

SDA Lunch Debate with General Henri Bentégeat

The EU Military Rapid Response



Bibliothèque Solvay, 10 September 2007, Brussels

Contents

Executive summary	p. 3
General Bentégeat	p. 4
The Q&A session	p. 5
The EU and NATO - rapid response	
The importance of industry	
Back in the EU	
Expansion of the Battlegroups concept	
Military and civilian actions, which ones are predominant?	
Use of Battlegroups (in Africa)	
List of participants	p. 9
About the SDA	p. 11

The EU Military Rapid Response

EU and NATO: we're compatible – it's time to cooperate

Inevitably, the SDA's lunchtime debate on the EU's Military Rapid Response was dominated by questions concerning the (in) compatibility between that initiative and NATO's own venture. The majority of questions were not of a negative nature, as they delved into how the two organisations could work effectively to meet existing challenges.

Speaking frankly, General Bentégeat outlined the history of the EU's Battlegroups, challenges they were facing – in Brussels, in the Member States and in the field – and the new thinking concerning the EU's ability to provide a comprehensive response to a crisis (civilian and military / the addition of sea and air support).

Despite the Alliance's infinitely superior resources, the UK's Ambassador to NATO's Stewart Eldon was keen to know details about any plans that the EU had to make its softer resources available. For General Bentégeat, "parallel and common" engagement was the way forward. He did add

though, that there would be times when the EU would want to act alone.

On the subject of increased cooperation, General Bentégeat was very positive. He saw the main benefits being for the EU as: a) it had limited resources, and b) NATO's rapid response forces had already learnt many lessons and was ahead in terms of training and certification.



General Henri Bentégeat, CEUMC

Pressed by NATO's Hendrik Schuwer on the shortage of helicopters in Afghanistan and potentially in Tchad (due to both organisations "fishing in the same pond"), General Bentégeat admitted that both organisations were stretched and that many problems had their origins back in the Member States, where decisions were taken by "individual nations". On the subject of the use of the Battlegroups, General Bentégeat hinted that the troops might operate in an unofficial capacity in, for example, Africa. If no actions were taken, he saw a danger that the concept could wither and die.

Germany's Ambassador to the EU, Clemens von Goetze, wanted the EUMC to go full speed ahead with the plans to add air and sea support to the Battlegroups concept. He wanted a fully comprehensive response unit on permanent stand-by. Jane's

International Defence Review's Brooks Tigner wanted to know what contingency plans were in place if the troops were sent into action.

General Bentégeat agreed on the way forward, with the provision that "It is not as easy as it looks". He could not fully answer Tigner's question either as the definitive crisis management concept had to be agreed by the Political and Security Committee (PSC). It was back to the Member States, although the General did have some hope that progress would be faster once the new Treaty was in place. Until then the EU and NATO's unofficial cooperation would continue apace.

As General Bentégeat commented, the two organisations are "acting in complementary fashion at all times".

General Henri Bentégeat

Opening his remarks with a brief history of the Battlegroup concept, General Bentégeat reviewed the lessons learnt from the *Artémis* operation and the subsequent agreement, by the EUMC, to press ahead with the initiative in June 2004.

Focusing on the military aspects of the EU's rapid response capabilities, General Bentégeat looked at the

challenges facing the EU. These were the need for:

- a) the EU's military capabilities to be more visible; he mentioned that the EU had less than 200 staff in uniform compared to the several thousand NATO personnel
- b) the global situation to be continually reassessed, especially in terms of operational capability

The Member States would of course be at the centre of all discussions, and General Bentégeat looked at the challenges they faced, resulting mainly from the Battlegroup implementation. These were:

- the decision-making process: that allows for just 10 days between the decision to deploy troops and those same troops being ready for action; General Bentégeat described this as being "very ambitious" especially as the perception of the "degree of threat" varied between Member States.
- the availability of strategic transport: as an example, the General stated that the *Artémis* operation had needed the equivalent of 200 C130 sorties (to set up the operation) and a further 276 sorties to convey



Ludwig Decamps, NATO

troops to the required locations

- certification and training: the choice was between making this a Member States' responsibility or addressing it through the EU structures; however a pragmatic solution had been found whereby the Member States were responsible but in cooperation with operational HQ.

maintained by Member States and supported by the European Commission) so they could respond to urgent non-military matters.

