COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU BATTLEGROUPS

Updated: April 2013

Full operational capability since 2007

The European Union is a global actor, ready to undertake its share of responsibility for global security. With the introduction of the Battlegroup concept, the Union formed a (further) military instrument for early and rapid responses when necessary. The EU Battlegroup concept reached full operational capability on 1 January 2007 and since that date, when responding to a crisis the EU is able to undertake two rapid-response deployments of limited duration if so decided by the Council, either as stand-alone actions or as part of a larger operation.

At the 1999 Helsinki European Council meeting, rapid response was identified as an important aspect of crisis management. As a result, the Helsinki Headline Goal 2003 assigned to member states the objective of being able to provide rapid response elements available and deployable at very high levels of readiness.

Subsequently, an EU military rapid response concept was developed. In June 2003 the first autonomous EU-led military operation, Operation Artemis, was launched. It showed very successfully the EU's ability to operate with a rather small force at a significant distance from Brussels, in this case more than 6 000 km. Moreover, it also demonstrated the need for further development of rapid response capabilities. Subsequently, Operation Artemis became a reference model for the development of a battlegroup-sized rapid response capability. In 2004 the Headline Goal 2010 aimed for completion of the development of rapidly deployable battlegroups, including the identification of appropriate strategic lift, sustainability and disembarkation assets, by 2007.

Within this context and based on a French-British-German initiative, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) developed the battlegroup concept, which was agreed by the EU Military Committee (EUMC) in June 2004. Since then, work has been taken forward, based on an agreed roadmap. It was concluded in October 2006 with the delivery of a single Battlegroup concept document.
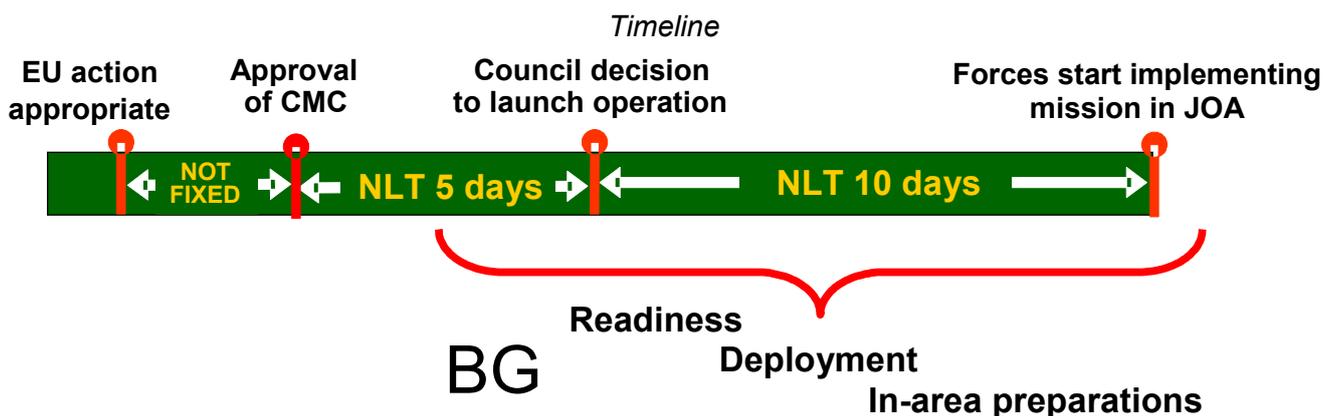
The Battlegroup concept provides the EU with a specific tool in the range of rapid response capabilities, which contributes to make the EU more coherent, more active and more capable. This concept enables the EU to respond rapidly to emerging crises with military means, taking into account the size and capabilities of the Battlegroups on stand-by. The

