

BOJOVÉ SKUPINY EURÓPSKEJ ÚNIE – NÁSTROJ RÝCHLEJ VOJENSKEJ REAKCIE EURÓPSKEJ ÚNIE

EU BATTLEGROUPS – THE TOOL OF EU RAPID MILITARY RESPONSE

František GUBÁŠ¹

SUMMARY:

The author deals with the Battlegroups of the European Union as one of key tools of the European Union rapid military response. The key points from the Concept of the European Union Battlegroups are analysed as a mean for encouraging continued improvements in deployable European military capabilities. This process helps widening the scope for burden sharing between European countries. EU BG roster for the following years and possible scenarios and methods for their deployment are described.

KEYWORDS: *the European Union, battlegroup, rapid military response.*

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) as one of the most important organizations of international crisis management in contribution to sustainability of international peace and international security has the ambition to act as security provider on its own territory, in neighbourhood, but also worldwide. Experiences from the past highlight the fact that fulfilment of this ambition is possible only with wide range of civilian and military capabilities prepared for this purpose.

The EU play important role as provider of civilian capabilities and executes civilian missions as a part of civilian crisis management deployed on several places of the world: Kosovo, Ukraine, Georgia, Palestinian Territories, Afghanistan, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Somalia, Seychelles, Tanzania and Yemen.

The EU has also ambition to develop military aspect within international crisis management with stress on military rapid response. Under these circumstances was developed concept of highly capable and interoperable forces, available at very short notice for operations of Common Security and Defence Policy, called EU Battlegroups (EU BG). EU BGs continue to be the flagship tool of military rapid response

[1] despite the fact, that in their eight years history, they have never been deployed.

1. THE CONCEPT OF A EU BATTLEGROUP

The BG is a specific form of Rapid Response Elements of the European Union. It constitutes one possible answer to the timely provision of the necessary capabilities for EU-led crisis management operations requiring a Rapid Response [3].

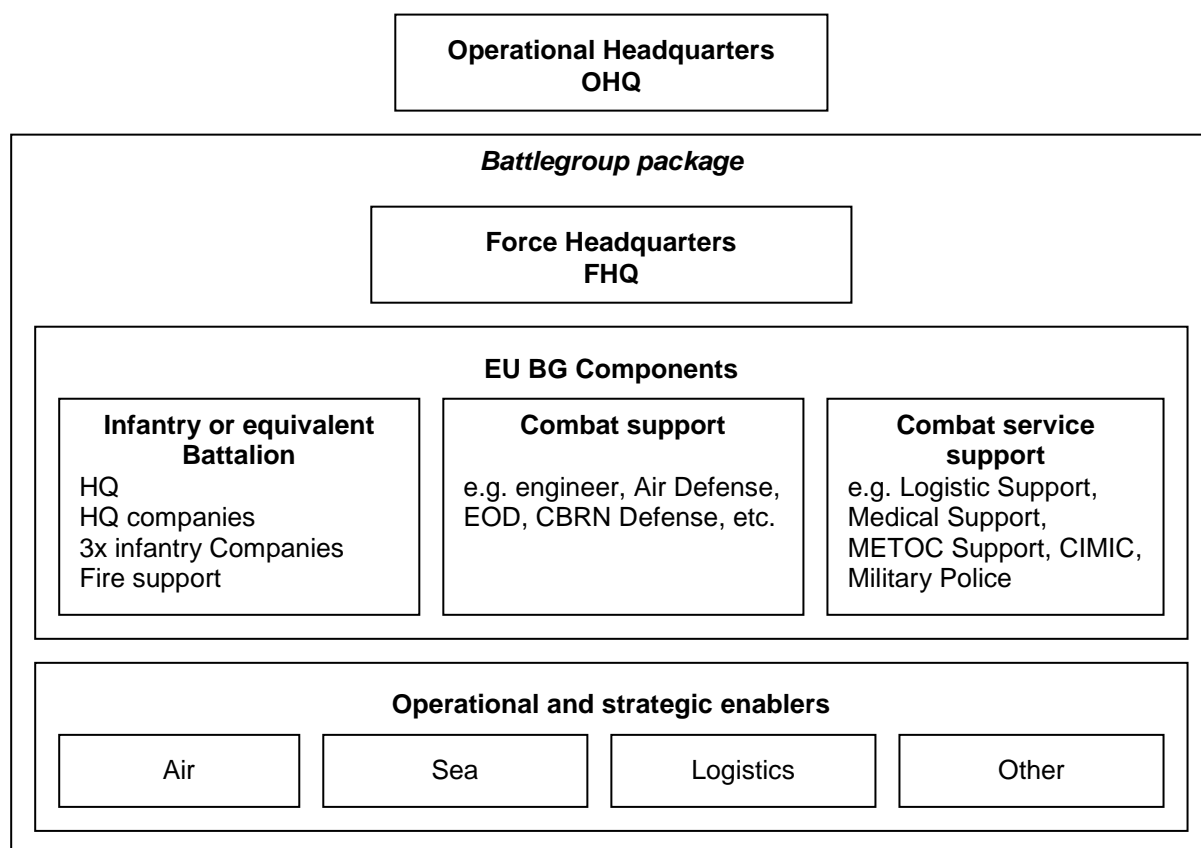
BGs are composed of generally accepted minimum force elements necessary to meet the requirements that are to be military effective, credible, coherent and capable of stand alone operations. [4] BGs are based on a combined arms, battalion sized force reinforced with Combat Support (CS) and Combat Service Support (CSS) elements. [3] The CS and CSS are relatively heavy compared to 3 Infantry or equivalent Companies. This is a logic consequence of the nature of stability operations to which BGs can be deployed and therefore require relatively more CS and CSS capacity. The heart of any EU BG will be the combat element which is most likely to be based on infantry battalion. It should have the ability to maneuver tactically in the area of operations, and some form of

