



REPORT

CONTEMPORARY DETERRENCE

INSIGHTS AND LESSONS FROM ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

| KALEV STOICESCU | PAULI JÄRVENPÄÄ |

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Authors: Stoicescu, Kalev; Järvenpää, Pauli

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63/4 Narva Rd., 10152 Tallinn, Estonia

info@icds.ee, www.icds.ee

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BG	Battlegroup
C2	Command and Control
EDI	European Deterrence Initiative
eFP	enhanced Forward Presence
EOP	Enhanced Opportunity Partnership/Partner
HNS	Host Nation Support
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
NFIU	NATO Force Integration Unit
NRF	NATO Response Force
SNMCMG1	Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1
SNMG1	Standing NATO Maritime Group 1
tFP	tailored Forward Presence
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NATO decided, in July 2016, to establish an enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. A battalion-size battlegroup (BG) was deployed in early 2017 to each of these nations. This report looks at various aspects of the eFP some eighteen months after the start of its deployment and offers recommendations to NATO Allies, particularly host and contributing nations, for strengthening the eFP.

The four BGs are manned by framework nations (United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States), who provide the bulk of the troops and support elements, alongside contributions from most other Allies. The multinational contingents of the BGs rotate regularly and are 24/7 combat ready. Their main task is deterrence, as part of NATO's wider strategy of deterrence by denial and punishment. This strategy includes also other forms of Allied presence in the region (US European Deterrence Initiative, Baltic Air Policing, NATO's standing maritime groups etc.), as well as forces that would reinforce the region in times of crisis (NRF/VJTF, follow-on forces).

The BGs are fully integrated into the land forces brigades of their host nations. They are subordinated through regional divisional headquarters and the Multinational Corps North-East headquarters to NATO's Joint Forces Command in Brunssum. The chain of command is clear, and supports training activities, as well as regional defence planning and integration.

As well as providing a deterrence presence, the eFP BGs contribute to the self-defence capabilities of their host nations, particularly in the Baltic states. Host and contributing nations gain from eFP by improving interoperability and maintaining combat readiness. The eFP also contributes to deepening political and economic relations between host and contributing (particularly framework) nations.

The eFP is a small presence, but has a very significant and visible role, including in strategic communication. It is generally deemed suitable in terms of its size for its roles, but proactive thinking and planning is needed for the possible requirement to strengthen the eFP (e.g. to brigade level units) in times of crisis. In addition, the eFP has to be fully backed by follow-on forces, whose reinforcement operations also need to be planned and regularly exercised. Better coherence between the eFP and other forms of Allied presence in the region is also needed.

Russia simultaneously both resents and plays down the importance of the eFP. Russia's official propaganda routinely attacks NATO, and disinformation and the exploitation of any incidents involving eFP personnel represents the main risk to the eFP.

Finland and Sweden work increasingly closely with the Alliance, including participation in major exercises (e.g. Trident Juncture 2018). There may be ways to engage them also with the eFP, initially by participation in exercises of eFP host and contributing nations.

INTRODUCTION

At their Summit in Warsaw in July 2016 the NATO Allies decided, in response to Russia's aggression in Crimea and Donbas, to establish an enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland and a tailored Forward Presence (tFP) in Bulgaria and Romania. This report is concerned with the eFP: Allied units positioned in the Baltic region where NATO has land borders with Russia.

The eFP comprises four multinational, battalion-size battlegroups (BG) deployed to the eFP host nations on a rotational basis and constructed around forces from four framework nations, respectively the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States.¹ The eFP units deployed between January and April 2017 and all had become fully operational by June 2017.²

The eFP deployments are substantial commitments by the framework and other contributing nations and have significant defence policy and resource implications for their host nations. Nonetheless, relatively few analyses have been produced to shed light on the purpose of the eFP and its impact on NATO's overall deterrence and collective defence posture, or on the self-defence capabilities of the host nations. The aim of this report is to fill that gap and to offer recommendations to NATO Allies, particularly eFP host and contributing nations, for strengthening the eFP as part of a wider Allied policy in the Nordic-Baltic region.

Our report is solely based on information available from open sources and from a series of non-attributable interviews carried out by the authors with a range of eFP policy makers and practitioners between September and November 2018.

¹ NATO, "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," paragraph 40, https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

² JFC Brunssum, Public Affairs Office, "Enhanced Forward Presence: Boosting NATO's Footprint in the East," *Northern Star*, August/September 2017, 4.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 ESTABLISHING THE EFP

Although the Warsaw Pact collapsed after the end of the Cold War, NATO not only survived, but enlarged, invested in the creation of security partnerships, and adapted to the new challenges of out-of-area operations and the fight against terrorism. NATO's enlargements in 1999 and 2004, which included among other nations Poland and the Baltic states, were mostly political actions. While the new members of the Alliance had been engaged even before their accession to NATO in out-of-area operations in locations such as the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, the increase of NATO's territory left its permanent force posture and hard security infrastructure virtually unchanged; NATO forces continued to be positioned where they were during the Cold War, albeit with significant reductions in capabilities and personnel, especially in the US forces deployed to Europe.

NATO was compelled to revise its threat assessment vis-à-vis Russia and thus to revisit its core task of collective defence

Russia's aggression against Georgia in August 2008 did not ring alarm bells in most NATO capitals, but the illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea and the incitement and support of 'separatism' in Ukraine's Donbas region in 2014 entirely changed the situation. NATO was compelled to revise its threat assessment vis-à-vis Russia and thus to revisit its core task of collective defence.

In September 2014, at its Summit in Wales, NATO adopted a Readiness Action Plan that included assurance measures (collective defence and crisis management activities and exercises in, on and around the eastern part of Alliance territory) and adaptation measures (tripling the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF), the establishment of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the enhancement of Standing Naval Forces, and the creation of eight NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU)).³

³ NATO, "Readiness Action Plan," NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_119353.htm.

The NFIUs are small headquarters intended to facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the eastern part of the Alliance, support collective defence planning and assist in coordinating training and exercises. Additionally, they work with civilian agencies, national armed forces and other NATO forces to identify logistical networks, transportation routes and supporting infrastructure for the effective deployment of NATO's high-readiness forces. As such, they are a vital link between national forces and other Allied forces in their host nations and were instrumental in planning and facilitating the deployment of the eFP contingents. The eight NFIUs are located in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Each contains about 20 national and 20 NATO Allied staff, deployed for periods of around three years and thus providing the advantage of continuity. The first six NFIUs became active in September 2015, and all were fully operational by the time of the 2016 Warsaw Summit.⁴

At Wales, however, the Alliance did not consider the deployment of Allied combat troops to its eastern borders. The US had, since May 2014, provided a symbolic assurance presence in the form of four airborne infantry companies in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.⁵ While US presence may provide a higher assurance and deterrence value than any other NATO Ally, it became increasingly clear in the run up to the Warsaw Summit in July 2016 that four companies from just one nation – even if that nation was the US – would simply not provide enough deterrence for the entire north-eastern flank, not to mention any real contribution to the self-defence capacity of the Baltic states and Poland. Nor would such a presence signal Allied solidarity in its support to the region.