General Bentégeat insisted that this type of coordination (civilian-military) was a matter that was on the EUMC's agenda. DG9 and the new chain of command established following the 2005 Hampton Court Summit would also be heavily involved. The EU's objective was to establish the necessary mechanisms (across the board) so that its forces could respond rapidly, in line

New developments

As for new thinking, General Bentégeat referred to current discussions concerning the addition of air and sea elements to the rapid response concept. In this regard, he noted the existence of



Brooks Tigner, Jane's International Defence Review

a coordination centre of maritime resources in Lisbon, created to assist in the fight against drug trafficking. In addition, the aerial rapid response mechanism could be aided by the use of a database that would allow questions to be asked (by Battlegroup commanders) about the availability of air support from participating Member States.

Another important dimension was the civilian-military coordination, seen to be essential if a comprehensive response was to be developed. The requirement was defined as the need to identify experts (from a pool

with the Petersberg Tasks, and a reaction would be as effective as possible.

Perhaps thinking of the questions to come, General Bentégeat concluded by adding that there was no

duplication between the EU Battlegroups and NATO's Rapid Response forces, and that the two concepts were compatible.

The Q&A session

The EU and NATO – rapid response

AFP's Pascal Mallet referred back to comments made by NATO General Secretary Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, whereby the Secretary General had commented about the ambivalence in the EU's attitude to NATO's policy.

Requesting General Bentégeat's thoughts on this, Mallet also asked the General if he thought that the re-integration of France within NATO would remove such ambivalence.

Although General Bentégeat was not aware of the Secretary General's comments, he did not see any ambivalence. The EU was, importantly, "more civil than military" and this was understandable due to the ESDP still being in its relative infancy. However, the EU wanted to improve its ability to act simultaneously on all fronts in order to manage an approaching crisis. General Bentégeat saw this as being totally in line with NATO's thinking. He argued that the EU had a complete range of capacities, both civilian and – "more and more" – military. General Bentégeat saw no conceptual differences and no variance in the use of (the same) armed forces. In addition, EU standards were always NATO standards and the organisations "acted in complementary fashion at all times".

As for France's position in NATO, the General reasoned that re-integration would alleviate the unwarranted suspicions concerning plots against NATO.

Following up, NATO's Ludwig Decamps asked if it was the time for

the EU and NATO to be discussing increased possibilities for cooperation rather than referring to possible duplication.

General Bentégeat was very positive on that subject as he saw that the two organisations were just beginning to coordinate more. He saw the main benefits being for the EU as a) it had limited resources, and b) NATO's Rapid Response Forces had already learnt many lessons and was ahead in terms of training and certification.

The UK's Ambassador to NATO Stewart Eldon had been impressed by the General's description of the "difference in spread" of the two organisations, which had made it obvious that the EU's spectrum of capabilities was far wider than NATO's (and wider than the Alliance would want). The Ambassador agreed there was no competition, and he was more interested in knowing if the EU was investigating areas where NATO would be able to use the EU's resources (e.g. Kosovo, Afghanistan, etc.) where both organisations were involved. Note: This would be a kind of reverse Berlin+. The Ambassador stressed the importance of such an approach, as some crises were too big for one organisation to handle alone.

General Bentégeat said parallel and common engagement was a way



Stewart Eldon, UK Delegation to NATO

forward, for example in Afghanistan (with a new police force alongside the military) and in Kosovo (civilian presence together with a NATO military capacity). Describing such initiatives as “interesting and important”, the General nevertheless insisted that it was not the only game in town, as there would be occasions (crises of a smaller military scale) when the EU would be able to work alone. The EU would also be able to rely on regional organisations and on the UN. However, he added that the latter organisation had been insufficiently involved at the beginning of the current crisis in Afghanistan.

Reuters’ Mark John returned to the strategic transport issue and asked if the EU might be turning towards NATO for assistance in this area. General Bentegeat saw strategic transport as a major problem, but he felt that the situation was improving due to the acquisition of C17s by some Member States. The General reasoned that strategic transport did need cooperation between NATO and the EU (in Darfur for example), and that this was being coordinated by Brussels, Eindhoven and in the field in Addis Ababa.

NATO’s Hendrik Schuwer came back to this subject, but with a focus on the

lack of helicopters (in Afghanistan and potentially in Tchad). Schuwer wanted to know if the General had regular contacts with NATO generals as he felt that the organisations were often “fishing in the same pond” in regard to forces, equipment etc.

General Bentegeat did agree that everyone was over-stretched, but he added that some Member States were providing more than others were. Yes, coordination was important and he did have regular (unofficial) meetings with the appropriate players.

