German Armed Forces Missions Abroad (1996-2004) : Challenges and Experiences

Lieutenant General Friedrich Riechmann

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Looking back on my long soldier's life of 41 years, it is a great honour and pleasure for me to be here and have the opportunity to introduce some aspects of the Bundeswehr Operations Command. My service career has always been involved with the planning and conducting of operations until 1989 under Cold War conditions in Europe, later in the context of growing responsibility and participation in international crisis management operations.

These highlights of my career reflect the transformation of the German Bundeswehr from a then peacetime Army in training for the worst case of an expected East-West confrontation to an Army on worldwide deployment as we have it today. I will give you an idea of how we managed this transformation.

Situation in Germany Around 1980s

I enjoyed the privilege of attending the Indian Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) between 1979 and 1981 from which I gained an excellent education and experience and found a number of lasting friends. At that time I gave a lecture in Wellington on "Berlin – A Divided City in a Divided Country". It was a time when a 1,523 kilometre border cut through our country. This border separated the Federal Republic of Germany and the western part of German capital from the German Democratic Republic, which I will refer to as "East Germany". The regime of the - so called - truly existing

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socialism shut itself off with a huge barrier, whose iron gate fences, walls and watchtowers separated thousands families and friends from each other. This strip was set up by East Germany against their own population. 191 Germans who attempted to flee East Germany paid with their lives for their desire to be free; they were shot or killed in an accident, or drowned while "defecting the Republic". The actual number of victims is probably two or three times higher.

All along the "Iron Curtain" we, together with Western European and Atlantic partners, were facing the armies of the Warsaw Pact. Operational requirements were almost exclusively directed towards the "combined arms battle".

I witnessed and realised this "scary stability of the cold war era" in prominent positions: as Chief Operations at all levels of the German Army, with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Headquarters, and as battalion commander. I was involved in the preparation of the contingency plans and participated in exercises for the deployment of our Armoured Divisions into their original defence sectors at the Inner-German border. The high level of operational readiness and allied solidarity of the Western European and Atlantic partners were the guarantees that prevented the "Cold War" from turning into a, possibly, nuclear "Hot War". The latter was hanging over us like the sword of Damocles.

The Situation in Germany and Europe After the Cold War

The "peaceful revolution" in East Germany and other Warsaw Pact states freed our country from the fate of being a Cold War front-line country. These events demonstrated that ideals like human rights, love for freedom and rule of law cannot be suppressed for long. We, the allied partners, could see this as a confirmation of our readiness to defend these ideals we have kept up for decades. This has also become evident by the fact that many former Warsaw Pact countries participate in the Partnership for Peace programme or, meanwhile, have even joined NATO and/or the European Union (EU).

Where there used to be the contemptuous Berlin wall just a few years ago, now there is life at full swing. The Federal Republic of Germany maintains good relations with neighbouring countries in the spirit of friendship and partnership, its readiness to bear responsibility for human rights, peace and freedom has been acknowledged worldwide.

I am not denying that freedom and security cannot be obtained for nothing, and the reunited Germany will still have to overcome many obstacles on its way to complete unity. And there are other challenges posed by the current economic strains, the European community of States growing together and the changed conditions for security policy.

Germans are ready to face these challenges. On our way the solid and proven Euro-Atlantic security structures are a firm corner stone and stable basis in a security environment which is diffused, dynamic and very complex. This is why we must actively participate in shaping these processes.

The Bundeswehr

Even when the massive military threat had lapsed, it soon became obvious that the world had by no means grown more peaceful. The "scary stability of cold war" was replaced by global instability. The operational challenge of the "combined arms battle" has moved to the background, now the challenges of "Peace Support" and "Peace Enforcement" are in the forefront. Today ethno-religious conflicts, refugee movements and organised crime are a part of the threat scenario. What is common for all of them are the features of asymmetric warfare which puts us soldiers at a disadvantage as we are faced with the difficult decision of how to regain the initiative, which lies with the adversary.

Our security and defence policy focuses on preventing and limiting crises and conflicts. It comprises the instruments and options related to security policy and builds on concerted action with allies and partners. In this context, military force is always considered the last resort. Consequently, the German Defence Policy Guidelines of 21 May 2003 – basis for the new forces structure –

put crisis management and conflict prevention operations as well as the support of Allies, even beyond the Alliance area, to the fore of the Bundeswehr scope of tasks.

