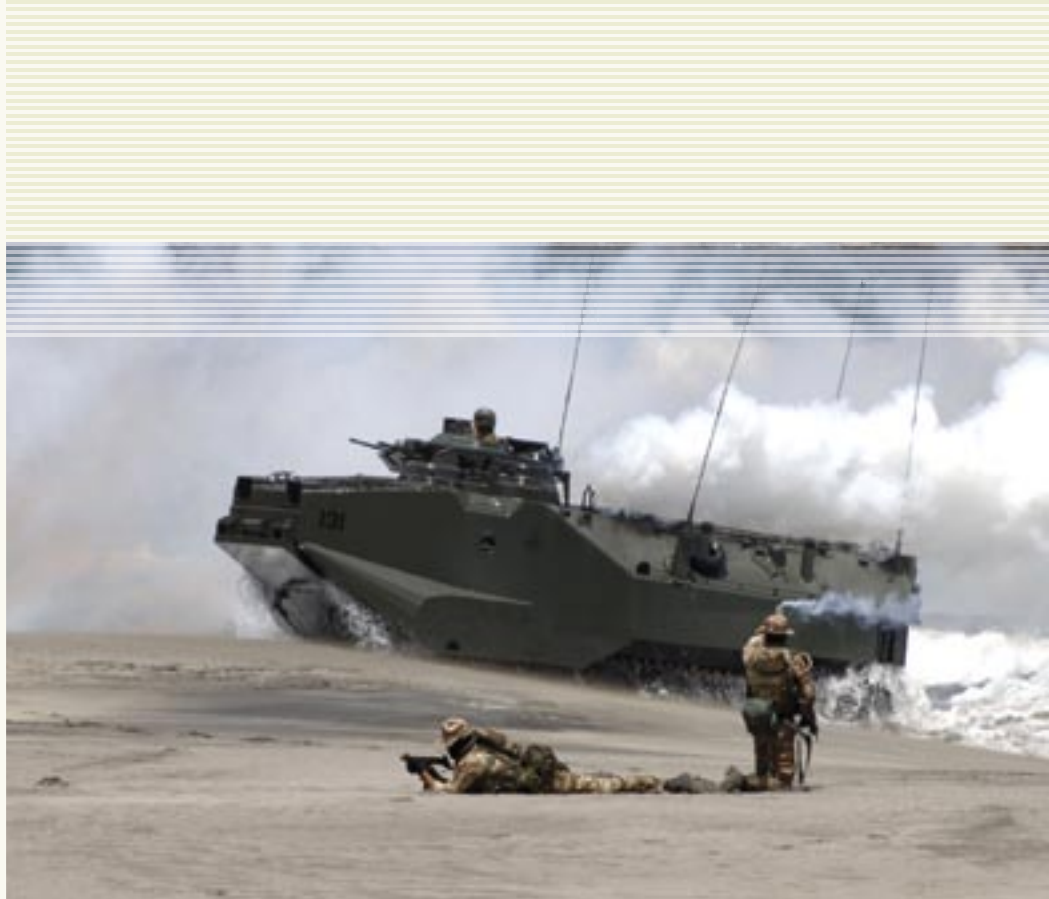
Standards and procedures for certification of the NATO Response Force have been developed, some of them following ground-breaking guidance on transformational elements such as multinationality, sustainability and deployability. They develop criteria for the certification, long-term sustainment, and improvement of the overall quality, capabilities and readiness of the NATO Response Force. As the different forces rotating through the

“The symmetry gained from the cohesion of the sea, land and air resources allows forces to operate at greater distances, more efficiently and more successfully than operating in isolation or parallel situations”

General James Jones

NRF must meet these high standards, the transformational process will increasingly spread throughout Allied forces.

The principle of rotation applies to the NATO Response Force. After preparation at a national level, a six-month training programme starts after which the force is certified to the highest standards. It is then put “on call” for six months. One rotation therefore consists of a training period and an “on-call” period. The units that constitute this joint force are either land, air or naval forces, or have some special function, such as the Multinational Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence Battalion, an initiative that was also launched at Prague. These force components are then replaced by a fresh set of units that will constitute a new rotation. They follow a similar training programme and are put “on call” for the same period of time before being replaced by other forces once they have completed the training cycle.



All NATO member countries fully support this rotational system which brings major benefits for the troops involved, for instance special training experience and integration in a force that has the highest standards of readiness. For the NATO Response Force, the focus is more on quality than it is on quantity.

The precise capability requirements for the NATO Response Force have been confirmed during the first rotations.

They are identified in the so-called Full Operational Capability Combined Joint Statement of Requirements. Specific national forces are identified and committed to the NATO Response Force through periodic force generation conferences. Also, force planning will be key to the success of the NRF by ensuring that the capabilities it requires are developed and available in the medium to longer term. In parallel, the necessary strategic lift to move the forces as well as deployable communications and support systems are being identified and planned for.



NATO Response Force in action

Elements of the NATO Response Force have been used to provide humanitarian relief and protection on special occasions:

- Units of the NRF were deployed to protect the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens;
- Units assigned to the NRF supported the Afghan presidential election in September 2004;
- Aircraft from the NRF delivered relief supplies donated by NATO and Partner countries to the victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the United States, in September-October 2005;
- Following the devastating earthquake of 8 October 2005, aircraft from the NRF were used in an air bridge that delivered almost 3500 tons of emergency supplies to Pakistan. Engineers and medical personnel from the NRF were deployed to Pakistan to assist in the relief effort.