Battlegroup concept is also a driver for capability development, improved interoperability and to transform the Member States' armed forces from a "cold war" to an expeditionary configuration, i.e. the Member States' capability to undertake rapid deployments and operations.
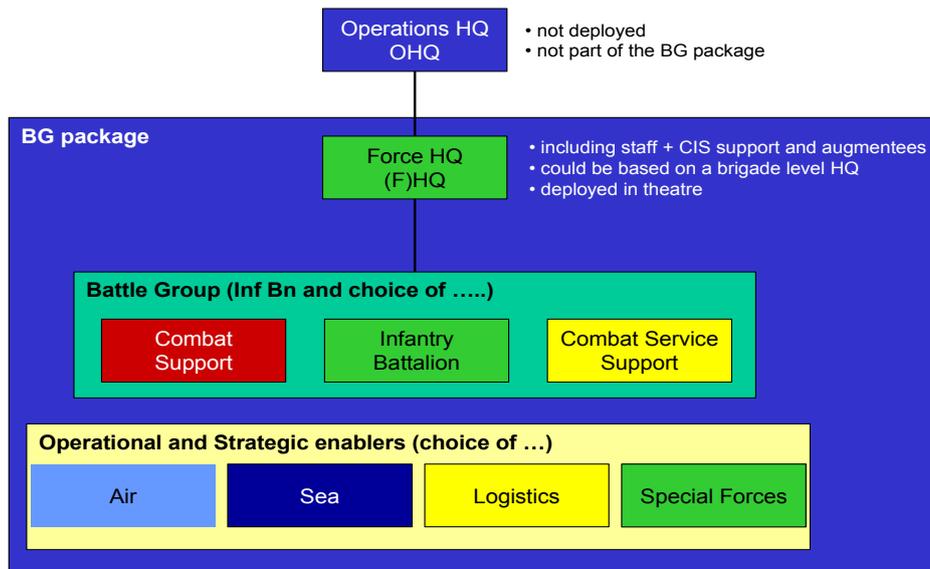
Basic features of EU Battlegroups

A Battlegroup is the minimum militarily effective a credible and coherent, rapidly deployable force package capable of stand-alone operations or for the initial phase of larger operations. It is based on a combined-arms, battalion-sized force, reinforced with combat-support and combat service-support elements. In their generic composition, but depending on the mission, Battlegroups are about 1 500 personnel strong.

Timeline

EU action appropriate	Approval of CMC	Council decision to launch operation		Forces start implementing mission in JOA
	NOT FIXED	NLT 5 days	NLT 10 days	

Readiness

BG   Deployment

In-area preparations

Battlegroups are based on the principle of multinationality and could be formed by a framework nation or by a multinational coalition of Member States. Interoperability and military effectiveness are key criteria. A Battlegroup is associated with a deployable force headquarters and pre-identified operational and strategic enablers, such as strategic lift and logistics. Member States may also contribute niche capabilities, providing specific elements with added value for Battlegroups. Battlegroups are on standby for a six-month period, or multiples of it, and should be initially sustainable for 30 days, extendable to 120 days if resupplied appropriately. The need for additional strategic lift capabilities is underlined by the Battlegroup concept. Furthermore, the concept emphasises the need for accelerated decision-making. Not only do the EU bodies need to be ready but the national decision-making processes need to be synchronised to meet the demanding timelines.

Setting up a Battlegroup package is an opportunity for enhanced military cooperation between Member States. This improves mutual knowledge of each other's capabilities with regard to military means and political decision-making.

Furthermore, the establishment of some Battlegroups is based on multinational coalitions of EU member states. Member States may also invite non-EU countries to participate in Battlegroups.

Operations HQ
OHQ
• not deployed
• not part of the BG package

BG package

Force HQ
(F)HQ
• including staff + CIS support and augmentees
• could be based on a brigade level HQ
• deployed in theatre

Battle Group (Inf Bn and choice of …..)

