

## **French/German Brigade**

### **Spearhead of Eurocorps and European Defence**

The French-German Brigade has been permanently placed under the command of the Eurocorps for exercise since the foundation of the latter in 1993. The cooperation between the two has been fostered very much by participation in the mission in Afghanistan from July 2004 until January 2005. In line with the command relationship between the French-German Brigade and the Eurocorps at home, the Kabul Multinational Brigade was directly subordinate to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), thus forming the most important instrument of the Commander. Twelve years of common work as herald of a European defence are reason enough to provide a short portrait of the French-German Brigade.

The French-German Brigade is a bi-national major army unit that is marked by high mobility and high readiness about 5000 soldiers. It is anchored in the fundamental idea of the Elysée Treaty concluded on the 22nd of January 1963 between the French President, Charles de Gaulle, and the German Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. Since 1989, it has been a symbol of French-German cooperation and of the continuously evolving European Security Policy. Beyond this symbolic function, the Brigade has been playing a convincing role as an effective instrument for maintaining and securing peace – a capability it has proved in several instances in all areas of operation of the German armed forces. Together with the Eurocorps it is currently preparing for an expansion of its mission. In doing so, it draws on the experience of long years of cooperation with other armed forces in a multinational environment. There is no doubt that the Brigade serves as a model for the permanent cooperation of different armies, especially for a future common European defence union.

It was in the year of 1987, at a summit in Karlsruhe/Germany, that Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterand decided to create a common major military unit. About one year later the military authorities in charge issued an order to create the French-German Brigade as the element entrusted with the task of coordinating the first steps of creating the Brigade. After the French-German Brigade had been officially founded on the 2nd of October 1989, the two nations celebrated its entry-into-service in a ceremony in Böblingen/Germany on the 17th of October 1990. It did not take long until the Brigade demonstrated its initial capability during its first field training exercise. After the headquarters had been transferred to Müllheim/Germany, the French-German Brigade was placed under the command of the Eurocorps in 1993. Highlights in the early years of existence of the Brigade – besides the exercises – were certainly the participation in the Champs-Élysées parade on the 14th of July 1993 and the visit of the two Ministers of Defence on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty in 1993.

### **The units and their locations**

The elements of the French-German Brigade are distributed over three garrisons and three subsidiary locations in the state of Baden-Württemberg. At these garrisons, German and French units of the Brigade are co-located.

The Robert-Schuman-Kaserne at Müllheim is the seat of the Brigade staff, the HQ Company and the Support Battalion. The French-German Brigade is commanded alternately by a German or a French general in a two-year rotation where the Commander is a Colonel of the respective other nation. The Brigade Commander is assisted by a mixed French-German staff. Besides the staff divisions that exist in purely national HQs, too – military security, training & operations, logistics, communications – there are specific elements in the staff of this brigade, which are: two personnel divisions (one German, one French), two administrative sections, a legal adviser section, a translation services section, a public information section, an air liaison section. Moreover, from summer 2005 on the brigade staff will be reinforced by two Spanish and five German personnel. The HQ Company – also a mixed-nationality unit – provides support to the brigade staff in terms of personnel and logistics. During exercises and operations its task is to prepare, operate and secure the brigade command posts. In order to maintain communication links to the subordinate units and to superior HQs, this company provides sophisticated French and German signal equipment plus the required operator personnel. The company with its approximately 300 German and French personnel is alternately headed by a French or a German commander.

The Support Battalion is the only battalion of the Brigade that has mixed-nationality units, even down to platoon level. The battalion commander post rotates between Germany and France, with the deputy being provided by the respective other nation. The main task of this mixed support battalion is the supply with and transport of spare parts, ammunition and the repair of equipment of all units of the brigade.

**The second location** where units of the French-German Brigade are stationed is the garrison of Donaueschingen. Here are the French 110e Régiment d'Infanterie and the German Jägerbataillon 292. Owing to their infantry combat and antitank capabilities both units are able to seize and hold terrain. Their high mobility enables them to gain control of areas quickly.