The manifestation of this radical change in security culture is the increasing number and intensity of Bundeswehr operations abroad. The Federal Republic of Germany acts according to the maxim that operations are conducted in cooperation with allies and partners under the United Nations (UN), NATO or EU auspices.

Reforms

Since reunification, the German Armed Forces have seen an immense development. This transformation is still going on, however, the first decisive steps have been taken. I had the privilege of being involved in this change from area defence and training forces to crisis response and deployment forces right from the beginning. The change as such is one thing. Other things are its contents and challenges. It has been a long way but this makes the last 13 years of my service the most exciting time.

In 1996 in former Yugoslavia, being the German National Commander in Theatre, I witnessed the transformation from the Implementation Force (IFOR) to the Stabilisation Force (SFOR). Whereas with IFOR we were deployed in the relatively secure Croatia and were busy providing mainly logistic support to our Allies, it was under SFOR that we assumed responsibility for an area in Bosnia-Herzegovina for the first time. As commander of the 14th (German) Mechanised Infantry Division, I was responsible for the training of the first German Kosovo Force (KFOR) contingent. A weekend training seminar of about 400 officers and Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) from my division and the German Armour School was followed by an orders briefing, and four days later 10,000 troops in Germany were on the move. None of my personnel had expected this could be possible. We were right in the middle of training the 1st KFOR Contingent when General Willmann, the Army Chief of Staff, called and asked whether the 14th division, would be ready to provide the 2nd Contingent. My brigade commanders were not too surprised when we met for a command meeting and I told them about the new agenda. And

then we took action. The success proved us right, among other things our contingent was also prepared for facing the former Yugoslav People's Army forces in combined arms battle.

Looking back on the way we have gone so far, I can say that operations under the extended spectrum of tasks are now a part of the everyday military life of the Bundeswehr. My message is that: brave, prudent and determined soldiers, who are well-trained and well-commanded, make their contribution to the course of peace and stability in the world, a contribution which is highly appreciated by the people in the areas of operations, by our allied fellow-soldiers, and our own people at home in Germany.

BUNDESWEHR OPERATIONS COMMAND

History

The Bundeswehr Operations Command (BwOpsCmd) was commissioned on 01 July 2001. According to the planning it should have had nine months available for personnel and material build-up, and a wide range of training. But events took a different turn. 11 September 2001 changed the situation radically, and with just 60 per cent of authorised personnel, we had to be prepared to establish operational readiness as soon as possible. We had to decide: should we take the new task and assume the more routine tasks on the Balkans later, or just the other way round?

We started with the new task, and rightly so. This way we learnt to cope with difficulties arising for the new contingent and deployment over strategic distances. Thus we have quickly grown together into an experienced team.

Jointness

Bundeswehr operations involve military personnel from all "organisational areas" of the Bundeswehr: the classic Services (Army, Air Force and Navy), the Central Medical Service and the Joint Support Service (i.e. the centralised support organisation). Also, personnel from the civilian defence administration are involved in operations abroad (Diagram 1).