¹ František Gubáš, Ing., externý doktorand, Katedra obrany a bezpečnosti, Akadémia ozbrojených síl gen. M.R. Štefánika
e-mail: fgubas@zoznam.sk

protected mobility may be required, including if necessary, mechanized vehicles [4].

A standard composition of an EU BG includes approximately 1,500 troops and includes FHQ, infantry or equivalent battalion, units of CS and CSS. However it is up to contributing countries

to decide on the exact composition of their EU BG – both in term of personnel and equipment. Since there is no fixed BG structure, participating countries have much flexibility regarding creating specific BG. EU BG package is depicted in the figure 1.



Source: author.

Figure 1. **Generic composition of EU BG Package**

BGs are held predominantly, but not exclusively to be used in response to a request from the UN to undertake rapid intervention. This might include acting to prevent atrocities in a hostile environment or helping with the provision of urgent humanitarian aid [4]. BGs are particularly applicable in failing or failed states.

The ambition set out in Headline Goal 2010 is that EU should be able to take the decision to launch an operation within 5 days of the approval of a Crisis Management Concept (CMC) and that forces start implementing their mission on the ground no later than 10 days after that decision. This requires that BGs are to be built on assets and capabilities held at readiness of 5 to 10 days [3].

In January 2005 Initial Operational Capability (IOC) on the EU BG was declared [4]. During this period lasting until December 2006, a minimum of one EU BG was on standby by a period of six months before it was replaced. In the first half of 2005, the United Kingdom and France each contributed a BG while Italy made a BG available for the second half of 2005 [7].

Full Operational Capability (FOC) was declared in 2007, with the European Union being able to undertake two concurrent single BG-size rapid response operations. [4] Since January 2007 two BGs for each 6 months period have been trained and held on standby for possible EU operations. EU BG Roster is stated in the table no. 1.

Table 1

EU BG Roster

Source: EUMC Report to PSC on the Outcome of BGCC 2-14.

2015	1 st half of 2015		2 nd half of 2015	
POC	Sweeden	vacant	France	vacant
Other counties	Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway		Belgium	
2016	1 st half of 2016		2 nd half of 2016	
POC	Poland	Greece	United Kingdom	Germany
Other counties	Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania, Ukraine	Latvia, Lithuania	Austria, Czech Republic, Ireland, Hungary, Croatia, Luxembourg, Netherlands
2017	1 st half of 2017		2 nd half of 2017	
POC	Italy	France	Spain	vacant
Other counties	Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia	Belgium	Portugal	
2018	1 st half of 2018		2 nd half of 2018	
POC	Greece	BENELUX	vacant	BENELUX
Other counties	Belgium, Cyprus, Romania	Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg		Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg

The BGs concept is based on the principle of multinationality [3]. An EU BG can be formed by a single EU Member state or by a framework nation with the support of other contributing countries [7]. The Framework nation is responsible for ensuring that the EU BG is ready to undertake its commitment. When the BG is constituted from a number of different states the aspect of force generation and force preparation cannot be underestimated. Of particular significance are the roles of both the Force Headquarters (FHQ) and the Operational Headquarters (OHQ) [4]. Since 2005, EU BG has never been formed by only one country.

Member states can form BG with the non-European NATO country and/or other countries which are candidates for accession to the EU in their BGs. For example Nordic Battlegroup, includes contributions from Norway, a non-European Union NATO country [7].

2. POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR DEPLOYMENT OF THE EU BG

The EU BG is expected to be capable to respond with rapid and decisive action in support of tasks listed in Article 43 (1) of the

Treaty of the European Union as well as those identified in European Union Security Strategy and in the Treaty of European Union (often referred as 'Petersberg tasks').

Additional guidance on the type of potential EU BG missions might be derived from the five illustrative scenarios used for 2005 Requirements Catalogue, and they are as follows:

- Conflict Prevention,
- Separation of Parties by Force,
- Stabilization, Reconstruction,
- Non-Combatant operations and
- Humanitarian Assistance [7].

Tasks that are normally carried out by Host Nation (HN) security forces may have to be undertaken by an EU BG if HN's forces are incapable of carrying these tasks and in accordance with the mandate. This should be done in support of HN authority and handed back to the HN as soon as possible [4].