The vast majority of the Allies have contributed to or plan to contribute to the eFP

The Allies thus decided at Warsaw to establish the eFP in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland and the tFP in Bulgaria and Romania. Between

⁴ NATO, "NATO Force Integration Units," fact sheet, September 2015.

⁵ Shinkman, Paul D., "U.S. Sends Airborne Infantry to Russian Front Door," *U.S. News*, 22 April 2014, <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2014/04/22/us-sends-600-airborne-infantry-troops-to-poland-baltics>.

January and April 2017, the eFP contingents replaced the US infantry companies heel-to-toe.

1.2 COMPOSITION

The composition of the eFP as of December 2018 is set out in Table 1. Altogether, the four contingents include a little more than 4800 personnel.

Host	Contributor	Troop numbers
Estonia	UK (framework nation)	700
	Denmark	186
	Iceland	1
Latvia	Canada (framework nation)	450
	Albania	21
	Czech Republic	60
	Italy	160
	Poland	Up to 200
	Slovakia	152
	Slovenia	Up to 50
	Spain	300
Lithuania	Germany (framework nation)	560
	Belgium	245
	Czech Republic	230
	Iceland	1
	Luxembourg	26
	Netherlands	250-270
	Norway	13
Poland	US (framework nation)	889
	Croatia	69
	Romania	120
	UK	130

Table 1. eFP Composition.⁶

Force generation is an independent process for each contingent, coordinated by the respective framework nation in cooperation with the host. This arrangement offers more flexibility than NATO at 29. The framework nations include, in Poland and Estonia at the critical extremities of the north-eastern flank, the US and the UK, two Allied nuclear powers with full spectrum armed forces. Germany (in Lithuania) and Canada (in Latvia), among NATO's strongest Allies are the other framework nations. France, also a nuclear power and one of NATO's most capable Allies, chose to be a contributing nation, rotating its forces between Estonia and Lithuania, rather than take up the role of a framework nation.

The vast majority of the Allies have contributed to or plan to contribute to the eFP, as well as

⁶ NATO, "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," fact sheet, December 2018.

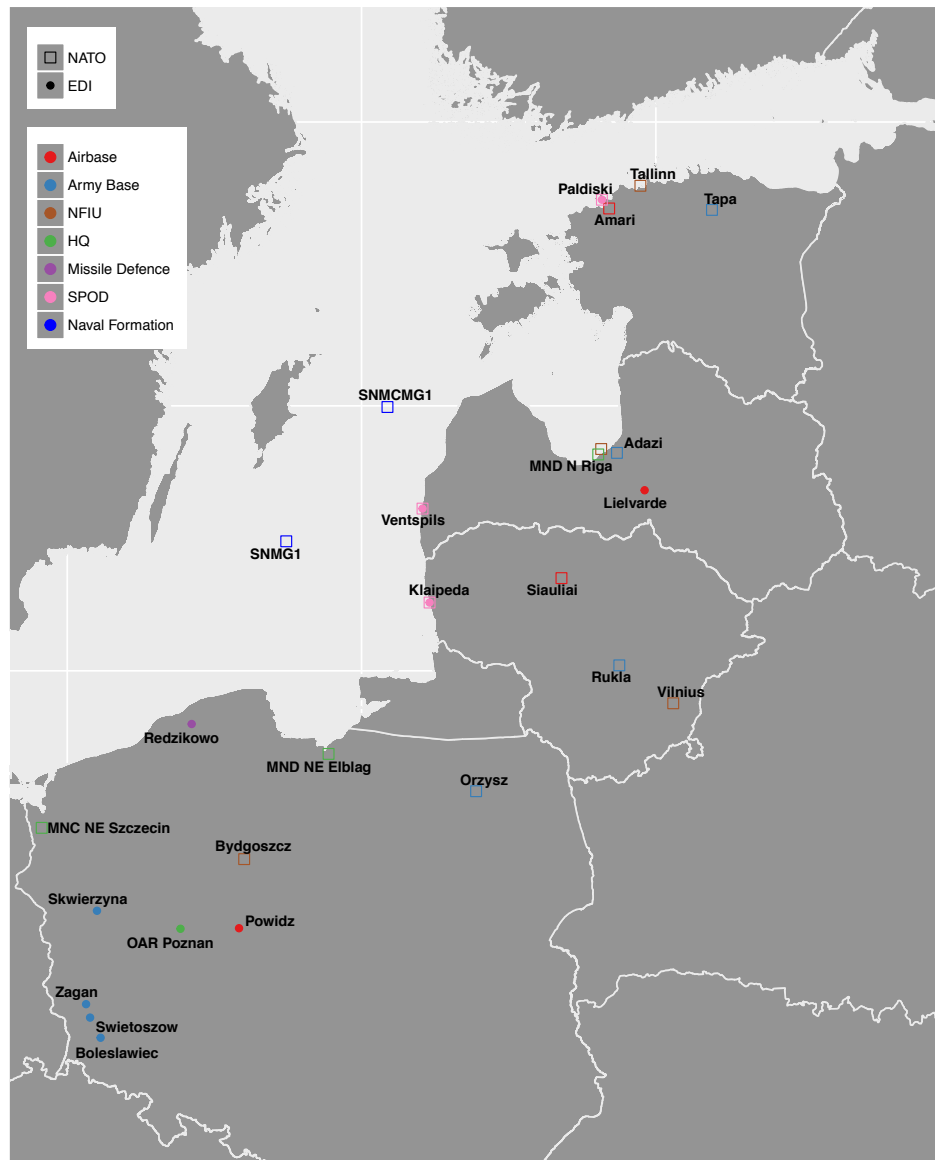


Figure 1. Allied Presence on the North-Eastern Flank

other forms of Allied presence on the north-eastern flank such as the air policing mission and the NFIUs. The only exceptions to date are Greece and Bulgaria. Montenegro, which joined NATO just before the Warsaw Summit, has pledged to contribute to the eFP in Latvia in 2019 as part of the Slovenian contingent.⁷

The eFP BGs include Combat Support and Combat Service Support elements, although the heavy equipment deployed in different rotations (e.g. Main Battle Tanks, Infantry Fighting Vehicles, Armoured Personnel Carriers, Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and

other artillery) may vary. Some BGs include a staff element of their own and others rely on the host nation. The eFP BGs are thus robust, multinational, combat-ready forces that, together with the local national defence forces, form the first line of defence for their host nations.

The eFP BGs are robust, multinational, combat-ready forces that, together with the local national defence forces, form the first line of defence for their host nations

⁷ "Montenegro to join NATO battalion deployed in Latvia – NATO general," *Isis.lv*, 19 September 2018, <https://eng.isis.lv/article/society/defense/montenegro-to-join-nato-battalion-deployed-in-latvia-nato-general.a292929/>.