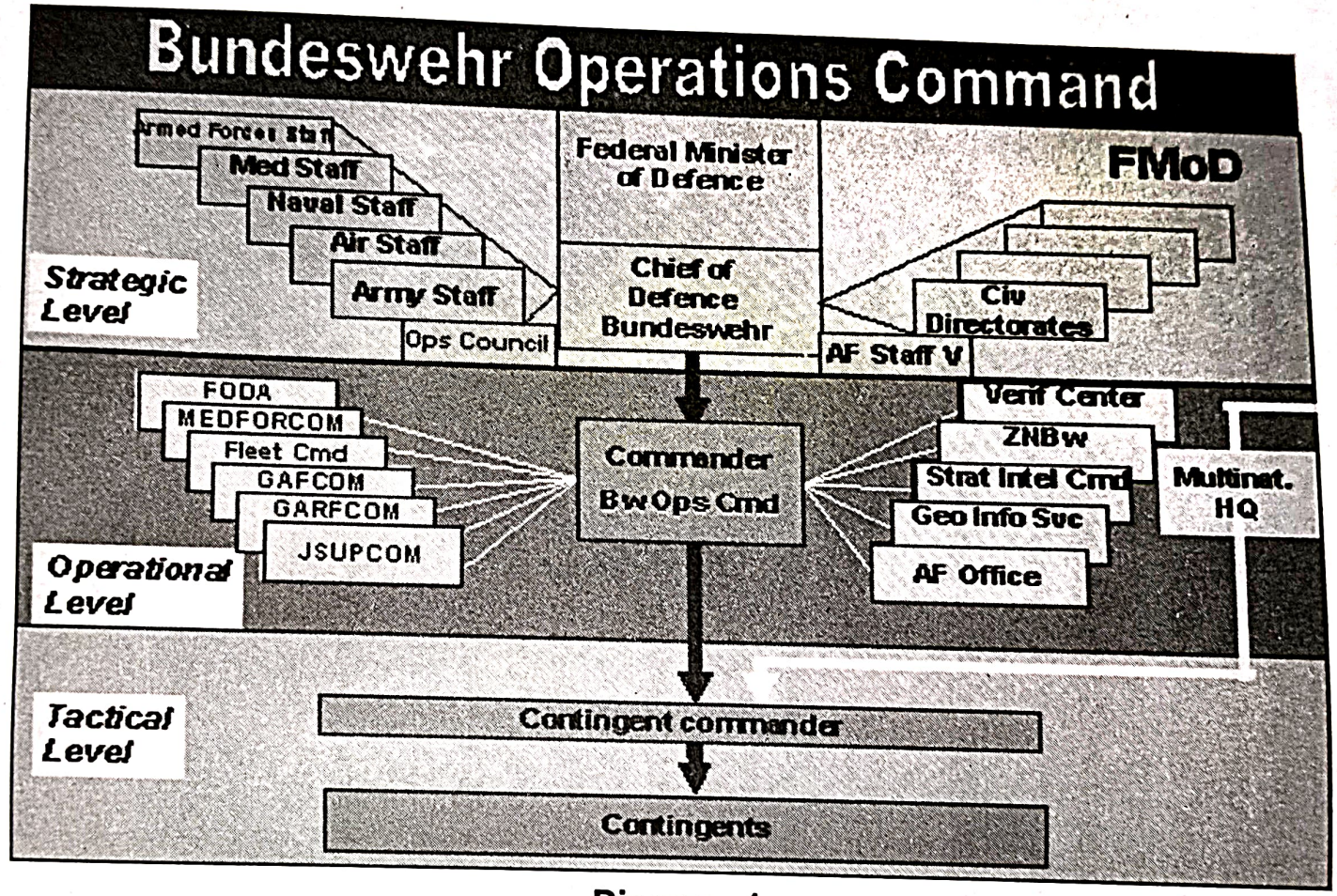


Diagram 1

Legend

1. Federal Office of Defence Administration (FODA)
2. Medical Forces Command (MEDFORCOM)
3. Fleet Command (Fleet Cmd)
4. German Air Force Command (GAFCOM)
5. Germany Army Force Command (GARFCOM)
6. Joint Support Command (JSUPCOM)
7. Verification Centre (Veric Center)
8. Bundeswehr Military Intelligence Centre (ZNBw)
9. Strategic Intelligence Command (Strat Intel Cmd)
10. Bundeswehr Geoinformation Service (Geo Info Svc)
11. Armed Forces Office (AF Office)
12. Multinational Headquarters (Multinational HQ)

In this context, what we mean by jointness is not just combining Army, Air Force and Navy, but achieving synergy by combining capabilities in the joint force categories of the Bundeswehr: stabilisation forces, response forces and support forces. These forces need to be trained, equipped and deployed in accordance with their tasks. For this we establish joint schools and agencies like the Bundeswehr Signal School, the Bundeswehr Logistics Office and others. Our Command and General Staff College endorses this approach by training future commanders in mixed classes. Thus, jointness becomes a trade mark of an operational army. Furthermore, all operations use the same resources and, therefore, are interdependent. So what the Bundeswehr requires is a central command element to ensure what we call "Unity of Command". This element is the Bundeswehr Operations Command.

In all operational issues, the Commander of the Bundeswehr Operations Command is directly subordinate to the Bundeswehr Chief of Defence. The Bundeswehr Chief of Defence uses basically two instruments for controlling Bundeswehr operations. Ministry of Defence: The Chief of Defence chairs the Operations Council which is the coordinating body at the level of the chiefs of staff. The work is done and coordinated by the operations division of the Armed Forces Staff. In turn, the Commander Bundeswehr Operations Command controls the German contingent commanders. The Commander is the only authority within the German Bundeswehr to issue orders to the deployed force commanders. Of course, the Bundeswehr, has various organisations with their own authorities. However, these organisations cannot address the contingents directly, they have to go via the Bundeswehr Operations Command. This guarantees unity of command. It is the only way to ensure that I can exercise the responsibility incumbent upon me.

