POLICY PAPER

BOOSTING THE DETERRENT EFFECT OF ALLIED ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

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INTRODUCTION

At the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, NATO allies decided to establish an enhanced forward presence (eFP) on the territory of the Baltic states and Poland “to unambiguously demonstrate, as part of our overall posture, Allies’ solidarity, determination, and ability to act by triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression”. The implementation of this historic decision has now resulted in the first-ever stationing of combat-ready troops from other Allied nations in the Baltic region.

The enhanced forward presence is an integral part of NATO’s deterrence and defence posture on the eastern flank. It signals that NATO stands as one, and that an attack on any single Ally will be considered an attack against all. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has stated:

During peacetime, the multinational forces in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland will train with national defence forces in those countries to enhance interoperability and improve their ability to operate locally. In case of aggression, these forces will respond in accordance with the right to self-defence, in coordination with the national forces of the host nation.

For these purposes, the eFP battlegroups are to be embedded into the respective host nation’s brigades.

While the eFP deployment is colloquially referenced using Cold War terminology, such as “trip-wire” approach, it is significantly different from the previous NATO experience and therefore has no direct precedents on which to draw. It is on a relatively low tactical level, and the possible threat scenarios today are more complex than the Cold War equivalents, which brings additional political challenges. In implementing the eFP concept, questions about how to signal the credibility of deterrence and how the eFP battlegroups would operate in crisis situations, especially prior to activation of Article 5 of Washington Treaty, are central.

This policy paper first addresses three precedents from NATO’s Cold War experience: the Central European theatre, West Berlin

1 “Warsaw Summit Communiqué – Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8–9 July 2016”, para 40.

and Norway. By focusing on the deployment to Estonia, it will go on to describe the nature of the eFP as it is currently planned and executed, and address a number of issues related to its implementation. It fleshes out the differences between the old and the contemporary approach, addresses the current challenges, and charts the way forward to inform policymakers and the public at large how to increase the employability of the force and the overall credibility of the eFP-based deterrent.

1. PRECEDENTS DURING THE COLD WAR

During the Cold War, issues related to the credibility of deterrence and to assuring exposed allied nations about other Allies’ adherence to their collective defence commitments played a key role in designing NATO’s conventional deterrence and defence posture. As geopolitical conditions in various border regions of the NATO area varied, individual deterrence and defence solutions adopted were also different, but in general NATO’s posture consisted of the deployment of Allied forces to conduct forward defence, specific alert measures to facilitate reaction to crisis situations, and arrangements for rapid reinforcement.

1.1 CENTRAL EUROPEAN THEATRE

Central Europe was the frontline of East-West confrontation as major Soviet aggression was expected to cross the inter-German border. Here NATO’s deterrence and defence posture relied on the deployment of large Allied military forces on West German territory in accordance with the concept of forward defence and the so-called “layer cake” deployment mode. West Germany had little strategic depth and, as a result, political and geographical considerations meant that the concept of forward defence became central to NATO’s strategy. From the 1960s onwards, alongside the adoption of the flexible response military strategy and the growth of NATO’s conventional military strength, the line of defence was fixed at West Germany’s eastern border. The placement of Allied forces in the border regions and making a firm commitment to forward defence were meant to send an unambiguous signal, both to the Soviet side and to the West German government and population, that the Alliance was firmly committed to defending West Germany’s borders. It was also to ensure that, in the event of attack, enemy forces would not be able to advance quickly deep into Allied territory.

The forward-defence concept was based on the principle of linear defence, which was implemented through the deployment of eight national army corps from the West German, US, British, Dutch and Belgian armies, lined up within their sectors next to each other along the border. As a result, any significant Soviet aggression would

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3 This paper does not consider aspects related to nuclear deterrence, which are outside its scope.

4 For a comprehensive overview of NATO’s Cold War strategies see Richard L. Kugler, “Commitment to Purpose: How Alliance Partnership Won the Cold War”, RAND Corporation, 1993
have attacked more than one defence layer, held by more than one national corps. In the event of an attack, non-German Allied forces would have been engaged from the outset and, by being compelled to defend themselves, would have also defended West Germany.

