



The new European Gendarmerie Force

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Theme: The EU has created a European Gendarmerie Force involving the five Member States that have paramilitary police forces: France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Summary: The purpose of this analysis is to describe the new force, the European Gendarmerie Force, which undoubtedly is to become a valuable asset in all kinds of crisis management operations. We will review what it involves, how it was created, what are its lines of action and, finally, its place within the European framework.

Analysis: *What is the New European Gendarmerie Force?*

During an informal meeting between the various Ministers of Defence of the European Union held in Rome on 3 and 4 October 2003, the French Minister of Defence Michelle Alliot-Marie proposed the creation of a new force to be known as the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) to her counterparts from the four other European countries that have paramilitary police forces: Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. The force would involve members of the French Gendarmerie, the Italian *Carabinieri*, the Portuguese *Guardia Nacional Republicana*, the Dutch *Royal Marechaussee* and the Spanish Civil Guard.

Based on the French proposal, a series of meetings took place between representatives of the five countries, and the result was that the Ministers of Defence of the nations involved signed an initial declaration of intentions on 17 September 2004, in Noordwijk (the Netherlands), coinciding with the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence held during the Dutch Presidency. The declaration of intentions states that the force was born to endow Europe with the capacity to execute all kinds of police missions during any crisis management operations. In addition, it will be open to other EU members, as well as candidates for membership that have police forces with the same characteristics. The statement also indicates that the force can be made available to other international organisations such as the United Nations, NATO and OSCE.

The force will become fully operational in 2005. It will have a multinational General Headquarters in the Italian city of Vicenza, with a staff of 30, of which five will be Spanish. It will have no permanent forces assigned, although it shall be capable of reacting within 30 days, with approximately 800 troops.

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The Police Force will include a High Level Inter-Ministry Committee (HLIMC) that will ensure political and military coordination between Member States. In addition, the HLIMC is the body that provides political control and strategic management of the force, appoints the commander and establishes the governing guidelines. Spain will be represented on the Committee by personnel attached to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, of the Interior and of Defence. The Presidency of the HLIMC will rotate among Member States and shall meet at least twice a year. The first meeting of the HLIMC took place in Rome on 21 January 2005.

The Initiative's Development

The process to reach an agreement to satisfy all nations was not easy, as can be imagined. The differences between the various nations became evident from the first meeting. As the project's originator, the French Ministry of Defence showed a clear interest in speeding up the establishment of the new force as much as possible. France had a very clear idea of what the force should be: first, autonomy from already existing infrastructures within the EU, involving units other than those already committed to it; secondly, the French concept of the force's structure and general headquarters was very similar to that already in existence for Eurofor (which involves France, Italy, Portugal and Spain, and which has a permanent headquarters that is assigned forces depending on operational requirements).

However, the French idea was not initially shared by the other nations, which preferred to organise the Gendarmerie Force within the EU, maximising already existing structures. They believed this initiative would double the current European Gendarmerie Force. Nevertheless, it was clear it would be difficult to create it within the framework of the EU, especially due to the reluctance of certain countries in the European Union towards police forces of a military character, such as the Nordic nations and perhaps some others.

From the start, France was a firm defender of its idea of a multinational approach similar to Eurofor, arguing, not without reason, that within the EU it would be necessary to overcome the considerable differences between Member States with highly disparate points of view, which would slow down the process.

In addition, there were multiple opinions regarding the force's size. On the one hand, countries such as France and Italy have large-scale forces of Gendarmes and Carabinieri, respectively. Furthermore, both French Gendarmes and Italian *carabinieri* are having their police responsibilities reduced within their own territories. Hence, they consider their projection abroad as a means of staying in the front line. On the other hand, countries like Portugal and the Netherlands have forces. Respectively the *Guardia Nacional Republicana* and the *Royal Marechaussee*) which are not very numerous and, obviously, their contributions would be modest. Spain stands in between the two extremes, with a force of considerable size, the *Guardia Civil*, which has numerous police responsibilities in Spain and therefore difficulties in releasing troops for missions abroad.

As regards the missions on which the force is to be deployed, there was unanimity from the start that the EGF should be capable of covering all police missions that could arise in a conflict area, including high-risk scenarios, the initial stages of military intervention and situations that are already stabilised. Ultimately, as created, the European Gendarmerie Force is very similar to a project presented by France in November 2003. Even the name, Gendarmerie, is clearly French.

The Force's Mission

What was very clear from the start was that the European Gendarmerie Force was to be an effective tool to carry out police missions during all phases of crisis management operations, whatever the type, either integrated into a military force or operating on the orders of a civilian authority.