1.3 THE BIGGER PICTURE: OTHER DEPLOYMENTS TO THE NORTH-EASTERN FLANK

In addition to the eFP and the NFIUs, the Allies are present in other forms on the north-eastern flank (see Figure 1). The Baltic air policing mission began as soon as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO in March 2004. Air policing, a peacetime mission, was initially performed only from Šiauliai air base in Lithuania, but additional aircraft have operated from Ämari air base in Estonia since 2014. In the maritime domain, the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1 (SNMCMG1) operate in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea.⁸

A far larger presence than eFP is provided on a national basis by the US. The US Army's presence is designated for the entire eastern flank, and funded through the US European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) programme.⁹ It presently consists of:

- A Division Tactical Command Post in Poznań (Poland) that could be expanded into a full Divisional HQ;
- Materiel and equipment for a full division, prepositioned in Poland, as well as in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands;
- The heel-to-toe rotational presence of an Armoured Brigade Combat Team with enablers (HQ in Żagań, troops and equipment in Żagań, Świątoszów, Skwierzyna and Bolesławiec Polish Army bases); and
- A Combat Aviation Brigade with more than 80 helicopters and 1,700 personnel, based primarily in Germany with a forward presence in Latvia (Lielvarde Air Base), Romania and Poland (Powidz Air Base).¹⁰

The EDI also includes air force and navy packages for the upgrade of infrastructure, the prepositioning of equipment, training

exercises, and various enablers and capabilities. EDI funding has risen from \$3.4 billion in FY 2017 to \$4.8 billion in FY 2018, and will reach \$6.5 billion in 2019.¹¹ The FY 2019 EDI request supports an average strength of approximately 9,900 active, reserve, and guard personnel in US European Command (9,095 Army, 350 Navy and 458 Air Force). These personnel will participate in multiple activities throughout the theatre, including rotations to increase temporary presence or to strengthen Allied capacity during planned exercises, deployments to expand the size and scope of planned exercises for enhancing NATO interoperability, and provision of support to US European Command's Joint Exercise Program and Joint Multi-National Readiness Center training events.

Poland has asked the US to increase and make permanent its military presence and has pledged substantial financial resources – up to \$2 billion initially – to support this endeavour.¹² The Pentagon has been asked to produce a feasibility study in connection with the Polish proposal by March 2019.

Allied ground, air and maritime presence on NATO's north-eastern flank is far more comprehensive and significantly larger than the eFP, which makes up less than a half of the Allied boots on the ground in the region

Beyond EDI, Poland is also host to the European Interceptor Site forming part of the US global missile defence system.¹³ Located in Redzikowo, it is due to become fully operational by 2020. The US has a second missile defence site in south-western Romania, at Deveselu Air Base. Meanwhile, to the north, in June 2018, at Norway's request the US more than doubled the number of Marines it has deployed there since January 2017 (from 330 to 700), and

⁸ NATO, Allied Maritime Command, "Maritime Groups," Allied Maritime Command, <https://mc.nato.int/missions/maritime-groups.aspx>.

⁹ Department of Defense (US), Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), "European Deterrence Initiative." February 2018.

¹⁰ US European Command Public Affairs Office, "2019 European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) Fact Sheet."

¹¹ Department of Defense (US), "European Deterrence Initiative," 1.

¹² Jarosław Adamowski, "Poland offers up to \$2 billion for a permanent US military presence," *DefenseNews*, 29 May 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/flashpoints/2018/05/29/poland-offers-up-to-2-billion-for-a-permanent-us-military-presence/>.

¹³ "Polish missile defence site to be developed by 2020: report," *Radio Poland*, 3 July 2017. <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/371097.Polish-missile-defence-site-to-be-developed-by-2020-report>.

moved them closer to Russia.¹⁴ The US Marine Corps is also reported to have moved additional combat and other equipment to “Frigaard Cave” in central Norway.¹⁵

Allied ground, air and maritime presence on NATO’s north-eastern flank is thus far more comprehensive and significantly larger than the eFP, which makes up less than a half of the Allied boots on the ground in the region. While Allied nations regard these various formats as interconnected, but officially separate, for Russia there are no particular distinctions – these are all Allied forces and assets.

2. FINDINGS

In this section of the report, we describe lessons from and insights into the eFP initiative. Unless otherwise stated, the material here is derived from the interviews conducted with a range of eFP policy makers and practitioners in Brussels, and in Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In order to encourage openness, our interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and their remarks and comments are not individually attributed in this report.

2.1 THE DECISION TO DEPLOY

Russia’s behaviour on the international stage and its military posture in the Western Military District (including in the Kaliningrad Oblast) provide from the point of view of Poland and the Baltic states more than sufficient justification for NATO’s enhancement of its deterrence posture on the north-eastern flank. However, for those Allies who feel less threatened by Russia, the answer to the question of whether the north-eastern flank would be better off with or without an Allied presence was not so obvious. Some, for example, considered this would be a Cold War-style response to an entirely

new set of circumstances. Further, even if a presence was required, it was not immediately clear what form and size would be sufficient for deterrence, but also consistent with the NATO-Russia Founding Act, which states:

*NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.*¹⁶

Russia’s behaviour on the international stage and its military posture in the Western Military District provide more than sufficient justification for NATO’s enhancement of its deterrence posture on the north-eastern flank

The eFP contingents were designated as ‘battalion-sized’ in order to give a nod to possible Russian sensibilities, but also to make Allied contributions easier by containing costs. It was obvious that a small contingent of around 1000 troops in each host nation could not by itself credibly defend against a large-scale attack. On the other hand, combined with local national forces and paving the way for NATO reinforcements, even such a small unit could provide a useful function. From the beginning it was understood that the eFP would act as a ‘trip-wire’, triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression.¹⁷ This stance was, of course, agreed unanimously by the Allies; the eFP is thus not just the embodiment of a local threat perception, but a commonly understood response to a (reasonably) common threat assessment among all NATO members.

From the beginning it was understood that the eFP would act as a ‘trip-wire’, triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression

¹⁴ Gwladys Fouche, “Norway to invite more U.S. Marines, for longer and closer to Russia,” *Reuters*, 12 June 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-us-russia/norway-to-invite-more-u-s-marines-for-longer-and-closer-to-russia-idUSKBN1J8149>.

¹⁵ Military.com, “Marines May Move Even More Combat Gear into Norwegian Caves,” *Military.com*, 16 June 2017, <https://www.military.com/defensetech/2017/06/16/marines-combat-gear-norwegian-caves>.

Nonetheless, some observers were surprised that NATO was able to agree at 28 to create a presence on the north-eastern flank, as a

¹⁶ NATO, “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France,” 27 May 1997, Section IV.

¹⁷ NATO, “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” paragraph 40.

number of Allies were initially sceptical about the deterrence value of the eFP (and tFP), and hoped to relieve tensions with Russia through dialogue. NATO and the Allies have never excluded dialogue with Russia, but experience has shown that it has little value and impact in the face of the Kremlin's aggressiveness and

security interest in Europe.¹⁸ Also, being involved in the eFP reminds the population at home that Canada is a NATO member that takes its defence responsibilities seriously. All in all, the Canadian presence as a framework nation in Latvia is a strong show of strategic resolve.

NATO's general approach towards Russia is based on the twin principles of 'transparency' and 'tailored response'

uncompromising demands. Ultimately, the most convincing arguments for the eFP were made by Russia itself, through its constant escalation of the confrontation with the West, its military venture into Syria, and its lack of willingness to solve the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

NATO's general approach towards Russia was thus based on the twin principles of 'transparency' and 'tailored response'. Transparency refers to the use of active public communications in order not to leave any room for Russian suspicions, or to permit Russian accusations of a hidden NATO agenda, for example, of offensive plans or ambitions. Tailored response refers to the use of the minimum level of forces that are deemed suitable for deterrence, together with an expectation that there should be no increases unless these are justified by Russia's own behaviour, military plans and activities.