However, there were many levels of coordination (primarily political) and helicopters in particular were expensive items of equipment. The General added that the problem related to “independent nations” making the decisions. These nations had to decide if they were committed to NATO or the EU.

The importance of industry

EADS’ Michel Troubetzkoy referred back to a previous SDA event, focused on the Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB). Troubetzkoy had noted that the General had not placed that strategy at the top of his agenda, at the time of the event, and asked if General Bentegeat had changed his opinion about the European Defence Agency’s (EDA’s) priorities.



Mark John, Reuters

General Bentégeat felt he had been misinterpreted as he had merely wished to say that he wanted to be realistic and make progress. He added that no one should expect too much support for the DTIB initiative from military personnel, as they wanted to be effective at the cheapest possible price. This meant that the source of the armaments was not a main priority. However, military bodies did not want to be dependent on “foreign” sales as this might one day remove part of the force’s autonomy. Forces had to be able to receive the right ammunition at all times under all political conditions.

Back in the EU

Jane’s Review’s Brooks Tigner brought the discussion back to Europe, asking how the EU would cope with a terrorist attack that was cross-border within the Union. What would the chain of command be and whose military equipment would be used.

General Bentégeat said counter terrorism was in the hands of the police and justice cooperation, without any military elements. No options were ruled out however, and all aspects of the proposed solution could change with the advent of the new Treaty.

Expansion of the Battlegroups concept

Germany’s Ambassador to the EU, Clemens von Goetze, was opposed to the use of the Battlegroups for longer-term deployment as they had to be ready at any time. He therefore wanted the attention turned to the further integration of air and sea elements into the existing structure.

General Bentégeat agreed but argued that this was not “as easy as it looks”, especially as not all Member States were in line on this subject.

Military and civil actions, which ones are predominant?

Following many debates about the virtues of civil and military actions, the EDA’s Hilmar Linnenkamp argued that there was more need for sustainable forces (to solve crises) than for rapid ones. He added that victories (or defeats) no longer determined the fates or welfare of people, and that

military action was now subsidiary to conflict resolution. Linnenkamp therefore asked if General Bentégeat’s perspective on the military element of operations had therefore changed.

General Bentégeat felt it was too early to say if Linnenkamp was correct in his hypothesis. For example, there could have been a different outcome (of the operations in question) if the military forces had been engaged in a different



Hilmar Linnenkamp, EDA

way, and perhaps military forces had been too impatient. Bentégeat knew that politics played an important role in any outcome, but he did not know the correct mix of sticks and carrots (i.e. military action and development / Security Sector Reform (SSR)).

Use of Battlegroups (in Africa)

Karl von Wogau, the European Parliament's Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee, asked if the Battlegroups could be used in Africa (in the case that the EU was involved militarily in that continent).

General Bentégeat felt that this was a vital question. Battlegroups, by definition, had to be ready to react quickly in emergencies. If their use remained theoretical, then that concept of *quick response* would wither on the vine. General Bentégeat argued that it was "absolutely necessary" to use the EU Battlegroup forces as soon as possible. However, due to the current (pre-approval) situation, troops could not carry the official Battlegroup label.

Staying in Africa, Giles Merritt referred to a previous SDA event that had focussed on the lessons learnt from the Congo mission. An apparent lack of cooperation between the hard and soft aspects of the operation had emerged during the debate. Merritt asked if the EUMC was addressing the issue.

General Bentégeat had seen positive changes in this regard, as Commission representatives were now always present at EUMC meetings. The Commission staff always gave their input, and this could be both supportive or in opposition to proposals. Moving on to Africa more

generally, General Bentégeat said that one of the main goals was to provide humanitarian assistance in areas following military intervention so that internally displaced persons (IDPs) could return to their former lives and living standards.

Still in Africa, Reuters' Mark John asked if General Bentégeat agreed with comments from NGOs in the field who had said there was a perceived danger that the French would dominate an EU force in Tchad.

General Bentégeat said it was too early to say. The Political and Security Committee (PSC) had to approve the crisis management concept. However, he did add that he disagreed with the NGOs' viewpoint, as a force in Tchad (with 50% French troops) was better than no force at all.

Tigner also focused on the use of a force in Tchad, asking if the EU had contingency plans in case things went wrong. General Bentégeat was somewhat reluctant to answer for the same reason. However, he said there would be case-by-case decisions, with either Battlegroups being in reserve or other troops being pre-identified.

