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**THESIS**

**THE ADVENT OF THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE  
AND ITS POTENTIAL EFFECT ON THE UNITED  
STATES AIR FORCE**

by

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September 2004

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EFFECT ON THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The advent of the NATO Response Force (NRF) is the result of the call for NATO to create a warfighting capability to meet the security threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The NRF is a joint force comprised of air, land and maritime assets designed to conduct operations across the full spectrum of conflict. Missions include opposed entry scenarios, counter-terrorism, crisis response and peace enforcement, embargo operations, interdiction, and human relief and non-combatant evacuations, meeting the need called for in the U.S. National Security Strategy as well as the European Union Security Strategy. The NRF will also serve as a catalyst for transformation, encouraging European nations to downsize and retool their legacy forces in order to participate in the NRF. Political influences and operational constraints threaten to limit the NRF. The tangible effect the NRF will have on the Air Force will be its disproportionate need for Air Force assets to meet its required operational mandate. The result of the EU's inability to readily address their capability shortfalls will be the NRF's dependence upon Air Force to provide strategic airlift, air refueling, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), and the procurement and use of Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs) for the foreseeable future.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In September 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called for NATO to create a warfighting capability able to deploy within a matter of hours and days in order to meet the security threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The concept for the NATO Response Force (NRF) was formed. Less than two years later the NRF is in its third rotation, a joint force comprised of air, land and maritime forces drawn from Europe's NATO members. Its mission is to deploy quickly as required by the North Atlantic Council to participate in operations across the full spectrum of conflict, from peacekeeping to war-waging.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the advent of the NATO Response Force and to measure the effect, if any, it will have on the United States Air Force in terms of operations or force structure. This thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter II: Genesis of the NATO Response Force, looks at European defense initiatives intended to reduce the U.S. European Union (EU) capabilities gap and their link to the NRF. The European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI), borne of the impotent European efforts in the Balkans, was the catalyst for calls demanding improvement in European military capabilities. The 1999 Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) identified many specific shortfalls requiring resolution prior to any attempt by the EU to establish a comprehensive defense institution independent of NATO and the U.S. DCI had no mechanism to force EU members' compliance with its recommendations, however, and as a result failed. The Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) in 2002 attempted to resurrect the goals of DCI, capitalizing on the effects of the September 11 terror attacks as a reminder of Europe's vulnerability. The PCC has been somewhat more successful than the DCI, though EU members are still slow to commit to the sweeping changes called for by NATO. Along with the PCC, the North Atlantic Council called for the implementation of the NRF at Prague.

Chapter III: The NATO Response Force: From Concept to Employment, describes the development of the NRF from the concept originally pitched by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld prior to the NATO Prague Summit to the third six-month rotation of

the NRF today. Rumsfeld's call for a rapidly deployable NATO force was based on the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> National Security Strategy calling for the North Atlantic Alliance to act whenever its interests were threatened. In November 2002 NATO held a summit in Prague and officially unveiled the NRF, as well as several other initiatives described as the Package of Measures. A NATO Press Release described the NRF as a "technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed, as decided by the Council" (2002), meeting the Defense Secretary's call. But the NRF concept also demanded the NRF serve as a catalyst for transformation, "focusing and promoting improvements in the Alliance's military capabilities." In less than a year, NATO had fielded an interim NRF, small in size and limited in capabilities, but nonetheless a year ahead of schedule. By October 2004, the mandated Initial Operational Capability date, the NRF will be in its third six month rotation, with realistic plans drawn for reaching Full Operational Capability by October 2006. A rotation schedule utilizing NATO's command structure to oversee NRF employment has been established. Certification criteria have been determined in order to measure the capabilities of potential NRF participants prior to their inclusion into the rotation cycle. And recently the mission of the NRF was more clearly defined, describing its ability to respond to operations along the full spectrum of conflict. Elements of the NRF have already been utilized in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan and during the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

Chapter IV: Limitations Affecting the NATO Response Force, examines some political and operational obstacles the NRF must overcome in order for it to become a rapid deployment force. On the political side, the bureaucracy involved in getting the NRF to the fight threatens to undermine the rapid nature of the response force. Cumbersome approval processes for employing the NRF currently exist among several Alliance partners, threatening the ability of the NRF to be a rapidly deployable force. Any national debate will be in addition to debate within the Alliance as to how and when the NRF might be employed. Equally troublesome are dwindling defense budgets among the European members of NATO. As birth rates decline and the population ages, the EU is finding it will need to fund social programs, possibly at the expense of defense.