Under a multinational operation the Federal Minister of Defence places the German contingents or parts thereof under the command of the multinational organisation leading this operation. It needs to be realised that all our contingents are under operational control of multinational commanders. This status means that the multinational commander is authorised to employ the German contingents in toto and not piecemeal without concurrence of German national

authorities. My command retains all national command and control functions.

Compatability with NATO. To ensure compatibility with allied and NATO staffs, our command differs from the Bundeswehr's traditional staff structure: it matches a NATO HQ. The Command has about 450 members coming from all organisational areas of the Bundeswehr. They are former commanders of various echelons or types of units, former naval commanders, pilots, personnel management or intelligence specialists, logisticians, physicians, administrative officers, special forces members, signalmen, legal administration officers, interpreters and so on. In view of the multinational character of Bundeswehr operations abroad, liaison officers from partner nations are integrated in our Command. Thus, two trade marks of a future-oriented approach to security are reflected in our organisational structure: the inter-Services approach, i.e. jointness and multinationality, i.e. combinedness.

Personnel Structure : Officers. Jointness is also reflected in our personnel structure. In our HQ of about 230 officers, a good half is Army, 30 per cent are Air Force, and almost 20 per cent are Navy. By virtue of this personnel mix the Bundeswehr Operations Command can rely on expert knowledge from all Services. This is one of the pillars that provides the basis for joint mission accomplishment at the operational level.

Operational Integration

A military operation under European leadership in accordance with the so-called Petersberg tasks requires a European command organisation. The EU deliberately abstained from duplicating NATO command structures with permanent European headquarters. Instead, it developed the concept of Operations Headquarters, or OHQ in short, and Force Headquarters, or FHQ. As the German government had offered the EU to provide the strategic-level headquarters or OHQ for any EU-led operation under the Petersberg tasks, the Bundeswehr Operations Command is prepared to take over this role. Such an EU operation would be controlled by a headquarters, with its core staff basically provided by one nation but its composition being multinational in order to be

able to accomplish its mission. Hence, a German OHQ would be developed on the basis of the National Operations Command, but with its own, independent organisation. Personnel from our Command have been prepared and assigned to assume OHQ tasks. Thus, we already have the nucleus of an OHQ. If the German government offered a German OHQ for an imminent EU operation and the EU accepted, these personnel would immediately man the OHQ facilities.

In this case, military and civilian personnel from other Bundeswehr locations would close the gaps in the Bundeswehr Operations Command and augment the OHQ nucleus to rapidly form a core staff. It will be augmented by personnel from other EU nations to form a multinational HQ. The administrative support like state-of-the art communications, the motor pool and messing facilities, are designed to accommodate the needs of both multinational and the national HQ at the same time. This model was presented to the EU Military Committee where it was approved. What really is special about it is its true multinational character which allows other contributing EU nations to fill key positions in such an operation.

DEPLOYMENT OF BUNDESWEHR OPERATIONS COMMAND

Command and Control

One of the principal tasks at the operational level is to transform strategic decisions into military action. This includes responsibility for national planning and control of operations. For instance, a typical national command responsibility is to deploy the contingents across global distances to their area of operation and provide the personnel, material and organisation necessary for them to accomplish their mission even over longer periods of time. Another responsibility is to check whether orders issued by a multinational headquarters (HQ) to German forces are consistent with German law. The so-called tactical orders to the deployed force commanders are issued by a multinational commander like Commander International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF) in Afghanistan.

Within Germany, the Bundeswehr Operations Command has no forces under its commnd and control except its organic headquarters and signal battalion. Therefore, during an operation, it assumes command of the units placed under its operational control by the force-providing commands for that operation only.

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

Actually, we already operated such an OHQ while fulfilling the lead nation function for ISAF together with our Dutch partners in 2003. Furthermore, we demonstrated our ability to conduct operations even on our own. The political decisions were adopted in The Hague, translated into strategic measures at the strategic level in Potsdam, and implemented at the operational level by HQ ISAF in Kabul. Our command hosted military personnel from 19 nations.