In Central Europe, NATO generally avoided pushing multi-nationality below the corps level, allowing sensitive issues related to command-and-control relationships to be avoided. This was possible in the context of the Cold War era, when the Allied nations fielded large military forces designed for the execution of the mission of collective defence in Europe. The United States alone had more than 300,000 military personnel permanently stationed in Europe, the majority of them in West Germany.

Deployments to border areas were backed up by a formal NATO alert system, which allowed specific measures to be taken that would have shifted all allied forces from a peace to a war footing and put the national forces under NATO command. Some steps could be taken by SACEUR on his own authority, while others required the authorisation of the national authorities through the North Atlantic Council (NAC). National units were earmarked to specific NATO Command Structure HQs, and knew in advance their planned role in the event of a crisis.

In addition, a concept of reinforcement was developed whereby additional forces would be sent to the defence of frontline Allies in the event of a crisis. The reinforcement plans were regularly practised through coordinated exercises, most notably the major US Reforger exercises, designed to test and demonstrate the ability to reinforce and defend Europe. An important aspect of the reinforcement plans was the storage of pre-positioned equipment for three additional US divisions at sites in West Germany and the Benelux countries.

The Alliance recognised that, instead of launching a major all-out war, the Soviet Union might prefer to exercise aggression aimed at achieving limited territorial objectives quickly, while hoping to contain the conflict to only one area of East-West confrontation. If successful, this could have threatened to deliver a devastating blow to NATO’s credibility. Exposed areas, for example West Berlin and northern Norway, were seen as the areas most likely to be susceptible to such an approach.

1.2 West Berlin

Specific arrangements were developed for the defence of West Berlin, a small but symbolically important territory located deep inside the Communist bloc. The West’s exposed position in Berlin resulted in a fear that the Soviet Union could use it to force a showdown, short of major war, aimed at exposing American reluctance to defend Western Europe, intimidating West Germany and weakening NATO. It was therefore necessary for the Alliance’s leaders to stand firm on Berlin. Here, NATO strategy consisted of two key pillars: the presence of Allied combat troops in the city itself and contingency planning for ensuring the freedom of access to Berlin.
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The three Allied nations who performed the functions of occupying powers in West Berlin as a result of arrangements made at the end of the Second World War\(^6\) – the United States, the United Kingdom and France – maintained brigade-size military forces in the city. Their wartime mission was to defend West Berlin as long as possible. Allied forces in West Berlin practised traditional forms of military activity to maintain their readiness. Due to their location within a densely-populated city, they also placed additional emphasis on urban combat operations. The Allied contingents also focused on “show of force”-type activities to demonstrate their intent to retain freedom of action in the city and to convince the Soviet side that the Allies would fight for Berlin even if they would not realistically be able to hold it in the event of major war.

Due to the special legal status of West Berlin, plans for ensuring Western access to the city consisted of a mix of trilateral and NATO-level arrangements. From 1959 until German unification in 1990, a separate trilateral arrangement between the US, the UK and France was in place for the coordination and implementation of military steps to protect and enforce Western access to West Berlin. Subordinated to SACEUR, a trilateral contingency planning staff, codenamed \textit{LIVE OAK}, developed contingency plans for rapid response to any interference with Western rights of access to West Berlin. In accordance with these plans, during the 1961 Berlin crisis President Kennedy sent a reinforced US battlegroup from West Germany through East German territory to Berlin to demonstrate the Allies’ determination to enforce their rights.

While initially the whole planning for Berlin contingencies was the sole preserve of the three nations, after the 1961 crisis NATO was linked in to ensure that \textit{LIVE OAK} planning was closely synchronised with that of NATO itself. In the event that a crisis over West Berlin escalated into a wider conflict, arrangements were in place to transfer command responsibility from \textit{LIVE OAK} nations to NATO. The Alliance also developed various Berlin-related contingency plans, which provided a catalogue of military measures designed to demonstrate NATO’s determination and to emphasise to the Soviet side the danger and consequences of escalation. These military plans were complemented by political, economic, psychological and public-diplomacy measures designed to convey Western resolve and deter hostile action.\(^7\)