The contribution of individual Allies has been motivated by essentially shared rationales, albeit with some nuances in thinking. For France and Germany in particular, the decision to deploy the eFP was a significant political step, although both have chosen to keep a rather low profile in this context. France has sent troops, even if it declined to act as a framework nation, to territories adjacent to those of an opposing nuclear power, while Germany took on the role of framework nation in Lithuania, and thus deployed its forces to a historically highly sensitive area.

For Canada, the eFP is a way to communicate and signal to Russia that through NATO it continues to be keenly involved in the Baltic region and that the Canadians have a strong

On a more critical note, while the Warsaw decision to deploy the eFP was implemented in just 7 to 10 months, some observers argued that it took NATO too long – almost two years after Russia invaded Crimea – to establish and deploy these small, multinational forces.

In this regard, Russia's demonstrated capacity to conduct large scale combat readiness and control exercises is something that the Alliance should take more seriously. NATO should be ready to make decisions and act in a matter of hours or days, rather than weeks or months.

2.2 THE MISSION

The main goal of the eFP, as formulated in the Warsaw Communiqué, is strategic deterrence. In other words, the eFP should help to persuade Russia not to test the Alliance or to provoke conflict on its Western borders. Allied presence in the region has tremendous importance as peace and security here and in the entire transatlantic area depend on successful deterrence. The eFP thus makes a very visible contribution to NATO's core function and *raison d'être*.

eFP should help to persuade Russia not to test the Alliance or to provoke conflict on its Western borders

In the worst case scenario of deterrence failure, the eFP must also take a part in the defence of NATO territory, although it is commonly understood that such small units can act only as a trip-wire, rather than mount a credible defence on a large scale. Thus, both eFP and host nation formations train together in order to achieve integrated combat readiness for a potential crisis situation (the eFP is not a

¹⁸ Government of Canada, "Defence Minister attends the NATO Defence Ministers Meeting," Government of Canada News Release, 29 June 2017, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2017/06/defence_ministerattendsnato defence ministers meeting.html.

capacity-building mission – it is not the role of the eFP to train the local forces of north-eastern flank Allies). Commanders of eFP contingents have no doubts or differences of views concerning the roles of the eFP in deterrence and collective defence, but in capitals there

The readiness of the eFP and local forces to defend against limited incursions forms the very basis of deterrence

are nuances in how the contributing nations view the eFP. For most of the Allies, the eFP is an operational and training mission, but not a NATO operation. Germany is an exception – for Berlin the eFP is, for political and administrative reasons, designated a ‘training activity’.

Very broadly, three scenarios for conflict between Russia and NATO might be imagined: total conflict, a regional conflict in the Nordic-Baltic and/or Black Sea theatres, and a limited incursion into NATO territory. The eFP, together with local forces, has a crucial role to play in this third scenario in particular. While it is very difficult to define in advance what a limited incursion might look like – except that it would be an action with relatively restricted forces and initial goals – the readiness of the eFP and local forces to defend against such limited incursions forms the very basis of deterrence. Russia is unlikely to venture directly into a regional conflict, even if it wishes to demonstrate through large scale combat readiness exercises its capability to conduct total war at relatively short notice, without first testing the responsiveness and determination of the Alliance on a smaller scale.

Generally, as explained in our interviews, the contributing and host nations make no difference between the roles of deterrence and defence: in their daily tasks, training and exercises, the BGs simply work to be 24/7 combat ready to respond to the political decisions of the Allies. The defence forces of the host nations, into which the eFP BGs are integrated, are the very first responders to a military crisis. Representatives of the contributing nations expressed no doubts that they would act together with local forces even in advance of a formal decision by the North Atlantic Council. In a hybrid situation, the host

nations would be the first responders, although not necessarily calling on their defence forces depending on the particular circumstances.

In settling into its deterrence and defence roles, the eFP has evolved from a reassurance measure into a capable and combat-ready additional deterrence factor against Russia. Interviewees noted the greater sense of ‘reality’ of the mission that comes from being deployed close to Russia’s borders, and the novelty, after many years of conducting peace and counter-insurgency operations, of facing a near-peer adversary. While deterrence is now better understood than it was in 2014, it was still not the case that the Allies share a fully common view of what deterrence means on the north-eastern flank and how it is best achieved. In particular, interviewees noted the lack of a measure of success – is the mere fact of the lack of Russian provocation enough? Or should measures of interoperability or combat readiness be included in NATO’s thinking?

It is important to note that the eFP is not a separate endeavour solely responsible for its mission, but fits into a larger NATO concept of deterrence by denial and punishment. In the words of the Warsaw Summit Communiqué,

In the Baltic states, the BGs are a very important addition to the comparatively small, local permanent and mobilised forces

“[the eFP BGs will be] underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy.”¹⁹ The eFP is thus part of a larger picture that includes the NFIUs, the VJTF and the entire NRF, as well as other follow-on forces, and cannot be considered complete unless it is backed up by the full set of reinforcements.²⁰ In support of this wider endeavour, NATO agreed in June 2018 to implement a ‘Four 30s’ plan, requiring the Allies to be able to deploy in the case of a crisis in Europe up to 30 battalion-size BGs, 30 squadrons of aircraft and 30 warships in no more than 30

¹⁹ NATO, “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” paragraph 40.

²⁰ NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, “NATO Response Force / Very High Readiness Joint Task Force,” NATO, SHAPE, April 2018, <https://shape.nato.int/nato-response-force--very-high-readiness-joint-task-force>.

days.²¹ The main aim of the initiative is to boost the readiness of NATO's existing forces.

Within this overall framework, though, the eFP contingents have a rather different meaning and impact for the individual host nations. In the Baltic states, the BGs are a very important addition to the comparatively small, local permanent and mobilised forces. But in Poland, which has much larger land forces constructed around divisions and corps, there are more command and control layers between the eFP BG and the Chief of Defence. This means that not only politically, but also militarily and practically, the eFP BGs have greater impact in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The eFP has a role in strategic communication: to signal Allied solidarity and resolve

Finally, in addition to deterrence and defence, the eFP has a role in strategic communication: to signal Allied solidarity and resolve, sending a clear message not only to Russia, but to the Allied countries themselves. The interaction of the various contributors to the eFP with local governments and populations, especially in the Baltic states, is very important and taken seriously by contingent commanders. Opinion polls (e.g. in Lithuania) show that local populations are generally supportive of the eFP and have, as a rule, similarly positive views towards national defence forces, as well as towards NATO. The eFP BGs are very active on social media, for example posting regularly on their Facebook pages.

2.3 COMMAND AND CONTROL

Our interviewees agreed, without exception, that there are no unresolved command and control issues concerning the eFP. Each of the BGs is fully integrated into the land forces of the respective host nation: the 1st Infantry Brigade of the Estonian Defence Forces (Tapa Military Base), the Mechanized Brigade of the Latvian National Armed Forces (Ādaži Military Base), the Mechanized Infantry Brigade "Iron Wolf" of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (Rukla Military Base), and the 15th Mechanized

Brigade of the 16th Infantry Division of the Polish Armed Forces (Orzysz Training Area).²² Thus, the commanders of the eFP BGs (officers from the framework nations who command all contingents of contributing nations attached to their BGs) are directly subordinated to their local brigade commander. This is a double integration of Allied multinational forces at the battalion level (among contributing nations in the eFP BG), and at the brigade level (BG and local forces).