The employment of the BGs on these operations will most likely be in one of three methods:

1. **Autonomous Activities** – an EU BG must have ability to operate autonomously when the security situation allows. Even though

it will be capable of undertaking combat operations its size will limit its effectiveness in non-permissive environment. However, when the situation is largely benign an EU BG should have the capability to operate for at least 30 days without having to rely on external support and up to the 120 days with access to reliable logistic support.

2. **Early Entry Force** – an EU BG can fulfil tasks as a force capable of responding quickly to an emerging crisis and is designed and equipped to prevent the development of the crisis or if that fails contain the crisis and create conditions for the deployment of follow-on or re-enforcement forces.

Bridging Force – in some circumstances an EU BG may be used to reinforce troops already on the ground on an on-going EU/UN Mission. This should be for a limited period and for specific tasks that would give the EU or the UN time to prepare and deploy other forces that would take over these tasks on an enduring basis. Bridging activities are most likely when an existing operation is expanding or changing [4].

2.1. CONFLICT PREVENTION

In Conflict Prevention an EU BG may be employed to take timely action to prevent the occurrence, escalation or resumption of conflict. This is likely to be as a show of the UN and EU's intention to engage in the area rather than as a force capable of tackling the root cause of the tension. If the violence in the area of operation is wide spread it is unlikely that a force of this size will have a significant effect; therefore the rapid deployment to the region before violence is established is likely to have the greatest chance of achieving the desired effects. Possible missions of an EU BG in Conflict Prevention are:

- early deployment of forces to prevent build-up or armed factions,
- key point defence,
- disarmament,
- monitoring and intelligence gathering,
- show of force,
- support to elections,
- support to local authorities,
- military or civilian training and assistance,
- crowd and riot control.

2.2. SEPARATION OF PARTIES BY FORCE

In the early stages of a localized conflict an EU BG could impose itself between two or more

adversaries who are engaged in a limited encounter. This would have to be quickly supported by diplomatic and economic activities. Again, the limited size of the BGs will only make it viable when warring parties are not well armed or not in such number that the BGs could soon become overrun. Possible mission of an EU BG in Separation of Parties by Force are:

- forces separation of hostile formations,
- surveillance and security tasks,
- establishment of limited protected zones,
- key point defence,
- securing lines of communications,
- crowd and riot control.

2.3. STABILITY, RECONSTRUCTION AND MILITARY ADVICE

An EU BG is not suited to the more enduring stabilization, reconstruction and military advice scenarios. However, in the event of a deterioration of such situations BG involvement within the terms of the other illustrative scenarios is conceivable. Possible missions in Stability, Reconstruction and Military Advice are:

- security of key points and infrastructure:
- secure airports of debarkation or seaports of debarkation for other agencies,
- convoy escort,
- distribution of humanitarian aid,
- limited disarmament of military or civilians,
- crowd and riot control,
- assist Security Forces (advising, mentoring, partnering or training),
- advice and support local security forces,
- assistance and support to International Humanitarian Organizations.

2.4. NON COMBATANT EVACUATION OPERATIONS

An EU BG has the capacity to undertake Non Combatant Evacuation Operations in both permissive and non-permissive environments. However, the ground troops would need considerable support from both air/aviation and naval forces to provide mobility for the military force as well as transport for the evacuation of civilian. Possible mission in Non Combatant Evacuation Operations are:

- security of key individuals,
- security of group of non-military,
- point defence,
- facility protection,
- security of key routes,
- protection of personnel redeployment, e. g. evacuation of an observer mission (UN,

- EU, OSCE or other) IO, GO or NGO and/or material,
- evacuation of EU nationals or citizens of other states,
- crowd and riot control,
- secure airports of debarkation or seaports debarkation,
- convoy escorts.

2.5. ASSISTANCE TO HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS

Acting as a force for good an EU BG can provide security as well as participating in the delivery of humanitarian aid and specialist engineering support. This is likely to be as a part of a coordinated operation to assist in areas of humanitarian crisis or natural disaster. As with stability tasks, it is key that the BGs can co-ordinate their activity with civilian agencies operating in the same environment. Possible missions in Assistance to Humanitarian Operations are:

- preliminary operations to secure or monitor seaport and/or airports as a prerequisite for the delivery of relief supplies,
- protection of transport and distribution of relief supplies, refugee movements and refugee camps,

- protection of other important objects/facilities as e. g. food stores, water points, etc.,
- crowd and riot control [4].

CONCLUSION

Two key attributes make the EU BGs stand out. First, they are expected to carry out a wide range of missions requiring a rapid response. These may range from elements contained in the Petersburg Tasks through those listed in European Union Security Strategy to those mentioned in the Treaty of the European Union. Second, an EU BG requires quick decision-making to ensure rapid response.

The BG Concept is one of the most important concepts developing military capabilities within the European Union and significantly contributes to the European Union's ability to respond rapidly to crisis. Various EU BGs that were at stand-by phase from the IOC contributed to interoperability improvements among military units of the European Union member countries.

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