\subsection*{1.3 \textbf{NORWAY}}

In the case of Norway, there was no permanent military presence of other Allies on its territory during the Cold War. This posture resulted from a policy of unilateral self-restraint placed on NATO activities in and around its territory by the Norwegian government. This policy, which was meant to reassure the Soviet side, also limited Nor-

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5}NATO has in recent years declassified and published a number of documents detailing the Alliance’s plans in defence of West Berlin. See \textit{"Military Planning for Berlin Emergency (1961–1968)"}. See also \textsuperscript{6}Donald A. Carter, \textit{"U.S. Military Response to the 1960-1962 Berlin crisis"}.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{6}West Berlin was not \textit{de jure} part of the Federal Republic of Germany and its administration was formally conducted by the three Western allies.}
way’s own military activities in the country’s northernmost regions. At the same time, Norway emphasised that the policy of reassurance was entirely self-defined and could be revoked should the situation change due to a shift in Soviet behaviour.  

As a result, the Norwegian defence concept depended on national armed forces slowing any Soviet advances through sparsely-populated northern Norway until pre-planned NATO reinforcements could arrive. This promise of reinforcement was backed up by earmarking specific Allied units for the defence of Norway and by the pre-positioning of war stocks to support these Allied reinforcements. A key feature of NATO’s rapid-reinforcement concept for the flank countries, like Norway, was the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (Land). This was a multinational brigade-size rapid reaction force supported by small air and naval components. It was supposed to be deployed within a matter of days to reinforce a threatened state in the NATO area, thereby providing NATO with an ability to react quickly to a crisis in distant flank areas vulnerable to limited Soviet incursion. Its primary purpose was to support local forces in helping to deter intimidation, coercion or aggression short of general war. The concept aimed to project a multinational deterrent capability at short notice upon a decision of the NAC. National contributions to the AMF(L) were organised into various pre-planned multinational force packages, optimised for deployment to the possible contingency areas.  

In an actual contingency, the deployed components would have come under the command and control of local forces, e.g. the Norwegian corps commander, to ensure integration and unity of command.

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9 The role of the AMF(L) is discussed in Diego Ruiz Palmer, “From AMF to NRF: the roles of NATO’s raid reaction forces in deterrence, defence and crisis-response, 1960-2009”, NATO Review, Spring 2009.
2. The Enhanced Forward Presence in Estonia

In Estonia, the eFP deployment is led by the United Kingdom as a framework nation, with France and Denmark participating as contributing nations. The first British rotation of the battlegroup, which arrived in Estonia in spring 2017 and consists of more than 800 personnel, is provided by the 5th Battalion, The Rifles of the British Army. For the first eight months, the British armoured infantry is joined by about 300 personnel from a French mechanised unit. In early 2018 the French troops will be replaced by a Danish contingent. In total the armoured battlegroup consists of almost 1,200 troops, with heavy land forces equipment including main battle tanks, self-propelled artillery and various armoured vehicles. A flag-raising ceremony to mark the entry into service of the eFP battlegroup in Estonia was held on 20 April.

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The eFP battlegroup is stationed in Tapa Army Base in northern Estonia. The base also houses the headquarters and many units of the Estonian Defence Forces’ 1st Infantry Brigade, which represents the main manoeuvre unit of the Estonian forces. The battlegroup is embedded into the 1st Brigade, and Allied officers will also serve on the Brigade staff. Liaison officers from eFP nations are also stationed at the Estonian Defence Forces Headquarters in Tallinn.

For the United Kingdom, its significant contribution to the eFP\textsuperscript{10} not only reflects its role as one of the militarily most capable NATO members, but can also be seen as having an important role in political messaging. In the run-up to Brexit, the role of the eFP deployment also helps to alleviate concerns about the effects of the UK leaving the European Union on British commitments to wider European security.

Following the end of the long and costly campaign in Afghanistan, the British Army currently has no large-scale ongoing operational combat deployments and is in the process of completing the withdrawal of remaining forces from Germany by 2020.\textsuperscript{11} As a result, the mission in Estonia has become one of its largest deployments abroad and therefore a major element in the UK’s global military footprint. The combination of these political and military aspects results in the deployment having a high domestic profile in the United Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{10} Besides the deployment to Estonia, the UK is also contributing around 150 troops to the US-led eFP battlegroup in Poland.