The number and geographic dispersion of the brigades that include the eFP BGs created a need for regional division-level command and control structures. Poland thus set up the Multinational Division Northeast (MND-NE) Headquarters in Elbląg, which is operational and currently coordinates and supervises the training and operational activities of all four BGs.²³ Denmark, meanwhile, came up with an initiative to establish a Multinational Division North (MND-N) Headquarters in Riga/Adaži, to which the eFP BGs in Estonia and Latvia would be subordinated, along with other Danish, Estonian and Latvian land force units. The MND-N HQ is expected to achieve Initial Operational Capability in 2019, and Full Operational Capability in 2020. It will probably be manned by Danish, Estonian and Latvian officers, but it is natural to assume that representatives of the framework nations of UK and Canada will also be among the contributors, as well as Lithuania, Poland and the US.

Both multinational divisional head-quarters will be subordinated directly to the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Headquarters in Szczecin, Poland, which is, in turn, subordinated to Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum,

²¹ "NATO Agrees To 'Four 30s' Plan to Counter Russia," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 7 June 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-ministers-expected-to-okay-four-thirties-initiative-stoltenberg/29275979.html>.

²² Kaitsevāgi (Estonian Defence Forces), "1st Infantry Brigade," Kaitsevāgi, 5 December 2018, <http://www.mil.ee/en/landforces/1st-Infantry-Brigade>; Matt Zalot, "One year in, NATO's Canada-led eFP Battle Group Latvia is better, faster, and stronger," *The Maple Leaf*, 5 July 2018, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2018/07/15545>; Lithuanian Armed Forces, "Mechanized Infantry Brigade 'Iron Wolf' (MIB IW)," Lithuanian Armed Forces, 17 June 2017, https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/structure_1469/land_force/structure_1299/infantry_brigade%20iron_wolf.html; Ministry of National Defence (Poland), "The Deployment of U.S. Armed Forces in Poland," Ministry of National Defence, 5 November 2016, <http://en.mon.gov.pl/news/article/latest-news/the-deployment-of-us-armed-forces-in-poland-m2016-11-05/>.

²³ NATO, Multinational Division North East, "Multinational Division North East," NATO, Multinational Division North East, <https://mndne.wp.mil.pl/en/>.

located in the Netherlands (the NFIUs are also subordinated to Brunssum). These command and control structures not only make the whole chain of command very clear and are of enormous importance to operational planning and the training of forces, but they also contribute significantly to regional defence integration.

2.4 MULTINATIONALITY

Aspects related to the degree and scope of multinationality were thoroughly considered

More flags signal stronger Allied solidarity, which is one of the main aims of the eFP

from the very start of the process of deciding for and implementing the eFP. Clearly, more flags signal stronger Allied solidarity, which is one of the main aims of the eFP, and ensure that the risks and burden associated with the eFP are spread across the Alliance. That goal has now been achieved through the more or less continuous participation of the vast majority of Allies, almost all of which have deployed forces without operational caveats. On the other hand, a battalion comprising a large number of national contingents, with cultural, administrative, procedural and other differences and, most notably, a lack of previous experience in defence cooperation, could result in less coherence and efficiency and thus reduced combat readiness. In the words of one of our interviewees, a balance is needed between strategic deterrence and military deterrence.

The eFP BGs in Estonia and Poland are less multinational and include countries that have cooperated for many years on different occasions and in various formats. For example, Estonian peacekeeping contingents have operated alongside Danish and British forces in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. These nations, together with six other Allies and partners, have established the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), an initiative aimed at creating a readily deployable intervention force for high-intensity operations.²⁴ The JEF will hold

a major exercise in northern Estonia and the Gulf of Finland in July 2019 that will include a significant maritime component.²⁵ Estonia and France, which participated in the eFP BG in Estonia in 2017 and will do so again from May to December 2019, also have a history of close military cooperation, including in operations in Mali and the Central African Republic.

Latvia and Lithuania host far more multinational eFP BGs – “multicultural laboratories” or “test-beds” in the words of our interviewees for perfecting “micro-interoperability” among the Allies below brigade-level. However, these seem to work very well, even in the case of Latvia where Canada as framework nation had very little or no previous experience of cooperation

with the other contributing nations that it was supposed to integrate. Soon after the Canadian-led eFP was established, high Canadian civilian and military authorities, including at ministerial level, met the contributing nations in Latvia every three months. Presently, such meetings take place only once a year, if that often, indicating that the functioning of the BG has become steady and predictable.

A balance is needed between strategic deterrence and military deterrence

In Lithuania, although there are no native English-speaking contingents, the daily language of command and communication is English. The English language as a common link of communication is yet another important aspect of interoperability – in some cases, English has become the everyday operational communication language in entire host brigades, which has benefits in larger exercises involving the contributing nations, and would be helpful in the possible deployment of follow-on forces. Further, communicating in a common language also encourages ‘security socialisation’, for example allowing hosts to explain matters such as local threat perceptions that are not necessarily self-evident to contingents of contributing nations before their deployment, or contributing nations from other regions to convey their own security concerns.

²⁴ The other participating nations are Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Mihai Turcanu, “UK Joint Expeditionary Force Validated, Will Become Fully Operational in 2018,” *European Security Journal*, 10 May 2018, <https://www.esjnews.com/uk-joint-expeditionary-force>.

²⁵ “UK planning landing operations exercise in Estonia in summer 2019,” *ERR News*, 9 December 2018. <https://news.err.ee/883411/uk-planning-landing-operations-exercise-in-estonia-in-summer-2019>.

Among the contributing nations in Lithuania, Germany and the Netherlands already operate some joint units of land forces. The German Bundeswehr will take over the land component of VJTF 2019, and in this will be supported by some fellow contributors to the eFP BG in Lithuania. Such examples show that the eFP BGs are actually cooperation formats between Allies who are already integrated or are on the way to becoming deeply integrated. Most problems related to multinationality in the eFP are more or less solved. Very good progress has been made in adapting tactics, procedures and techniques in all the host nation brigades which include the multinational eFP contingents. Some practical challenges, for example those related to different types of communication equipment, have existed for many years, but these challenges do not affect the general state of combat readiness and interoperability at brigade level.

To all intents and purposes, the eFP BGs are mini-coalitions of the willing. They focus on their respective host nations, but also take time to work on their interaction in the wider context of the north-eastern flank, especially through regular cross-border exercises. The general opinion of our interviewees was that the composition of the individual BGs had been settled and would be preserved in the future, although some contributing nations would prefer the flexibility to move their contingents between certain host nations – for example, France and Iceland would like to be able to participate in both Estonia and Lithuania.