For reasons of lacking space, two companies of Jägerbataillon 292 are temporarily stationed at locations other than Donaueschingen: the 7th Company carries out the basic training of recruits in Messtetten, whereas the 5th (Jäger) is stationed in Stetten am kalten Markt.

**The third garrison**, Immendingen, is located between the Black Forest and the Swabian Alb. It is the home Panzerartilleriebataillon 295 (armoured artillery), the French 3e Régiment de Hussards (light armoured cavalry) and Panzerpionierkompanie 550 (armoured engineers).

The Panzerartilleriebataillon 295 has not been part of the French-German Brigade from the start: it was attached to the course of a re-organisation move. In the future, the primary mission of this armoured artillery battalion will be brigade fire support only, but also ground-based reconnaissance. For this purpose, the unit has been equipped with an armoured reconnaissance vehicle, which has proved its value for reconnaissance tasks during the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The 3e Régiment de Hussards is a unit with a long tradition reaching back to the French Revolution. It was part of the command of the French-German Brigade in 1990 and has since then fulfilled the typical tasks of light armoured units. The core of these tasks is to provide the Brigade with reconnaissance information. Until 1995 the unit was stationed in one reconnaissance company being detached to Müllheim as an independent unit. The Panzerpionierkompanie 550 was created in the course of the creation of the French-German Brigade. With its modern equipment it is capable of both mobility and counter-mobility operations (obstacles).

The total capabilities of its units enable the French-German Brigade to perform a variety of missions within the theatre of military operations. This includes the rapid deployment over long distances, the securing and screening of access points, the opening and keeping open of access points for other major units. The reconnaissance capabilities moreover enable the Brigade to gather intelligence for operations of formations at superior level.

### **Peculiarities**

As a consequence of the bi-national structure of the French-German Brigade, this major army unit has some peculiarities. Of these, the working language is a point of special significance. French and German have an equal status within the Brigade. Bilingualism is an important element of the day-to-day work. It is furthermore an important criterion for the selection of personnel for the brigade headquarters and the battalions and regiments. In addition, English is gaining importance as operational language during exercises and operations. The soldiers of this Brigade are used to working in a multicultural environment. Therefore, they need less time than others to adapt themselves to new circumstances and to cooperate with soldiers of other nations. This high flexibility of its personnel is one of the special qualities of the French-German Brigade. Bi-nationality is not restricted to duty affairs, however. The cooperation with the local authorities and the local population is excellent. For example, the possibility exists in all garrisons of the Brigade to send one's children to national kindergartens and elementary schools. Adult educational opportunities, leisure-time activities and family support together form a range of opportunities to get into contact and get to know each other. This integration is an important factor regarding the attractiveness of work in the French-German Brigade.

As to the training carried out within the Brigade, its subordination under the Eurocorps means that the tactical doctrine will be based on national regulations only. Instead, key elements are the so-called Standing Operating Procedures of the Eurocorps which, in turn, are based on NATO regulations.

### **Perspectives**

Undeniably the French-German Brigade has achieved a lot in the short time of its existence – indeed many of its achievements were deemed impossible when it was founded. This does not mean, however, that there is a sense of complacency now. The Brigade continues to work on further refining its structures and enlarging its scope of operations. A turning point in the evolutionary process is presented by the transformation of the Eurocorps into a European Corps that will be implemented in the near future. Crucial elements in designing the employment options for the French-German Brigade could be its capability of rapid deployment, even over large distances, and the objective of conducting an effective Initial Entry Operation.

At the moment, the Brigade is developing concepts on a potential employment as Initial Entry Force of the Eurocorps. The essence of these concepts is that the French-German Brigade will assume the task of acting as a highly mobile force that will be followed by the Eurocorps as a rapidly deployable headquarters together with additional units. Independently of this, the Brigade – under Eurocorps command - will be part of the newly created NATO Reserve Force for a period of six months, in the second half of 2006.

In November 2004, the European defence ministers furthermore decided to set up multinational European Battle Groups as rapid reaction forces of the European Union. According to current plans, the French-German Brigade will have 1,500 of its total of 5,000 soldiers for this force in the second half of 2008.

