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NOTE

from: Politico-Military Group
to: Political and Security Committee
Subject: PMG recommendations on EU Rapid Response Capabilities and EU Battlegroups

Delegations will find attached PMG recommendations on EU Rapid Response Capabilities and EU Battlegroups, as finalized by the Politico-Military Group on 5 November 2013.

PMG RECOMMENDATIONS ON EU RAPID RESPONSE CAPABILITIES AND EU BATTLEGROUPS

INTRODUCTION

1. On 22 October, the PSC tasked the PMG to provide recommendations on the EU Rapid Response Capabilities and EU Battlegroups (EU BGs) (PSC MD 111/13 and 112/13, dated 16 October 2013).

CONSIDERATIONS

2. The PMG underlines the need for concrete improvements in EU Rapid Response and the EU BGs in view of the European Council in December, in follow up to its tasking from December 2012 to strengthen “the EU’s ability to deploy the right civilian and military capability rapidly and effectively across the whole spectrum of crisis management action”. It stresses that these improvements are necessary with a view to underpinning the EU’s increasing responsibility as a security provider.
3. The PMG further recalls that in its conclusions of 19 November 2012, the Council “stresses the need to improve the usability of the EU Battlegroups, in line with the Battlegroup Concept, for operations throughout the mission spectrum, including in support to an on-going operation/mission or as a bridging operation, when so decided by the Council, without undermining normal force generation.”
4. The PMG reaffirms that the agreed level of ambition for the EU BGs, as the flagship military rapid response tool, should be maintained and concurs that the case of highly capable and interoperable forces, available at short notice for CSDP operations, is stronger than ever. It underlines the demonstrated effects of the EU BGs as a transformational tool and a vehicle for concrete multinational cooperation and interoperability.

5. The PMG underlines, however, that gaps in the EU BG Roster persist and that the EU BGs are yet to be deployed in operations. The PMG therefore stresses that all the efforts are aimed at assisting the Member States to provide EU BGs in accordance with the agreed ambition, and seek improvements in their quality and usability/deployability. It notes that the work strands to be initiated may need to be further developed in detail with MS' experts.

EU Rapid Response

6. The PMG agrees with the need to revise the EU Military Rapid Response (RR) Concept, as well as the subordinate maritime and air rapid response concepts, with the aim of developing a more flexible, multi-service suite of assets, and related mechanisms for making them available based on the principle of voluntariness, noting that the existing EU BG Concept be maintained. The PMG underlines that a range of possible generic rapid response scenarios should be identified in order to deduce the type of actions, tasks and requirements. The PMG notes that levels of readiness and commitment may not be equal for all RR assets, due to operational requirements and resource constraints, but stresses that the potential availability of a more coherent suite of (maritime, air, land) assets including niche modules should provide the EU Operation Commander (OpCdr) more flexibility in his operational planning and more scope for tailoring the rapid response force (incl. EU BG) for the operation/mission at hand.
7. The PMG draws attention to the proposed training/advisory module, which could be developed in light of the growing need for such capacity in the field. It considers it necessary to further elaborate the precise requirements in terms of structure, resources, readiness, training, etc.

Framework Nation (FN) approach

8. The PMG agrees that efforts should continue to fill the gaps in the BG Roster with voluntary commitments of the Member States using the FN approach agreed in 2012, as a more systematic approach that promotes predictability, consistency and a more equitable sharing of the burden. It underlines that additional and/or more frequent commitments are necessary to sustain the EU BG Roster. It notes that voluntary commitments for a longer standby period (e.g. 12 months) would also contribute to filling the roster, and could make more effective use of limited resources.

Modularity

9. The PMG agrees with the need to strengthen the inherent modularity of the EU BGs, while maintaining its core capabilities, in order to make them more adaptable to the range of possible crises, thus enhancing their operational relevance, in coherence with the work on the identification of possible additional assets under the EU Rapid Response Concept and the subordinate service level RR concepts. It notes that enhancing modularity should also allow, in a smooth and rapid way, Member States able to provide needed capabilities and willing to participate in an EU BG operation to step in, and Member States on stand-by to adapt to the specific context and to tailor the EU BG to the crisis at hand. The PMG stresses that any EU BG on standby should be capable of meeting all the standards and criteria of the EU BG Concept. It underlines that the further work on modularity should also take into account the possible effects on areas such as military effectiveness, interoperability and command & control. The PMG underlines that the aim is to assist the FN and, when identified, the OpCdr and the Force Commander (FCdr), to plan and prepare, even ahead of the standby phase and as part of the advance planning, for operations requiring different configurations of core capabilities and enablers (“plug and play”).