A company-size US contingent could be deployed to the Baltic states, rotated regularly between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and attached to the respective eFP BG

The US rotates the bulk of its EDI forces in Germany and Poland, including the eFP BG to which it contributes. From Poland, US units of different sizes and purposes move for exercises and temporary shows of presence through the entire eastern flank of the Alliance, from Estonia to Bulgaria. The US flag is therefore not

absent from the Baltic states, but neither has it been permanent since the deployment of the eFP BGs and the departure of the US companies deployed in 2014. Some Baltic interviewees suggested that a company-size US contingent could be deployed to the Baltic states, rotated regularly between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and attached to the respective eFP BG. This relatively minor adjustment from the military/practical point of view would have a great political significance for the Baltic states, and would certainly support the eFP's mission of deterrence.

Our interviewees left us in no doubt about their countries' commitment to contribute further to the eFP, commonly citing Allied solidarity as the prime motivator

2.5 THE WIDER VALUE OF THE eFP TO THE CONTRIBUTING AND HOST NATIONS

Our interviewees left us in no doubt about their countries' commitment to contribute further to the eFP, commonly citing Allied solidarity as the prime motivator. But it is also clear that practically all contributing nations value additional motivational factors that make their commitment easier to sustain. These motivational factors may be political or practical or, as seems to be most frequent, both.

Political relations between contributing nations, and particularly between framework nations and their respective hosts, have become tighter; the eFP certainly plays a positive role here. British-Estonian, Danish-Estonian and Polish-American relations need no elaboration in this respect. Canada, meanwhile, has discovered Latvia and the Baltic area, and rediscovered its own interest in European security. Bilateral high-level visits of unprecedented frequency between Canada and Latvia (and also Estonia) demonstrate Canada's willingness to also develop business and trade relations in the region, including as far as Ukraine. While the purchase of up to 60 airplanes by the Latvian state-owned Air Baltic from Canada's Bombardier Inc. is not at all linked to eFP, it is

nonetheless a major sale by the Canadian aircraft producer that helps bringing the two countries closer together.²⁶ Canada has also launched a 'Twelve Cities Programme' in Latvia in order to promote commercial, entrepreneurial and other ties, making use of the free trade agreement between the EU and Canada.²⁷

Another example is France, which has developed a strong relationship with Estonia, including political contacts, defence procurements, Estonian participation in French/EU operations in Africa, and so forth. It would certainly like to replicate such a relationship with Lithuania, where it rotated a contingent in 2018. Lithuania, however, may be more tempted to focus politically, economically and militarily on Germany.

More practically, formations of contributing nations, in particular the framework nations, deploy with different types of armaments, including main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and multiple launch rocket systems, offering them the opportunity to test on the ground almost the entire spectrum of land force platforms. As a result, the scale and quality of training for contributing nations is constantly improving, including at divisional level. We were also told by interviewees that individual personnel on deployment – officers, NCOs and soldiers – have plenty of time to focus on enhancing their

Aside from the strategic benefits of enhanced deterrence, the eFP also brings considerable advantages to host nations. While NATO headquarters views the eFP as primarily a political instrument, for the host nations it also has a strong military dimension. In the Baltic states, the BGs – as integral parts of land force brigades – are included in national defence plans and efforts are made to convey this important strategic message. Combat readiness, which includes training and integration with local forces and familiarization with local conditions and climate, is achieved in a matter of weeks. Commanders of host nation brigades are happy to acknowledge that their units have become stronger through integration of the eFP BGs. Meanwhile, the eFP prepares an increasing number of rotating combat-ready formations from each contributing nation to complement the pool of high-readiness follow-on forces.

Another beneficial aspect for host nations, but also for the entire Alliance, is the improvement of hard security infrastructure, including through projects for development of HNS capabilities

While NATO headquarters views the eFP as primarily a political instrument, for the host nations it also has a strong military dimension

military skills. In many instances, they are able to get better training than at home, with more complete sets of equipment. They are also kept constantly busy in order to achieve and sustain combat readiness.

Another beneficial aspect for host nations, but also for the entire Alliance, is the improvement of hard security infrastructure, including through projects for development of HNS capabilities. Estonia's HNS expenditures are allocated on top of the 2% of GDP provided for defence, hence the overall defence budget is presently 2.17% of GDP. Latvia and Lithuania do not have 'separate' HNS budgets and their HNS expenditures – included in the 2% of GDP they spend on defence – are more difficult to calculate. Estonia has already accomplished and Latvia and Lithuania will complete by 2020 large HNS infrastructure projects (barracks, depots, training sites etc.), to which the framework nations also contribute. However, interviewees (especially in Latvia and Lithuania) acknowledged that the host nations would find difficulty in covering significantly higher HNS costs in the event of the eFP being further enhanced.

Mobility by road, rail and ship is yet another benefit. The Military Mobility Initiative of

²⁶ Air Baltic Corporation, "airBaltic Orders up to 60 Aircraft for Significant Breakthrough of Development," Press Release, 28 May 2018, <https://www.airbaltic.com/en/airbaltic-orders-up-to-60-aircraft-for-significant-breakthrough-of-development>.

²⁷ Government of Canada, The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, "Trade Commissioner Service – Latvia," Government of Canada, The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, <https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/latvia-lettonie/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

the European Union ('Military Schengen') certainly supports and complements the eFP programme, and will allow far speedier border crossing by military convoys and cargoes than are currently possible.²⁸ A good example is the planned additional investment in Rail Baltic for military mobility to allow for the transport of heavier cargoes.²⁹

The value added by the eFP is interoperability at the tactical level, both in terms of procedures and human integration

The keyword used by both local and contributing commanders concerning the value added by the eFP, however, is interoperability at the tactical level, both in terms of procedures and human integration.

2.6 RUSSIA'S RESPONSE

On the whole, Russia's official reactions to the establishment of the eFP have been mixed, sometimes labelling the Allied presence a real menace, at other times deeming the eFP to be insignificant. It is no secret that Russia deeply dislikes NATO, and the determination of the Allies to defend every square inch of the

While Russia has no reason to feel threatened by the eFP, it does seem to be irritated by the Allies' perception of the Russian threat and their return to collective defence

territory of the Alliance.³⁰ While Russia has no reason to feel threatened by the eFP, which is a very limited force, it does seem to be irritated by NATO's efforts to build and strengthen hard security infrastructure in host nations, by the US commitment to the defence of the Suwałki gap, and above all by the Allies' perception of

the Russian threat and their return to collective defence.³¹

Interviewees regarded Russian attempts to break Allied solidarity as the main risk to the eFP. At the same time, they recognised that Russia has few options when it comes to reacting to the eFP and, ultimately, it would have to accept NATO presence in the Baltic states and Poland just as it had to accept Baltic and Polish membership of NATO. Russia has used and can be expected to continue to use opportunities to launch disinformation and propaganda attacks against NATO in general and the eFP in particular. For example, only two weeks after the deployment of the German contingent to Lithuania (in mid-February 2017), Russia launched disinformation attacks against it: emails accusing German soldiers of rape were sent to local news outlets and the speaker of the country's parliament, seemingly in an attempt to duplicate the impact of the 'Lisa case', discredit the eFP and discourage Allies from deploying troops to the north-eastern flank.³² This disinformation attack was rebutted, very quickly and firmly.³³ Later in 2017, a faked photo of the German commander of the eFP BG in Lithuania, showing him with a Russian "spy" in Moscow's Red Square, was disseminated on social media. There were also reports that Russia hacked and harassed eFP personnel by tracking smartphones, actions described as 'hybrid challenges'.³⁴

²⁸ European Union, European Commission, "EU Budget: Commission proposes increased funding to invest in connecting Europeans with high-performance infrastructure," European Commission, Press Release, 6 June 2018. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4029_en.htm.