These new tasks will at the same time be a challenge, connected with large efforts in terms of training and equipment. It will also be a chance for the French-German Brigade to present itself as what it actually is: **The Spearhead of European Defence.**

### **The French-German Brigade**

#### **Always in action – in training areas, in disaster aid and in operations abroad**

The situation in the fictitious country of Thuringia has constantly deteriorated over the past 15 years. In the course of

development, an armed conflict broke out between Nelopania, a part of Thuringia striving for independence : western region of the country, and the central government. After several months of fighting, the conflict part concluded an armistice and agreed to a peace plan as part of which an international protection force (TPFOR) and deployed under UN mandate.

This was the STARTEX situation for EUROPEAN SPEARHEAD, an exercise that took place from 30th May until which about 360 soldiers of the French-German Brigade were involved. The Brigade had spent almost six months the exercise in close cooperation with German Army Warfighting Simulation Centre, Wildflecken. For the Brigade, the exercise implied entering new territory: rather than staging the classical battle BLUE exercise scenario presented a much more complex setting. The command posts of the battalions and regiments only with the regular armed forces of the country of deployment, but also with militias, guerrillas and even gendarmes. The tactical situations presented by the computer system were substantiated by role players commanders had to deal with - very much like under real-life circumstances. The agenda included negotiation of the regular forces and militia leaders as well as CIMIC meetings with civilian representatives of UNHCR and ICRC. Moreover, media teams demanded statements on TPFOR and the current situation. The Brigade provided the media acted as role players, with one notable exception: the Red Cross representative was even real. The military a International Organisation had the opportunity of practising their cooperation during potential future mission: already, and thus they both benefitted from the common experience made. English replaced German and French Brigade's normal working languages for this exercise as a measure of training and preparation for the future mission spectrum.

With a view to the potential NRF mission scenarios the exercise had been designed in several phases in order to cover a spectrum of operations as wide as possible. The exercise started off with an Initial Entry Operation that had a theatre reconnaissance. The next phase was a Peace Support Operation during which the battalions and regiments master incidents of different kinds: militias unwilling to leave the area designated as demilitarised zone in the area, snipers, arresting of war criminals and humanitarian aid in refugee camps. The developments in the area of operations culminated in an armed conflict with the former civil war factions, after the successful completion of which the exercise came to an end.

#### **Exercises in preparation of NRF and IECF**

European Spearhead is one of several exercises which the French-German Brigade uses to prepare internally for the NATO Response Force (NRF) in the second half of 2006. At the same time, the Brigade has stepped up its role as Initial Entry Force of the Eurocorps. The objective of European Spearhead, therefore, was to provide an opportunity for the command posts of the Brigade's subordinate battalions and regiments. The focus was on organisation of the command posts, on the command and control process and on the reporting procedures.

For the Brigade it was the first exercise with all subordinate elements after four years and at the same time that brought the Brigade together again after the successful completion of the Afghanistan mission. With a view to this situation, the Brigade Commander, Brigadegeneral Walter Spindler, stated that although the exercise was a frequent constant exercise rhythm for the command posts significantly increases the Brigade's operational readiness". At the company and battalion level are part of the annual training and education programme, the large number of missions abroad does not allow exercises of the whole Brigade as regularly as would be desirable. The current situation however, is to change this situation, especially with a view to the forthcoming tasks of the Brigade as part of the half of 2006 and the planned commitment as European Battle Group starting in 2008. The fact that the Brigade is taken out of the national rotation schemes for the contingents to be provided for missions abroad will then mean that they concentrate on common tasks for which all capabilities available within the Brigade will be gathered in a single command which additional capabilities of external units will be integrated.