NATO Response Force

During their Spring Meeting, NATO defence ministers approved the NATO Response Force (NRF) concept. The objective is to create a flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable multinational force which would offer the options necessary for handling critical situations. The NRF has been activated with effect from 8 October 2003 with German participation right from the beginning. Germany currently provides naval units and German Air Force Tornado aircraft, with an Army contingent to be contributed from January 2005. German participation will consist of 5000 troops. National coordination of the German NRF units in terms of preparation and national command and control during operations lie with the Bundeswehr Operations Command.

Multinational Cooperation

The transformation of the Armed Forces to adapt to future challenges requires close multinational cooperation. Therefore, the Bundeswehr participates in the Multinational Joint Concept Development and Experimentation process, which involves selected individual nations as well as the NATO. The major focus is on developing the operations planning and control capabilities based on networking all HQ and systems for immediate exchange

of information. Since 2001 a multinational research programme has been conducted. In February 2004 this research was continued in the Multinational Experiment 03 (MNE). These tests linked the national HQ of the participating parties, i.e. the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Germany and NATO (NRF) and Allied Forces Nation (AFN)), in a world-wide network for generic operations planning. The German contribution has been made in my HQ in Potsdam. For this, an Experimental Laboratory was set up to represent elements of a Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ). The nucleus was located in the US, the other elements of the HQ were located in Canada, the UK, France and Australia. Thus initial planning could be conducted without even setting up an HQ in one spot which permitted to assess the feasibility and implications of networking concepts, procedures and technical solutions. These exercises will be continued.

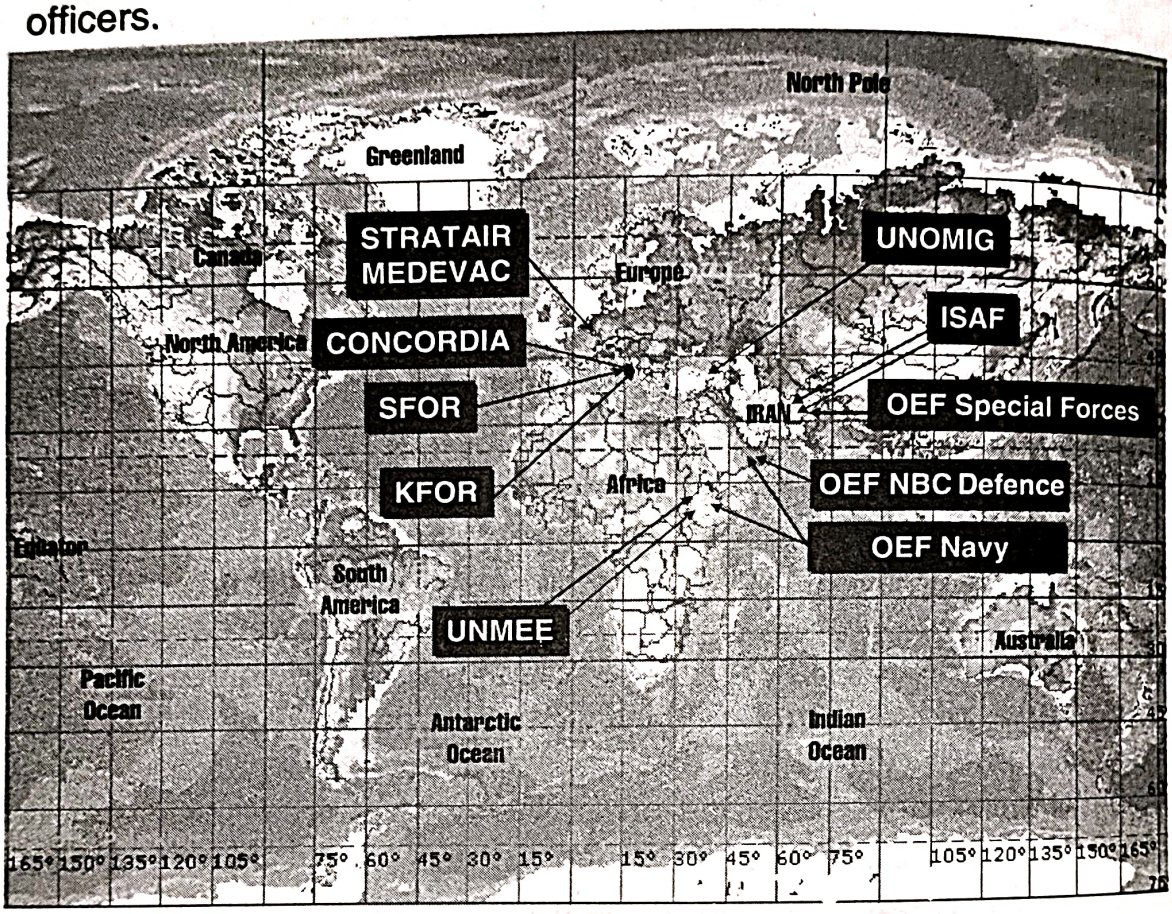
Bundeswehr Operations Command is responsible for planning and controlling national military evacuation missions. For this task Bundeswehr assets are at short notice. Crisis Response Teams (CRTs) are the instrument to prepare and support diplomatic missions in such situations. CRTs are organised when requested by the Foreign Office and directed by the Federal Minister of Defence from different service elements, deployed by our Command and led by an officer from the Command. Personnel and material are on call and available at short notice. Teams were deployed upon request of the Foreign Office to support the German embassy in La Paz in the evacuation of EU nationals in October 2003 and European citizens in Haiti in February 2004.