²⁹ Rail Baltic, "The Rail Baltic Project," Rail Baltic, 1 July 2015, <http://railbaltic.info/en/>.

³⁰ "Lavrov calls for 'post-West' world order; dismisses NATO as Cold War relic," *Deutsche Welle*, 18 February 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/lavrov-calls-for-post-west-world-order-dismisses-nato-as-cold-war-relic/a-37614099>.

³¹ For example: "Russian Defense Minister calls for 'symmetrical response' to NATO activities near Western borders," *RT*, 20 June 2018, <https://www.rt.com/russia/430325-russian-defense-minister-symmetrical/>; "Lavrov: NATO Unveils Facilities Near Russia Behind Far-Fetched Pretexts," *Sputnik*, 23 June 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201706231054916268-lavrov-nato-russia/>; "Lavrov hopes NATO 'wise enough' to prevent third world war," *Tass*, 18 October 2018, <http://tass.com/politics/1026658>.

³² "Lithuania looking for source of false accusation of rape by German troops," *Reuters*, 17 February 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lithuania-nato/lithuania-looking-for-source-of-false-accusation-of-rape-by-german-troops-idUSKBN15W1JO>.

³³ Teri Shultz, "Why the 'fake rape' story against German NATO forces fell flat in Lithuania," *Deutsche Welle*, 22 February 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-the-fake-rape-story-against-german-nato-forces-fell-flat-in-lithuania/a-37694870>.

³⁴ Teri Shultz, "Russia is hacking and harassing NATO soldiers, report says," *Deutsche Welle*, 6 October 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/russia-is-hacking-and-harassing-nato-soldiers-report-says/a-40827197>.

Russia's disinformation war is directed at different audiences and has different purposes. The public and decision makers in eFP contributing nations are obvious targets. To them, the Kremlin tries to show that Allied presence on the north-eastern flank is both useless (Russia is not a threat) and escalatory (the eFP is regarded by the Kremlin as a real threat). The Russian speakers in the Baltic states are equally important targets, as many of them are daily consumers of official Russian propaganda, especially on television. Moscow clearly tries to influence a large audience in the host nations and to make people believe that the eFP is a malign presence.³⁵

Russia's attacks, however, have not been successful and while the Kremlin has stopped producing fake stories on the eFP, Russia's state propaganda channels RT and Sputnik remain very keen to exploit to the maximum any incidents involving eFP personnel, and to repeat the Kremlin's anti-NATO and anti-eFP narrative.³⁶ eFP personnel from various contributing nations are instructed very thoroughly before deployment in order to avoid incidents and provocations that could be used by the Russian propaganda machine. The risk of provocations by Russia could influence commanders to keep their soldiers mostly in barracks or training areas in order to avoid incidents, which would lead to rather limited knowledge among the contingents of their surroundings and little contact with the local populations. However, this has not been the case: eFP commanders have preferred to accept the risk of Russian propaganda and disinformation attacks rather than keep their troops isolated.

Finally, it should be noted that Russia has had direct contact with and access to the eFP. Russian officers have inspected the BGs in the framework of the OSCE's Vienna Document of 2011, for example at Tapa Base in Estonia,

in November 2018.³⁷ Such inspections should prevent Russian suspicions regarding the size and defensive purpose of the eFP BGs, while also conveying messages about their combat readiness.

2.7 ENHANCING THE eFP

2.7.1 SIZE

Most interviewees believed that NATO's deterrence by denial in theatre is sufficient under present circumstances, meaning that the situation in and around the north-eastern flank is considered relatively stable. The risk of surprise conflict was estimated to be low and strengthening the eFP BGs with significantly more boots on the ground, e.g. by augmenting them from battalion to brigade size formations, tended to be considered undesirable or even counterproductive. Four eFP multinational brigades may not decisively change the balance of forces on the north-eastern flank, but when mobilised local forces are also considered, NATO would possess altogether at least 10 brigades in the Baltic states alone. These, together with deployed US forces and Polish forces, would require Russia to have a very large number of combat-ready brigades for a 3 to 1 winning ratio.

Some experts and officials thus argued that, in unchanged circumstances, eFP brigades in each host nation would lead to further escalation by Russia and bring about an 'arms race', and a significantly higher risk of incidents and/or Russian provocations with the potential to degenerate into conflict. They believed that full brigades would exceed – in Russia's view – the threshold of "substantial combat forces" enshrined in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, even if the meaning of the term "substantial" has never been agreed and the security environment has deteriorated considerably since the Founding Act was signed. In addition, they considered that brigade-sized eFP contingents would transform the eFP, again from Russia's point of view, from a defensive force to one capable of offensive action, notwithstanding the fact that Russia's forces would still exceed substantially NATO's combined forces on the

³⁵ Digital Forensic Research Laboratory, "BalticBrief: The Kremlin's Loudspeaker in Latvia. Russian language media outlet in Latvia adapts pro-Kremlin content for local audience," *Medium.com*, 19 November 2017, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/balticbrief-the-kremlins-loudspeaker-in-latvia-14c6398b2473>.

³⁶ Digital Forensic Laboratory, "Russian Narratives on NATO's Deployment. How Russian-language media in Poland and the Baltic States portray NATO's reinforcements," *Medium.com*, 1 April 2017, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/russian-narratives-on-natos-deployment-616e19c3d194>.

³⁷ "Russian Arms Control delegation inspecting Estonian Defence Forces units," *ERR News*, 27 November 2018, <https://news.err.ee/880347/russian-arms-control-delegation-inspecting-estonian-defence-forces-units>.

north-eastern flank. Furthermore, interviewees pointed to financial and practical limitations (especially the lack of training facilities) to increasing the size of the eFP.

Most interviewed experts agreed that the Allies would need to strengthen the eFP in a significantly worsened, but still permissive environment

However, most interviewed experts agreed that the Allies would need to strengthen the eFP in a significantly worsened, but still permissive environment, even if the main bulk of NATO's reinforcements (VJTF, NRF and other follow-on forces) would not be deployed unless conflict was imminent. Nevertheless, assumptions among the Allies about the unlikelihood of such a change prevent NATO from thinking about and planning for rapid responses by the Alliance, including the strengthening of the eFP. Some interviewees saw a merit in the purposeful ambiguity of this approach, which arguably makes Russia's planning and decision-making more difficult.

One way to proceed with the strengthening of the eFP, while not increasing the number of rotational troops, would be to deploy additional equipment from framework (and other contributing) nations for storage in host nations. Ideally, each host nation would store sufficient materiel for a full eFP brigade, including the equipment in use by the rotating BG. Additional costs for building storage facilities etc. could be covered jointly by equipment providers and host nations, while the stored equipment could also be used for exercises.