Karl von Wogau was concerned about the humanitarian situation. Giving Tchad as an example, the people had to have the means to return to their villages. That implied protection, and von Wogau wanted to know how this would be achieved. General Bentégeat returned to the problem of the 27 independent nations. He knew the requirements but he could not always deliver. Now, if he had those helicopters...

List of Participants

Paul Ames <i>Defence Correspondent</i>	Associated Press
Henri Bentégeat <i>Chairman</i>	European Union Military Committee
Catherine Boucher <i>First Secretary, Security and Defence</i>	Mission of Canada to the EU
Geert Cami <i>Managing Director</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
John Chapman <i>Rapporteur</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
Jim Cloos <i>Director</i>	Council of the European Union, Directorate General for External and Politico-Military Affairs
Ludwig Decamps <i>Policy Planning Advisor</i>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)
Laure Deymier <i>Aide de camp</i>	European Union Military Committee
Stewart Eldon <i>Ambassador</i>	Delegation of the United Kingdom to NATO
Scott A. Harris <i>President, Continental Europe</i>	Lockheed Martin Global
Jessica Henderson <i>Senior Manager</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

Mark John <i>Senior Correspondent, EU and NATO</i>	Reuters
Hilmar Linnenkamp <i>Deputy Chief Executive</i>	European Defence Agency (EDA)
Pascal Mallet <i>Journalist</i>	Agence France Presse (AFP)
Giles Merritt <i>Director</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
Magnus Ovilius <i>Head of Sector, Preparedness and Crisis Management</i>	European Commission, Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security
Hendrik Schuwer <i>Director, Private Office</i>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Office of the Secretary General
Brooks Tigner <i>EU / NATO Correspondent</i>	Defense News
Michel Troubetzkoy <i>Senior Vice President, Director for EU & NATO Affairs</i>	European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS)
Emil Valdelin <i>Project Manager</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
Clemens von Goetze <i>Permanent Representative to the PSC</i>	Permanent Representation of Germany to the EU
Karl von Wogau <i>Chairman</i>	European Parliament, Committee on Security and Defence

About the Security & Defence Agenda



SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA

THE SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA (SDA) IS THE ONLY SPECIALIST BRUSSELS-BASED THINK-TANK WHERE EU INSTITUTIONS, NATO, NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, INDUSTRY, SPECIALISED AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA, THINK TANKS, ACADEMIA AND NGOs GATHER TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN AND TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICIES IN EUROPE AND WORLDWIDE.



Stefan Zollar and
Gen Harald Kujat



Günter Verheugen and
Karl von Wogau



Vecdi Gönül and
Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

BUILDING ON THE COMBINED EXPERTISE AND AUTHORITY OF THOSE INVOLVED IN OUR MEETINGS, THE SDA GIVES GREATER PROMINENCE TO THE COMPLEX QUESTIONS OF HOW EU AND NATO POLICIES CAN COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER, AND HOW TRANSATLANTIC CHALLENGES SUCH AS TERRORISM AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION CAN BE MET.

BY OFFERING A HIGH-LEVEL AND NEUTRAL PLATFORM FOR DEBATE, THE SDA SETS OUT TO CLARIFY POLICY POSITIONS, STIMULATE DISCUSSION AND ENSURE A WIDER UNDERSTANDING OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY ISSUES BY THE PRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION.

SDA ACTIVITIES:

- MONTHLY ROUNDTABLES AND EVENING DEBATES
- PRESS DINNERS AND LUNCHEES
- INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES
- REPORTING GROUPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

NATO & ESDP: Forging new links
International Conference Spring 2007



Desmond Browne
Secretary of State for Defence, UK

Protecting Europe
International Conference Spring 2006



Franco Frattini
EU Commission, Vice President,
Justice, Freedom and Security

The Security & Defence Agenda would like to thank its partners and members for their support in making the SDA a success



Interested in joining the SDA? Please contact us at Tel: +32 (0)2 737 91 48
 Fax: +32 (0)2 736 32 16 Email: info@securitydefenceagenda.org

A *Security & Defence Agenda* Report
Rapporteur: John Chapman
Photos: Frédéric Remouchamps

SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA (SDA)

Bibliothèque Solvay, Park Léopold, 137 rue Belliard, B-1040, Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 737 91 48 Fax: +32 (0)2 736 32 16 E-mail: info@securitydefenceagenda.org
www.securitydefenceagenda.org