Combat
Support

Infantry
Battalion

Combat Service
Support

Operational and Strategic enablers (choice of …)

Air

Sea

Logistics

Special Forces

Tasks for EU Battlegroups

In line with the military Headline Goal 2010, and the follow on EU Civilian and Military Capability Development beyond 2010, which place the emphasis on rapid response and deployability, the EU has progressed well in further developing its military capability. Battlegroups are be employable across the full range of tasks listed in Article 43(1) of the Treaty on European Union and those identified in the European Security Strategy. They are combat-trained and their full potential would be best realised in tasks of combat forces in crisis management, bearing in mind their limited size. Battlegroups' operations would as a rule be conducted under a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR), although operations could be envisaged where a UNSCR would not be necessary (e.g. for evacuation of EU citizens).

EU Battlegroup commitments

Member States conduct the generation of Battlegroup packages and are responsible for offering a complete package formed by a framework nation or by a multinational coalition of Member States. The Battlegroup package has no fixed structure and thus provides Member States with the necessary flexibility to form their own Battlegroup package. This could lead, for instance, to Battlegroups with a mountain or amphibious capability. This flexibility aims at facilitating smoother force generation and a broader spectrum of capabilities.

Member States offer their Battlegroup packages during the six-monthly EUMS-chaired Battlegroup Coordination Conferences (BGCC). The planning horizon of the BGCC is six years and is divided into three different levels of commitment connected with the years ahead from the BGCC. The outcome of the BGCC is formalised in a report which the EUMC sends to the PSC. The last BGCC was held in April 2013.

Standards, training and certification

To qualify as an EU Battlegroup, the Battlegroup packages have to meet commonly defined and agreed military capability standards. Standards and criteria embodied in the Battlegroup concept and the Battlegroup preparation guide form the basis for Member States to develop specific instructions to ensure coherence between the constituent parts of the Battlegroup package, taking into account the principle of multinationality.

Training is a key requirement for Battlegroups, and is the responsibility of the Member States concerned. Member States conduct a series of exercises in this regard, prior to taking a Battlegroup standby period. The EU facilitates coordination among Member States.

The certification of Battlegroups also remains a national responsibility of the contributing member states. The EU Military Committee, assisted by the EU Military Staff, monitors the Battlegroup certification process, which must be undertaken in accordance with the established EU-agreed procedures.

A certified Battlegroup package will provide the EU with the necessary assurance that it is ready for a possible mission. The operation commander, who will be appointed by the Council on a case-by-case basis, has the authority to tailor the command and control structure and the Battlegroup package assets and capabilities to the specific requirements of the operation.

Challenges to meet EU commitments

Since the Battlegroup concept was agreed in June 2004, much has been achieved. With the full commitment of Member States, the Battlegroup concept has already shown its potential value in securing increased cooperation and capability development among Member States. It has contributed to enhancing the EU's capability to deal with rapid response and will continue to do so.

The high operational tempo, the substantial costs associated with the preparation and the possible deployment of Battlegroups, combined with current financial crisis and austerity, pose, however, challenges to fill the Battlegroup Roster. This situation has triggered intensive work and initiatives to mitigate existing shortfalls.

EU Battlegroups remain important for CSDP as the only military capabilities on stand-by for possible EU operations and as they are helping to reinforce the effectiveness of Member States' military forces. In November 2009 the Council approved guidelines for improving the flexibility and usability of Battlegroups. Most recently, in its December 2012 Conclusions on CSDP, the European Council called for strengthening the EU's ability to deploy the right capabilities rapidly and effectively on the whole spectrum of crisis management action. The issue of having available adequate rapid response capabilities for EU action will stay high on the EU agenda, also in light of the European Council's assertion that in today's changing world the EU is called upon to assume increased responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The common security and defence policy (CSDP) shall be an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. It shall provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The Union may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The performance of these tasks shall be undertaken using capabilities provided by the member states.

The common security and defence policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides. The CSDP includes a strong conflict prevention component.

Further information and background documents available on:
www.consilium.europa.eu/esdp and eeas.europa.eu