Target and Impact Analysis

The scope of capabilities that is relatively new to the German Armed Forces is target planning and target and impact analysis. It is the aim of the Bundeswehr Operations Command to ensure German participation in the compilation, evaluation and approval of international target lists and to offer political leaders options for evaluation. For this, an experimental system was installed at Bundeswehr Operations Command and put into operation in January 2004.

Contingents Deployed

Currently, the Bundeswehr Operations Command (see Map 1) retains full command over a total of seven contingents in eight countries (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Djibouti, Georgia, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia and Eritrea) with 3,800 ground vehicles, aircraft and ships, with some 7,000 officers and men. Some time ago, the number of personnel was 12,000. Also soldiers from more than 30 nations are receiving guidance from German officers.



Legend :-

STRATAIR MEDEVAC	=	Strategic Air Medical Evacuation
CONCORDIA	=	Operation Concordia in Macedonia
SFOR	=	Stabilisation Force
KFOR	=	Kosovo Force
UNMEE	=	UN Observer Mission in Ethopia and Eritrea
UNOMIG	=	United Nations Observer Mission in Abkhazia and Georgia
ISAF	=	International Security Assistance Force
OEF	=	Operation Enduring Freedom

Map 1

Some operations which have been concluded are:-

(a) Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defence (NBC) in Kuwait.

(b) OEF Special Forces in Afghanistan.

(c) Operation Concordia in Macedonia. This was the first operation led by the EU.

CURRENT MISSIONS OF THE BUNDESWEHR

Bundeswehr is engaged in the two missions in the Balkans, (SFOR and KFOR), and two UN observer missions.

As the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is growing more stable, in July 2004 SFOR changed its operational profile for "Deterrent Presence". Organised into Multinational Task Forces (MNTF) along with a significant reduction of deployed forces, the operation is based on a sophisticated network generated by small teams living amongst the people in the country, and on multi-national battle groups as Quick-Reaction-Forces. The SFOR mission will be handed over from NATO to the EU by the end of 2004. In view of the events such as the unrests in March 2004, Kosovo has our special attention. Within a few hours violent clashes spread all over the country showing that the envisaged transition to Deterrent Presence along with a reduction of KFOR strength is not yet possible. A strong military presence will have to be maintained until a political solution to the ethnic conflicts is found.

Since February 2004 Germany has been participating in the United Nations Observer Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE).

Since March 1994 the Federal Republic of Germany has been contributing to the United Nations Observer Mission in Abkhazia and Georgia (UNOMIG). The situation in the UNOMIG area of responsibility is mostly calm but tense. Generally, in view of criminal attacks and kidnapping cases, threat to German soldiers cannot be ruled out.

Since 22 December 2001, Germany as participant of the ISAF has been supporting the provisional Afghan state authorities in

maintaining security, law and order within and around Kabul by providing about 1,800 troops. That makes Germany the largest force provider, with the German Contingent accomplishing its mission in various ways: by demonstrating presence, providing support, and also conducting reconnaissance. The visible success of German ISAF operations are reflected in decreasing crime rate, growing trade, plus an increasing confidence of the Afghan population in the ISAF. After the constitutional Loya Jirga in 2003, the Presidential elections were to be held in October 2004. The voter registration after initial difficulties made good pace.