\textsuperscript{11} For over 20 years, from the start of the UN and NATO missions in the Balkans in the early 1990s until the end of the ISAF mission in 2014, the British Army had to maintain at least a brigade-size force on missions overseas. As the current British participation in the fight against ISIS involves mostly Royal Air Force assets and personnel, the only remaining major UK Army foreign deployment is related to the British military presence in Cyprus.
2.1 eFP DEPLOYMENT AND ENSURING THE CREDIBILITY OF DETERRENCE

Enhanced forward presence is a key element in the current NATO collective defence effort. It should ensure that, in the event of a military attack upon the sovereignty of a frontline Ally, other Allies would be immediately drawn into the conflict. The eFP would provide a flexible tool to deter and, if necessary, defend during the time of crisis. It should increase the cost of any aggression and deny the adversary an opportunity to employ certain military scenarios, thereby sending a clear signal that a conflict would not remain localised, but would bring a forceful response from the NATO alliance as a whole.

Credibility is key to the eFP as a successful deterrent, and can be achieved through various measures aimed at different types of messaging. Political messaging to convey political resolve, the size and capabilities of the force, and exercises and other everyday activities, all play an important role in sending correct signals to the opponent.

An essential element of the credibility of the deterrent is the perception of military capability to inflict substantial costs on an attacker and deny it an ability to quickly achieve its objectives.

In this context, the notion of eFP as a fighting force and first responder to crises should be part of the messaging. In this context, one could draw parallels with US forces in South Korea, whose mission statement clearly states their ability to “fight tonight” in defence of their Korean allies.  

2.2 MULTINATIONALITY AND MILITARY INTEROPERABILITY

A key feature of the eFP concept is the multinational character of the battlegroups. This is politically crucial in sending out a message of allied solidarity and also enabling burden-sharing. But multinationality also inevitably brings practical interoperability-related challenges, especially if implemented at the low tactical level of a battalion-size battlegroup.

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In the case of the eFP deployment to Estonia, these challenges should be smaller than, for example, for similar deployments to Latvia and Lithuania. In accordance with current plans, the battlegroup in Estonia would be among the first responders to contingencies, and would thereby significantly increase the combat power available for the defence of Estonia. This would be especially important in the early stages of a crisis, given that the Estonian Defence Forces are mainly a reserve-based force.

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12 US Eighth Army Commander’s Guidance, “How We Fight”.
will have three contributing nations with only two of them deploying troops at the same time, while the eFP in Latvia and Lithuania will consist of six and eight nations, respectively. Moreover, all of the nations which will be operating together in Estonia are no novices to military cooperation and joint action with other contributors.

The three Allies sending troops to Estonia have a history of cooperation and joint operational experience with the Estonian Defence Forces. Most notable is the experience of British and Estonian armed forces in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, where between 2006 and 2014 an Estonian infantry company was continuously deployed under British command. Estonia also participates in the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force initiative. The Estonian Defence Forces have long-standing experience of joint deployments with the Danish Army, dating back to the Balkan missions of the 1990s. Furthermore, since 2009 the Estonian 1st Brigade has been affiliated with a Danish division for training and exercises. While military links between Estonia and France have been less extensive, both countries have similarly cooperated during several foreign missions, most significantly in the Central African Republic where, in 2014, Estonia was among the very first contributors to the French-initiated EU military mission.

All the nations contributing to the eFP in Estonia are well used to foreign deployments, and both the French and Danish militaries have a lot of practical experience of operating with UK troops. Danish troops have deployed with the British Army to Afghanistan and Iraq. Britain and France have established a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force to enable the two countries to deploy forces together. Thus, it can be assumed that on the practical military level there should be relatively few problems in cooperation and joint action in the framework of the eFP.

2.3 Command-and-control relationship

One of the biggest challenges in the implementation of the multinational eFP concept relates to the issue of command and control. The fact that the battlegroup will have links to three lines of command – the NATO command structure, national lines of command of the contributing nations, and the line of command in the host nation (Estonia) – makes the issue particularly complicated.