Exercises, Training and Certification

10. The PMG stresses the importance of enhancing and streamlining the exercises involving EU BGs and the relevant Command and Control structures, including the possibility of live exercises, and set the necessary milestones in order to:
- test their effectiveness in possible operations and the applicability of the modularity approach;
 - strengthen interoperability;
 - improve interaction with the EU-level and among BGs, including by linking better to the EU cycle of exercises;
 - engage the political level e.g. through POLEX or ML/CME;
 - assist the FN certification process.

The PMG also proposes for further consideration a possible inclusion of exercises related to the training and preparation of the EU BGs in the EU Exercise Policy under review and future EU Exercise Programmes.

The PMG also welcomes the proposals to improve the certification process of the EU BGs under the responsibility of the FN by offering the possibility of inviting a multi-national evaluation team involving all participating countries and/or introducing peer-review between EU BGs, associating also the EU Military Staff.

Advance Planning

11. The PMG stresses the central importance of a closer, more structured involvement of the respective preferred OHQ and (F)HQ (or the FN) for the EU BGs in advance planning as well as contingency planning on the developing, on-going and most likely crisis situations and scenarios requiring rapid response. It urges to link both more closely to the EEAS' early warning mechanism, by appointing liaison officers from preferred OHQ and (F)HQ (or the FN) to regularly interact with the EEAS. The PMG underlines that this work should help to prepare and shape the EU BG, enhancing flexibility and focusing response, and should also inform the EU BG exercises.

Political Decision Making

12. The PMG recognizes that rapid deployment also asks for rapid decision making. In order to improve this, more could be done to prepare the ground for political consent. Potential crisis areas could be discussed (“horizon scanning”) at various levels, for example at meetings of Ministers or (Defence or Security) Policy Directors. An exercise involving the political level (POLEX) could be held by the EU BG(s) on standby, in order to increase awareness and commitment and improve mutual familiarity with the decision-making processes. Strategic lessons identified by EU BGs on standby could also be shared at political level to contribute to a smooth handover between subsequent EU BGs.

EU-NATO

13. The PMG encourages the EEAS to remain in close contact with NATO to develop proposals for synergies between the EU and NATO in the field of rapid response where requirements overlap, retain best practices, and avoid unnecessary duplication, as well as preserve and improve when necessary and possible the communality between standards and criteria with due respect to the decision-making autonomy of the EU and NATO in this context.

EU-UN

14. The PMG recalls the EU-UN partnership in crisis management as an important dimension relevant to the work on improving EU rapid response and the EU BGs.

Burden-sharing

15. The PMG highlights the concerns of MS regarding the financial burden of an EU BG operation and recalls that the Council, in its conclusions of 19 November 2012, already underlined the need “to continue efforts on improving the Battlegroups’ cost effectiveness through pooling and sharing solutions, especially in logistics, and addressing the financial constraining factors related to EU Battlegroups.” The PMG recalls that fair burden-sharing (encompassing commitment, risks and financial costs) should help to promote the utility of the EU BGs as an effective EU tool for crisis management. It also recalls the need for burden sharing between FNs and Troop Contributing Nations. It agrees that the financial aspects, including the proposals as set out within the EEAS note, will be considered in view of the review of the Athena mechanism, on the basis of the necessary preparatory work, noting the special character of, and the requirements for, rapid response operations in particular when using EU BGs. Other cost sharing measures and measures to enhance cost-effectiveness (e.g. through Pooling & Sharing arrangements on enabling capabilities) should be further considered as well. The PMG stresses that increased modularity may also help to spread the burden of commitments by potentially allowing for broader participation of Member States.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. The PMG invites the PSC to agree that the note on the EU Rapid Response and EU Battlegroups be revised to reflect the considerations above, with a view to forwarding it to the November FAC upon approval by the PSC. It considers that this would provide for concrete improvement in EU Rapid Response and EU BGs in view of the European Council. It recommends further elaborating the proposals with the Member States with a view to a swift implementation.