The naval servicemen aboard the German frigate at the Horn of Africa often search suspicious ships. Patrolling pays off. Merchant ships are seeking protection and the number of terrorist attacks has decreased. The employment of maritime patrol aircraft constitutes the "air reconnaissance component" in support of operations against international terrorism.

The Bundeswehr's air-medical evacuation (AIRMEDEVAC) capabilities, i.e. the aerial transport of ill or injured personnel, have a very high standard. Unfortunately, we had to rely on them on several occasions.

Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, Germany has set up the first ISAF-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The extended ISAF operation is intended to support the Afghan state authorities in maintaining security in areas beyond Kabul to ensure that they as well as the UN and other international personnel have a secure environment for reconstruction and humanitarian work, and to provide security assistance for other tasks under the Petersberg Agreement. Members of four German ministries (i.e. the German Foreign Office, the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development) support the Afghan central government in its reconstruction efforts in four provinces located north of the Hindu Kush mountains. This includes 300 Bundeswehr personnel with helicopters and military equipment.

Our PRT concept is different from others. We provide a civilian element headed by a diplomat. He organises the institutional, social, political and economic reconstruction. In all security issues the military commander has the final word. The advantage of this system is that everyone has to answer for his area of responsibility. Now that the first threads of the future security network have been woven in Kunduz, the Bundeswehr is extending its activities along the main lines of communication to the northeastern provinces within its area of responsibility. Initially, the Bundeswehr was temporarily operating two PRT field offices in Pol-E- Khomri, province of Baghlan and Taloqan, province of Takhar, depending on situation and task. Furthermore, preparations are underway for a new PRT in Feyzabad, province of Badakshan, which will rely on the PRT Kunduz for logistics and organisational issues.

Asymmetric Operations

Characteristic for all conflicts today is asymmetric warfare. All modern armed forces have a growing problem with this. It has to be unscrupulous enough to take advantage of this situation. Asymmetric operation is a positive phenomenon if armed forces use means an adversary cannot counter, as for instance, high-technology systems effective at long distances. Yet asymmetry is turning negative as adversary uses means despite international law which can hardly be countered by the classic capabilities of armed forces. Often these are primitive instruments which are effective at close distance and are employed covertly. Who can recognise a passenger car with 50 kgs of explosives in the trunk, out of thousands of similar cars?

It is because of this asymmetry that peace support and peace-enforcing operations are required not only to suppress but also to actively build peace. Whereas armed forces can only provide the basis, sustainable peace can only be achieved through comprehensive interdisciplinary efforts. In Kunduz, the Bundeswehr is a trailblazer, as there is no other place where a military contingent is so intensely intervowen with other actors. This is one of the ways into the future.

Termez Air Transport Base

The vital link for the contribution to ISAF in both Kabul and Kunduz is the air transport base set up in Termez, Uzbekistan. It is the transport hub for personnel and material. Also, the CH-53 helicopters stationed there fulfil AIRMEDEVAC tasks for the entire North of Afghanistan and accomplish airlift missions for PRT Kunduz. They ensure mobility within the areas of operation of the Kunduz and Feyzabad PRTs.

A few weeks ago in Termez, we implemented the concept of jointness by creating the first ever joint unit of the Bundeswehr: the Termez operational air wing. This unit includes service members of Air Force, Army Aviation, Joint Support Service and Central Medical Service.

LESSONS LEARNT

Multinationality

Important lessons learnt from operations abroad are as under:-

(a) All Bundeswehr operations highlight the importance of coalitions.

(b) From the military point of view, a number of operations could well be handled by just one country. But from the political point of view, action by just one nation cannot, as a rule, suit the aims of the international community.

(c) Multinationality is the basis from which operations draw their legitimacy.

(d) Multinationality of operations is the normal case.

Therefore, key-leader training must prepare military personnel for this key-challenge right from the beginning of military training.

Coalitions

Coalition operations require complex coordination processes. This coordination starts at the political, cabinet level, goes on via

the strategic level of the defence staff to the multinational coordination at the operational level of force commanders and HQ.