While the detailed aspects of the eFP command arrangements remain beyond the scope of this paper, it should be noted that unity of command is an undisputable and timeless feature of smart military planning. Command-and-control arrangements must be clear, practical and implementable to avoid confusion and friction resulting from parallel command structures. The decision-making process on the employment of the eFP must be as seamless as possible.

Enhanced forward presence is a NATO measure, agreed on by all the member states of the Alliance. In the event of conflict breaking out, the battlegroup would play a key role in the NATO response, especially in the early stages of the crisis. This makes it imperative that the eFP is connected to NATO’s integrated military command structure and embedded into the Alliance’s contingency planning.

However, given that the activation of NATO’s collective mechanisms will inevita-

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bly take some time, it is vitally important that the eFP should be able to respond before the launch of a NATO operation. Prior to the activation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the military response will be an issue for individual Allies, especially those with troops on the ground. In this situation, the fullest possible integration of the eFP battlegroup to the Estonian 1st Brigade is important in ensuring coordinated joint action in the event of a crisis. It will also increase the overall credibility of the deterrence posture, as it demonstrates that the eFP will stand with Estonian forces and is prepared to go all the way if necessary.

2.4 Crisis situations

There is always a risk that Russia could see the presence of the eFP as an opportunity to try to test certain Allied reactions. It might, for example, seek to test the role and reactions of the eFP by the deployment of its forces close to the border or by undertaking some other military activities short of outright aggression. In so doing, Moscow would be eager to check the credibility of the Alliance’s response.

In September 2017, Russia is scheduled to conduct a strategic-level military exercise, Zapad 2017, in its Western Military District and on the territory of its ally, Belarus. The exercise will involve the concentration of large Russian military formations in the immediate vicinity of the Baltic states and Poland, and a significant increase in Russia’s military activities in the region. This will significantly increase the risk of incidents or deliberate provocations from the Russian side, which may also be aimed at testing the eFP deployments.

In this context, NATO and the nations involved need to think about various possible crisis scenarios which might require reaction from the eFP beyond their everyday activities, to wargame them and develop relevant contingency plans. Through such activities, the parties involved can also better understand each other’s command-and-control chain, Rules of Engagement, political appetite for risk, etc. Political consultations and contingency and defence planning should ensure common understanding about the roles and activities of the eFP. In this context, the importance of eFP Rules of Engagement which are as closely harmonised as possible with Estonian ones is paramount.

Political and military decisions will be made based on available information. In ensuring smooth decision-making, situational awareness and cooperation in the field of intelligence and reconnaissance are vital. The less ambiguity there is about the nature of the threat, the easier it will be to make decisions.

2.5 Information environment

In an era in which disinformation and propaganda campaigns have become extensively used weapons to discredit and undermine Western institutions and policies, the eFP deployment is providing a tempting target for Russian information warfare.

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activities in this field could be aimed at undermining political support for the deployments in eFP-sending nations, or stirring up controversy between the troop contingents and the local population.

While these may entail staging and the use of possible on-duty or off-duty incidents involving eFP members, the Russian media will not shy away from inventing entirely false news stories to spread accusations of misconduct. While the eFP deployment to Estonia has not yet experienced serious disinformation attacks, there have already been cases in other eFP host nations of attempts to disseminate fake news about the Allied presence. Most notably, in February, just a few days after the arrival in Lithuania of the first troops from the German eFP contingent, they became a target of false rape claims. Both the German and the Lithuanian authorities have pointed out that these false stories clearly originated from sources in Russia. In this environment, the role of strategic communications – on the ground in sending nations and at the Alliance level – becomes vitally important.

The allied units stationed in Estonia are battle-hardened professional units, to whom Estonia looks like a very benign and peaceful environment. On the other hand, when it comes to information warfare, this is not necessarily the case. The troops should be properly trained and well briefed to cope in this complicated information space.