Different forms of Allied presence in any case operate in full unison, as proven through numerous exercises

2.7.2 JOINT ENABLEMENT

A perhaps more relevant aspect is that the eFP is land-centric. This is, of course, for a good reason, as the Baltic and, to a lesser extent, Polish forces are mostly land based. Nevertheless, operations are conducted

jointly on land and sea, and in the air, space and cyber space. NATO and the Allies rehearse this in most of their medium and large scale exercises (e.g. Sabre Strike, Anaconda, Trident Juncture). While NATO Allies provide land, air and naval forces on the north-eastern flank, these are not integrated into one joint mission. Most officials and commanders interviewed disagreed with the idea that the eFP should evolve into a fully integrated land, air, sea space and cyber formation, pointing out that jointness already exists and that the different forms of Allied presence in any case operate in full unison, as proven through numerous exercises. Some interviewees, however, highlighted a need for enablers to facilitate the deployment of reinforcements, such as additional air, missile and coastal defences and fire support assets. In a similar vein, others argued that the rapid transition of Baltic air policing to an air defence mission should be planned and exercised.

Steadily developing cooperation between NATO and its Nordic EOP partners would allow these Partners to become ever more closely involved with the workings of the eFP

2.7.3 INVOLVING THE ENHANCED OPPORTUNITIES PARTNERS

Finland and Sweden, both militarily capable countries with tremendous geographic importance for deterring Russia and defending NATO's north-eastern flank, are amongst the closest partners of NATO. Cooperation between NATO, Finland and Sweden has in the last few years increased in scale and quality, and it continues to do so. For example, Finnish and Swedish military forces have participated in many regional training exercises, including Sabre Strike, Trident Juncture and Estonia's *Siil* (Hedgehog) and *Kevadtorm* (Spring Storm).

In the naval domain, it would be natural to consider ways of inviting Finland and Sweden to join the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1) and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1 (SNMCMG1).

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to exchange regional situational awareness information in the form of air and maritime pictures, and for NATO and Finland and Sweden to share information to the fullest possible extent on hybrid and cyber operations.

Steadily developing cooperation between NATO and its Nordic EOP partners would allow these Partners to become ever more closely involved with the workings of the eFP.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our report has looked at various aspects of the eFP some eighteen months after the start of its deployment to the Baltic states and Poland. Our findings have been based on a series of interviews with decision makers and implementers from several eFP contributing and host nations. In general, there is broad agreement that the concept, establishment, deployment, continuous generation, rotation, integration, training and combat readiness of the eFP BGs has been a great success. NATO's multinational presence on the north-eastern flank demonstrates Allied solidarity and resolve.

- **The eFP should remain a focus of the Alliance, at the highest levels, in order to maintain political support from contributing nations, and NATO as a whole to force generation and the provision of necessary resources. Host nations, meanwhile, must be able to cover HNS expenditures, within or in addition to the 2% of GDP allocated to their defence budgets. They must be ready to improve or build the necessary hard security infrastructure.**

Deterrence under present circumstances is, however, an evolving concept and not all Allies entirely share threat perceptions or agree on responses.

- **NATO should continue to encourage debate on, and work on the concept of deterrence in order to promote a common understanding.**

Battalion-size eFP BGs are considered sufficient for deterrence under the present

circumstances, which are deemed relatively stable. However, the possibility that the security environment may worsen drastically and rapidly cannot be excluded and the Alliance should plan accordingly.

- **Plans should be made for the rapid augmentation of the eFP from battalion to brigade-size formations in the event of a deteriorating security environment. These plans should be fully and regularly exercised in all host nations.**

The eFP does not exist in isolation. It is part of NATO's overall strategy of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment. As such it depends on other components of the Alliance's deterrence strategy.

- **NATO should continue to exercise reinforcement operations, involving the whole range of follow-on forces, in addition to the VJTF and the NRF. Trident Juncture 2018 was a very good example of the scale and scope of NATO exercises necessary in the present circumstances.**

The chain of command, from the eFP BGs through national brigades, multinational divisional HQs and the MNC NE up to Joint Force Command Brunssum is largely in place and clear. The MND-N HQ in Latvia remains to be established, manned and become operational and will make a vital contribution to regional defence planning and integration.

- **The establishment of MND-N HQ should be accelerated. Exercises at divisional level, coordinated by MND HQs in Poland and Latvia, should strengthen regional integration and cement the role of the eFP BGs in the defence structures of their host nations.**

Wider Allied presence on the north-eastern flank under the NATO umbrella (the eFP, air policing, maritime components) and on a national/bilateral basis (US EDI) exists in parallel, with rather limited coordination. This multitude of formats is mutually reinforcing, interoperability is exercised jointly through numerous combined exercises, but the picture of the overall presence of Allies remains somewhat fragmented.

- **The different frameworks of Allied presence on the north-eastern flank should complement and strengthen each other more coherently. The gradual integration of different forms of presence, through existing structures in the chain of command, for the sake of increased coherence and interoperability, is highly desirable.**

The eFP BGs rotate with different types of heavy equipment (main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery etc.), which allows the testing of virtually the entire spectrum of platforms operated by the Allies' land forces. The eFP might be enhanced by the storage of additional equipment in host nations to improve the speed and effectiveness of NATO's collective response.

- **Entire sets of the heavy equipment necessary at brigade level should be stored in the eFP host nations and used both for exercises and as prepositioned equipment for strengthening the eFP BGs in times of crisis. The additional costs could be shared by host nations (under HNS) and contributing nations (offset against the cost of storage of equipment at home).**

Combat readiness is a key feature of the eFP that is sustained by all BGs and the respective local brigades through constant training.

- **The host nations should make greater effort to develop their training areas and shooting ranges, both for use by the in-place eFP BGs, as well as reinforcements. Exercises out of training areas should also be conducted, as far as is possible and practical.**

Another key feature of the eFP as a tool for deterrence is visibility, strategic communication and contact with local governments and populations. Contributing and host nations are active on social and other media, and organise diverse events for local populations in order to build confidence and raise understanding of the eFP's role and aims.

- **The eFP BGs should maintain a high level of visibility and strategic communication. Interaction with local populations, including Russian speakers in the Baltic states, not just in the proximity of garrisons, should continue and diversify.**

Russia is the main risk to eFP, in terms of disinformation and propaganda attacks. Hostile acts (supported) by the Kremlin against Allied presence on the north-eastern flank, including the eFP, will continue as long as Russia's confrontation with the West goes on.

- **Host and contributing nations, as well as NATO, should maintain a high level of surveillance and vigilance in order to counter quickly and effectively any Russian disinformation and propaganda attack against eFP.**

Yet another paramount feature of the eFP is solidarity through multinationality. The 'mini-coalitions-of-the-willing' are firmly in place, and need no significant further adjustments. However, the US is present only in Poland, and not in the Baltic states.

- **The US should consider augmenting its presence in the Baltic states, as a contributing nation in one of the three eFP BGs, or by rotating a company-sized contingent between the three countries. US presence creates high deterrence value.**

Finland and Sweden welcomed the eFP. These partners have very close ties with the Alliance, and their geography, infrastructure and military capabilities in theatre have enormous value for NATO.

- **The non-alignment of Sweden and Finland should not prevent even tighter cooperation with NATO, including the participation of these partners in the Alliance's maritime components (SNMG1 and/or SNMCMG1), or even the eFP itself.**

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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY
63/4 NARVA RD., 10152 TALLINN, ESTONIA
INFO@ICDS.EE, WWW.ICDS.EE



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