#### **Disaster aid**

The shift from classical national defence and Alliance defence operations to a rapid reaction force for missions abroad does not mean, however, that the Brigade is no longer available for assistance in Government tasks at home. As the remaining military unit in the southwest of Baden-Württemberg, the Brigade still has territorial tasks, too. For example, in the event of natural disasters, it has not been situations for quite a long time now in which the Brigade has been needed to help fighting natural disasters by removing the damage of such disasters in its home region. The last time this was the case was in December 1999, when a violent winter storm called "Lothar" struck the area badly. In February and March 2000, German and French forces cleaned the beaches of Brittany after they had been polluted with oil from the tanker "Erika" that had sunk off the coast. A disaster aid operation in which the Brigade's efforts were particularly praised was the fighting of the floods along the Moselle in August 2002, when the soldiers helped the traumatized population minimize the damage to the extent possible. The most recent event of this kind occurred in November 2003, when the Brigade offered its help to French regions stricken by the floods. As the situation improved quickly, this help was no longer needed in that case.

#### **The French-German Brigade on mission world-wide**

During their missions all around the globe, the soldiers of this Brigade regularly experience that they are inde

first years of its existence, major exercises were the main events within the Brigade's scope of activities. The nineties on, it undertook international commitments. In 1996 / 1997 the entire Brigade went on a mission abroad, taking part in SFOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since then, soldiers of the Brigade have been deployed on peace missions, be it in the Balkans, in Africa or in the Hindukush region. So far, the German and French units have and deployed on missions in accordance with national contingent formation schemes. For the soldiers of 110<sup>e</sup> d'Infanterie and 3<sup>e</sup> Régiment de Hussards this has meant having to perform other missions in addition to their peace missions in the Balkans. This has included France-internal VIGIPIRATE operations, security tasks in the provinces such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion or Nouvelle-Calédonie, but also commitments in former Ivory Coast or Chad. The German soldiers of Jägerbataillon 292, Panzerartilleriebataillon 295 and Panzerpionierbataillon 292, by contrast, have been on mission in the deployment areas of the Bundeswehr only. From 2001 on, they have military installations in Germany in order to make it possible for the USA to employ more US troops in the fight against international terrorism.

### **The culmination point so far: operations in Afghanistan**

When HQ Eurocorps took over the ISAF responsibility, the time had come for the French-German Brigade, to its capability of mastering such a major challenge. From 27th July 2004 until 27th January 2005, the German led by Brigadegeneral Walter Spindler, was at the head of the Kabul Multinational Brigade (KMNB) in Afghanistan, second mission of the Brigade as a whole and the first one under Eurocorps command.

It is difficult to describe the complexity of the KMNB operations in this six-month period in a few sentences, but to help to give an idea of it: soldiers from 28 nations carried out 14,044 patrols, in the city and in the province. On average about 80 patrols were performed per day. In the days around 9th October, the day of the presidential elections which constituted the peak days of the mission, even 122 patrols were out on the roads and in the streets, but

The main task of the Brigade was to support the Afghan authorities as partners in security operations in their cities and to enhance the security in the city and the province of Kabul. It assisted the Kabul City Police in performing a reform of the police and the training of the Afghan National Army (ANA), and it cooperated closely with the Afghan Secret Service. Moreover, the Brigade assisted in re-construction work in the framework of Civil-Military Cooperation.

For the fulfilment of its tasks, the KMNB had 3,800 soldiers from 28 nations at its disposal, of whom 1000 soldiers from the German and one French Battle Group each, the HQ Company and the key personnel of the Brigade staff - were provided by the German Brigade.

The clearly improved security situation in the city and the province of Kabul, the successful and peaceful presidential elections and the smooth installation of the legitimately elected President were the manifestations of the success of the Brigade's mission in Afghanistan. This success has to be ascribed to the individual efforts of each soldier of the Brigade, but also to the excellent cohesion within the KMNB as expressed in the motto One Team – One Mission. It was the result of cooperation with the Afghan security partners and on an open and cordial reception by the Afghan population. It is evident that the large majority of the Afghan people are interested in security and peace rather than a continuation of the hostilities, so that they can concentrate on the re-construction of the country and on their personal future.

**The successful mission of the French-German Brigade in Afghanistan under Eurocorps command is a clear demonstration of the function which the French-German Brigade effectively fulfils – the function as Spearhead of the Eurocorps Defence.**

More about the French-German Brigade on <http://www.df-brigade.de/>