3. Role of the eFP in the Context of the Overall NATO Defence and Deterrence Posture

While the establishment of the eFP on the ground is proceeding successfully, the credibility of the forward presence as a trigger of allied reaction requires it to be part of a larger force, which is capable of reacting with significant speed and firepower. Absent this, the “trigger” – as described in the Warsaw Summit communiqué – does not trigger much. This requires that the eFP is integrated into overall NATO operational planning for contingencies in the Baltic area and, as a result, is “underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy” as explicitly stated by the communiqué. During the Cold War, such reinforcements were carefully planned and trained, which itself strengthened the credibility of the deterrent. Now, further work is clearly needed to fit the eFP into the general mosaic of NATO’s defence and deterrent posture.

3.1 Rapid reinforcement capability

Given the size of the eFP and the magnitude of possible counterforce, there will likely be a need for rapid reinforcements and increase in combat capability to seriously strengthen the deterrent, possibly in a very short time-frame. NATO today possesses only limited operational capabilities for rapid reaction. All time-sensitive rein-

13 For an analysis of how Russian-language media portray eFP deployments, see @DFRLab (Digital Forensic Research Lab, Atlantic Council), “Russian Narratives on NATO Deployment”, 1 April 2017.
Forcements will face a number of logistical difficulties, even if conducted in a permissive environment. This reality points to a need to analyse the option of forward-positioning armaments and materiel in depots, ready for use in crisis situations. This pre-positioning would greatly reduce the time needed to bring forces to the Baltic theatre.

The multinational brigade-size Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), NATO’s primary rapid reaction task force set up to deploy at short notice, would face a number of practical challenges in the event of the collective decision to deploy it. Unlike its Cold War-era predecessor – AMF(L) – it has no specific geographical operational areas assigned to its rotational units and, as a result, no pre-positioned equipment.

In reality, individual military-capable allied nations would most likely be the ones whose reaction troops would be first to arrive on the ground in the Baltic area, if tasked to do so. In this context, while emphasising the key role of the United States, countries like the UK and France should also consider options for reinforcing the Baltic region on a bilateral basis using their national reaction forces, should speed be of the essence.

3.2 The Role of US Forces

In the context of reinforcing the eFP deployments in the event of crisis or conflict, the ability of the US military to back up the deployed forces with its own contributions will remain crucial. While the change of leadership in the White House has brought occasional conflicting signals regarding the importance of NATO, the US commitment to its Allies has never been questioned. Importantly, all deployments to Europe planned under the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) by the Obama administration have been going forward. The ongoing re-establishment of war-fighting capabilities within the US European Command, after years of constant drawdown of American forces in Europe, is highly important in this regard.

As part of the ERI and Operation Atlantic Resolve, the US Army has now started to continuously rotate full armoured brigade combat teams to the European theatre. For the first of these nine-month rotations, around 3,500 soldiers of the 3rd Armoured Brigade Combat Team from the 4th Infantry Division arrived in Europe from the US with their full complement of equipment in January 2017. The brigade is headquartered in Poland and its units will rotate through the other eastern flank countries, including the Baltic states, for exercises and training. In addition, the US Army is now also rotating through Europe an aviation brigade with combat and transport helicopters and a Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. These deployments mean that, from this year, the strength of US Army Europe’s manoeuvre units, which was previously down to only two light brigades – the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment – will be significantly bolstered. The successive deployments of complete US armoured brigades will also enable the exercise of complex skills required to rapidly deploy major forces across the Atlantic, something which has not been
practised since the end of the annual Re-forger exercises in the early 1990s. As the eFP battlegroups in the Baltic states do not involve US troops, the presence of the American rotating armoured brigade’s units for exercises and training in the region is vital. The political and strategic significance of the presence in Baltic territories of troops from the world’s sole military superpower cannot be underestimated, as Moscow certainly follows very closely US political and military messaging.

Further plans also foresee the stationing of additional US equipment and ammunition (Army Prepositioned Stocks) in Europe, through which a set required for a full armoured division-size force would be available on the continent. However, despite the preferences of US commanders in Europe for additional manned armoured and enabling capabilities, current plans only see the pre-positioning of equipment, not the stationing of associated personnel. In this regard, it is worth emphasising the importance of the return of divisional- and corps-level assets to Europe, which are required for the effective conduct of combined-arms operations.