The EGF's activity would cover three phases:

- During an initial phase, on arrival at the scene, the EGF could access together with the military forces in order to execute its police missions.
- During the transition or stabilisation phase, the EGF can continue its mission on its own or in cooperation with a military force, in order to facilitate the coordination and cooperation with international or local police units.
- During the final phase of withdrawal of the military component once the situation has been stabilised, the Force could facilitate the transfer of responsibilities to civilian authorities and the agencies participating in cooperation tasks, if required.

On the one hand, depending on the mandate of each operation, the EGF can also execute a broad spectrum of activities related to its police duties, including but not limited to the following:

- Security and public order.
- Supervision and advice to local police in the execution of its daily activities, including criminal investigation tasks.
- Public surveillance, traffic regulations, border control and general intelligence.
- Criminal investigation, including the detection of offences, monitoring of offenders and their presentation before the appropriate court authorities.
- Protection of assets and persons and maintenance of public order in the event of disturbances.
- Training of police officers in line with international standards.
- Training of instructors, mainly through cooperation programmes.

In summary, the main object of the EGF is to take advantage of the special characteristics of Europe's paramilitary police forces –such as the means at their disposal, their training and discipline–, which are far superior to those of all other existing police forces.

European Framework

It is clear that although the EGF is not embedded in current European Union institutions, the countries that form the Force have the clear intention of making it available, as specified in the aforementioned declaration of intentions.

Over the past few years the European Union has been in the process of strengthening its military capacity for crisis management, examples of which include the new General Objective for 2010, which replaces the 2003 Objective, the creation of Combat Groups, civilian-military cells and the establishment of the European Defence Agency. But while improving military capacities, the European Union is also seeking to equip itself with civilian capacities to manage crises and for this purpose the Dutch Presidency organised the Second Conference of Civilian Capacity Commitments on 22 November 2004.

The conference's aim was to update, in both quality and quantity, the civilian commitments that had been acquired in 2001 at the Feira Summit (Portugal). In addition, the goal was to integrate the capacities that new Member States can provide to the European Union. During the conference, the Member States reinforced their strong commitment to developing civilian crisis management skills within the Union, establishing four primary areas for the civilian management of crisis: police, rule of law, civil administration and civil defence.

From the contributions made by Member States it can be estimated that the global capability of the European Union is of around 12,000, including police, experts in the rule of law, experts in civil administration, persons to support teams of Special Representatives in the European Union, experts in observation missions and civil defence experts. We should highlight the fact that these contributions exceeded the specific objectives that had been set in the European Council last June 2004.

A Primary Civilian Objective has been defined with the object of establishing the necessary civilian capabilities the European Union should have by 2008 in order to fulfil future missions and challenges. This Primary Objective will clearly define the EU's ambitions in terms of the civilian aspects of the European Safety and Defence Policy (ESDP) over the coming years and will be designed on a sound basis that includes the necessary capabilities to fulfil the EU's aims in this respect. The final objective is to endow the European Union with a significant instrument for crisis management by combining military and civilian capabilities in order to face the challenges that the international community in general, and Europe specifically, are facing at the start of the 21st Century.

The European Union is a pioneer in this field. Today, no international body has effectively bridged the gap between civilian and military organisations within the specific field of crisis management. It is obvious that the course taken by the EU should place it well ahead of other international organisations. Furthermore, this civilian and military tool is today the most effective weapon to face strategic challenges. Think of Afghanistan, Iraq or the African continent. In the case of Afghanistan, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams

(known by their English initials PRT) are an example of civil-military cooperation. Within this European crisis management project, which involves both civilian and military problems, the European Gendarmerie Force can and must play a key role.

Conclusions: Since the French proposal was made, it was clear that Spain, with its *Guardia Civil*, could not be left out of an initiative that, if successful, would represent an essential element for crisis management within the European context. Moreover, because this initiative is clearly part of the ESDP, Spain's involvement necessarily involves the Ministries of Interior and Defence.

Spain was, and is, convinced that the European Gendarmerie Force is a valuable tool to complement the EU's crisis management capabilities in police work, filling an important gap. In future it will undoubtedly help to facilitate the development of a great crisis management instrument for the European Union, combining military and civil capabilities.

Javier Solana, Secretary General/High Representative of the European Union and future Minister of Foreign Affairs of the EU, recently stated that the future European soldier would be very similar to a Spanish Civil Guard, highlighting the excellent characteristics of this corps, which combines a mixture of military and police characteristics. This provides an idea of the role to be played by the European Gendarmerie Force within the international context in general, and in Europe specifically, in the very near future.