NATO will no doubt continue to make use of the NATO Response Force, or of some of its elements, “when and where necessary”, as collectively decided by the Allies. “...If the Asian tsunami had happened closer to the NATO area, I have little doubt we would have deployed the NRF. If you look at the mandate of the NRF, it is quite a far-reaching mandate”, said Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

Expeditionary capability

The NATO Response Force consists of a brigade-size land component with forced entry capability, a naval task force composed of one carrier battle group, an amphibious task group and a surface action group, and an air component capable of 200 combat sorties a day. In the words of General James Jones: “The symmetry gained from the cohesion of the sea, land and air resources allows forces to operate at greater distances, more efficiently and more successfully than operating in isolation or parallel situations”. Special forces constitute an additional component of the force that can be called upon when necessary. Once nations commit forces to an NRF rotation, they would only be withdrawn under exceptional circumstances.

Contributions of around 25 000 troops that make up the NRF are drawn from combat-ready, interoperable units contributed by NATO member countries. This does not exclude the support of



Partner countries, to be decided by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis for a specific operation, as is the case for most NATO-led operations.

National combat support and combat service support “niche” capabilities are integral parts of the NATO Response Force. These include special forces, nuclear, biological and chemical defence and medical units, as well as supporting air and naval units, logistics, communications, intelligence and whatever else is required to make it a credible and capable fighting force.

Two principal aims: high combat-readiness and capability transformation

The NATO Response Force is not only the spearhead of NATO's military capability, but also of NATO's transformation efforts with regard to military capabilities, acting as a medium for longer-term capability development. As NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer declared, “the NRF is the most important tool to show how NATO has transformed and is transforming”.



It operates under the command and control of a Joint Force Headquarters of which the permanent staff cadre, called the “Deployable Joint Task Force Headquarters”, comes from the Joint Force Commands in Brunssum and Naples and the Joint Headquarters in Lisbon. These also provide the nuclei for the Combined Joint Task Forces (CJTF) Headquarters¹.

These two distinct purposes reinforce each other and are in line with the division of responsibility between NATO’s two strategic commands. On the one hand, SACEUR, who is responsible for operations, holds strategic military command over the NATO Response Force. This includes standards, certification, as well as exercises. On the other hand, the Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation (SACT) is responsible within the military structure for developing and planning future capabilities, applying emerging technologies and adapting military doctrine and training, including for the NATO Response Force. Both strategic commands work closely together.

Tailored force

The NATO Response Force’s flexibility gives it its unique character, enabling it to be tailored to a specific operation. It can be smaller than envisaged during the six-month training period and the following “on-call” period, the same size, or even larger. Whatever the case, it remains the NATO Response Force.

The Land and Maritime High Readiness Force Headquarters, that have been introduced as part of other NATO force structure innovations, play a role in setting up the NRF land/maritime component commands. ■

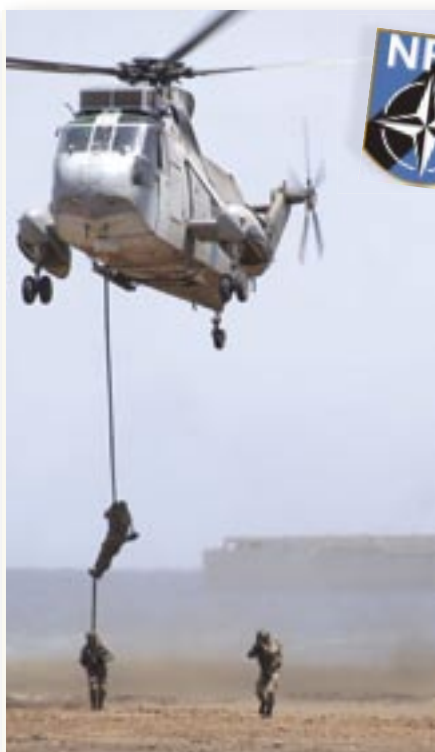
¹ A Combined Joint Task Force is a deployable, multinational, multi-service force with a land component of up to Corps-size and with comparable air and naval components, activated on order to conduct specific NATO Article 5 (collective defence) or non-Article 5 crisis response operations.

“... an important recognition on the part of the Alliance that the international security environment has changed dramatically”

General James Jones

For more information, please see:
www.nato.int/issues/nrf





Mutual reinforcement of the NRF and an EU rapid reaction capability

NATO and the EU have been working together to ensure that the NATO Response Force and the EU Battle-groups be mutually reinforcing and complement each other, while respecting the autonomy of both organisations. Although they are different concepts with different missions, cooperation on their development is desirable, considering that countries rely on a single set of forces, available to NATO, to the EU or for national purposes. For instance, consistent with the Berlin-Plus arrangements, NATO might make the NATO Response Force or significant

elements of it available to the EU as a trained and coherent tailored package, if requested. It is therefore important that they use similar standards and procedures to avoid duplication of efforts. Another area of possible future cooperation could be training both the NATO Response Force and EU Battle-groups together in coordinated exercises. ■

Authorisation to deploy and transfer of authority

Political authorisation is given on a case-by-case basis and is obviously the result of a consensual decision, as is the case for all NATO decisions. However, in addition to obtaining agreement between members, each individual country must be able to deploy its troops rapidly. In some countries, parliamentary approval is needed for the deployment of troops abroad, in particular, in cases where the country is not in a state of war or emergency. That is one of the reasons why Allies have taken steps on ways of enhancing the effectiveness and speed of the organisation's decision-

making process, taking into account the pressure of short-notice events.

Regarding the transfer of authority, with the established procedures, it occurs when national forces are in theatre. In the case of the NATO Response Force, which is not a standing force but a force package held at very high readiness, the transfer of authority to SACEUR has to take place once the political decision has been taken for the NATO Response Force to prepare for deployment for a specific operation. ■



Photo by Andreas Steindl