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reinforced by high-readiness units based in the US, some of which could be deployed across the Atlantic at relatively short notice.

3.3 FURTHER ISSUES

The indispensable role of the United States’ military capability in responding to contingencies in the Baltic region was highlighted in a recent study by the RAND Corporation assessing the abilities of the UK, Germany and France to deploy armoured forces to the region. This found that even these three major European powers would find it difficult to generate armoured forces quickly and sustain their deployment. As a result, they would be hard-pressed to provide a combat-capable heavy brigade at short notice.

The shortage of capabilities within the Alliance to deploy and sustain larger formations on the exposed eastern Allies’ territories (Follow-on Forces) highlights the need to rebuild military capabilities and formations in Europe. This includes the overall NATO force structure, which has been greatly diminished over recent decades due to budget cuts and political decisions to reconfigure it towards lighter, expeditionary operations. Another aspect relates to the low readiness levels prevalent among European forces, which are insufficient in the context of today’s challenges. While a lot of work has been done in this regard, serious limitations are posed, in particular by low defence spending in many Allied countries.

Furthermore, due to geography the Baltic states are in a special situation as regards the reinforcement of the Allied forces on

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14 Meghann Myers, “Back to Europe: The Army is sending more troops, tanks and helicopters to deter Russia”, Army Times, 19 March 2017.

their territory. Russia has been building up anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, including air defence and anti-ship missiles, in the Kaliningrad region and in its Western Military District in general. These could threaten to impede the movement of additional forces to the Baltic region in the event of a crisis. NATO’s ability to counter and neutralise these systems, if needed, should become a key element of the overall defence concept for the Baltic region.

While the eFP addresses the land forces dimension of the Alliance presence, one aspect which requires further work relates to the air and maritime domains. The present Baltic Air Policing mission in the region is a peacetime operation, but the Alliance also needs an air-defence solution for the region. Similarly, control of the Baltic Sea will be vital in the context of possible scenarios. Both the air and maritime fields require further work in the context of deterrence and defence in the Baltic region and need combined region-wide solutions.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

While the eFP seems a relatively simple solution in a complex security environment, one should keep in mind that such a solution is actually unique. Forward positioning in this specific instance has a number of particular aspects, which should be taken into consideration to guarantee the success of the deployment.

While forward positioning of troops was practised during the Cold War, no previous experience is a carbon copy of the present challenges in the Baltic states. The size of the deterrent, its position in the defence posture, real military capabilities available and other factors make it impossible to draw direct comparisons with West Berlin, West Germany or Norway during the Cold War. However, all these examples have elements to offer pertaining to the present situation. For instance, the elevated role of SACEUR in time of crisis, which guaranteed the unity of command during the Cold War period, can be replicated today.

The composition of the battle-groups, their successful deployment and appropriate exercises, along with the associated public messaging, jointly form the credibility of the deterrent when it comes to eFP. A properly functioning command-and-control structure has a crucial role in the coherent use of any, let alone multinational, formations. Finally, the “trigger” effect foreseen in the Warsaw Summit communiqué can only be credible in circumstances in which the eFP is firmly embedded in the overall Alliance defence posture.

In this context, the following general recommendations are made:

- Ensure that the battle-groups have a “ready to fight” posture, and that public messaging includes the notion of eFP as a fighting force that will be among the first responders to military crises.
- Integrate the battle-groups to the fullest extent possible into the local host nations’ forces, thus ensuring unity of command and harmonised Rules of Engagement; exercise the seamless functioning of command and control relations in peacetime,
as well as during times of crisis and war.

- Wargame possible crisis situations which could require the employment of the eFP and develop relevant contingency planning – in particular for situations prior to Article 5 being invoked, when the forces must be ready to operate as part of a multinational coalition of nations.

- Be prepared to counter Russian “active measures”, which aim to discredit eFP troops. This would involve educating the deployed troops about Russian measures and the associated dangers, and existence of a proper strategic communications outreach policy.

- Focus on the integration of the eFP battlegroups into an overall NATO deterrence and defence framework for the Baltic region, which would include enablers, rapid-reaction capabilities, follow-on forces etc., all of which would need to be properly planned and exercised.