The predominant criterion in this process is time pressure. These complex multinational processes must be advanced very quickly, as only when they are finished the orders for the preparation of the forces can be issued. And again, the preparation and selection of forces, their composition, equipment, training as well as their deployment to the theatre of operations and the establishment of their operational capability take time. The force must have this time, otherwise it would be irresponsible to deploy them. The requirement is that multinational processes be conducted rapidly and smoothly. A successful multinational interaction takes time. It is a product of a mental process, of mutual understanding developed not in ad-hoc coalitions but in proven Alliances over years of growing together.

NATO and Partnership for Peace

Well-established structures, such as the multinational NATO HQ, the proven procedures based on various NATO Standardisation Agreements and common understanding between NATO officers resulting from their training in other NATO countries and working together at NATO HQ, are irreplaceable.

More than 50 nations, this is to say about 25 per cent of the nations represented in the UN, being either members of the Alliance or participants of the Partnership for Peace programme, are familiar with the application of NATO doctrines and procedures. This helps during operations. The North-Atlantic Alliance has not been devaluated by radical changes in security policy occurring outside the Alliance.

European Interaction

It is obvious that the Armed Forces of the United States of America provide prominent capabilities for these operations. But it is also obvious that the co-operation of European armed forces is creating potential of high value. Security in the south of Bosnia-Herzegovina is provided by a formation which mainly consists of French, Italian, Spanish and German units. The command function

rotates among these nations. Currently a German General is in command. At the same time the entire west of the Kosovo is protected by a multinational brigade comprising mainly Italian, Spanish, Austrian and German troops supported by seven nations.

Europe has currently very high visibility in Afghanistan, too. The approximately 7,000 troops in Kabul and in the north of Afghanistan are under command and control of HQ ISAF, and a tactical HQ, Kabul Multinational Brigade (KMNB). ISAF is currently commanded by the Commanding General of the European Corps and the Kabul Multinational Brigade at tactical level by the commander of the German-French Brigade, a German General. European cooperation is vital, advanced and the backbone of the European identity.

Operational Balance

Not every force can do everything. When planning and conducting armed missions, the forces to be deployed must be tailored to their mission and the situation in the theatre. If this is the case we think of the interrelation of the three factors : situation, mission and force being in an "operational balance". For instance, there was an operational balance when the first KFOR contingent of 60,000 personnel was deployed with all the heavy arms, its mission being to create a safe and secure environment while resorting to force if necessary, and the situation in Kosovo, where attacks could be expected from the Yugoslav Army. Also, ISAF with its 5,000 personnel and light weapons is in an operational balance with its limited support mission, without any perceivable threat from major military units.

But there is one factor which can change, and we cannot influence: the situation. Whenever this happens, the operational balance must be preserved by adapting either the mission, or the forces or both. To make and implement such decisions needs time. It is, therefore, important for armed missions to make changes to avoid negative impact. This is the more important if the deployed force is not very robust.

Diplomatic Preparations

Stationing troops in sovereign states that are not members of the Euro-Atlantic community requires comprehensive diplomatic

preparation. In the preparatory phase of Operation Enduring Freedom, German troops in half a dozen countries were affected by negotiations revolving around over-flight rights, landing rights, entry permits and stationing agreements. States with a rather centralistic democracy make cooperation dependent on the diplomatic level requests. Merely sending an officer with a fact-finding team might not be enough, while a visit or a call by a leading politician might work as a miracle.

Family Support Organisation

There is a need to organise a regular support and information for the families back home. For this 19 full-time family support centres (FSC) and 58 part-time family support points have been set up. These are coordinated and controlled by the Central FSC in Potsdam. They provide family members with information on the operations abroad and arrange assistance should problems occur.

Conclusion

The deployment of Bundeswehr forces for operations abroad is one of the elements of German foreign and security policy alongside others such as diplomacy and economic cooperation. The Federal Republic of Germany acts according to the maxim that these operations are conducted in cooperation with allies and partners under the auspices of the UN, NATO or EU.

The Bundeswehr is ordered into action wherever German interests and the situation call for the use of armed forces. In many situations, it is this action that paves the way for politics to manifest in other forms. The final solution of a problem has to be achieved by political initiative. Armed forces can only contribute to the achievement of the political goal. Strategic decisions are transformed into operational military action by the Bundeswehr Operations Command. Military action in operations entails threat. A primary task of the Bundeswehr Operations Command is to keep the risk for German and allied personnel as low as possible. The risk is the price to be paid for an objective that is worth the effort.