Defense budgets are already disproportionately lower among most European members of NATO as compared to the U.S.; further declines threaten all but the most basic defense programs. The EU must resolve its identity crisis before it can assume its role as a military power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; otherwise it may be forced to remain under the protective umbrella of NATO.

The operational issues facing the NRF are equally challenging. New NATO partners lack the experience, equipment, and training possessed by the rest of the Alliance, creating a capabilities imbalance within the European pillar. At the same time, older European members consistently fail to meet defense capabilities requirements. Virtually all of the European partners possess undeployable legacy militaries in need of replacement with expeditionary forces in order to support the NRF. Monetary benefits of downsizing could fund force transformation, improving readiness. The EU must ensure it maintains an adequate pool of troops will be available to meet the call-ups for both the NRF and the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF). The political influences and operational constraints limiting affecting European defense are significant. Europeans must unreservedly commit to the NRF concept for it to survive as a credible force.

Chapter V: What Effect will the NATO Response Force Have on the U.S. Air Force?, discusses the overlap in missions between the NRF and the Air Force by comparing the respective organizations' mission statements. Despite any overlap, the Air Force is unlikely to reduce its forces as a result of the advent of the NRF. The U.S., in maintaining its force posture in Europe, both furthers the role of NATO and represents its interests abroad. Recent announcements of overseas troop realignments may affect Air Force base locations in Europe but it is unlikely that the Air Force presence in Europe will be reduced in any significant way. The Air Force footprint in Europe had already been reduced to an ideally sized force designed to support NATO. The tangible effect the NRF will have on the Air Force will be its dependence on certain Air Force assets needed to fill out its structure. The EU faces significant military capabilities shortfalls for the foreseeable future in spite of various initiatives intended to alleviate the problem. The most significant European shortfalls are in strategic airlift, air refueling, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), and the procurement and use of Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs). As a result the Department of Defense (DoD), if it is truly

committed to supporting the NRF, will be forced to provide a disproportionate share of these assets until such time as European Alliance members can assume that responsibility. By the time it reaches Full Operational Capability in 2007, it is likely the NRF will be increasingly called upon; its employment growing in direct proportion to its value.

Chapter VI: Conclusion, synthesizes findings from the previous chapters regarding the inception of the NRF, the problems it will likely face as it grows, and the effects the NRF will have on the U.S. Air Force.

## II. GENESIS OF THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE

*...we will develop the US proposal for a NATO Response Force from a national idea into multinational reality.<sup>1</sup>*

*NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson*

In April 1999, NATO declared it was improving its defense capabilities in light of a rapidly changing security environment. According to NATO Update (2002), its goal was to

ensure the effectiveness of future multinational operations across the full spectrum of Alliance missions. The focus [was] on improving interoperability in areas such as the deployability and mobility of Alliance forces, their sustainability and logistics, their survivability and effective engagement capability, and command, control and information systems.

The Alliance also felt it important to contribute to the development of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) by assisting in improving European defense capabilities and, by extension, the European pillar of NATO. The Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), ambitious as it was necessary, was unveiled as the answer. The overarching goal of DCI was to improve interoperability among all NATO members by raising the capability standards of most European partners. The initiative identified 58 capability shortfalls and convened a governing body to oversee their rectification. Participation by member countries was voluntary, however, and because requirements were so vast and costly, little progress was achieved. DCI was generally regarded as a failure.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 affected the way NATO members viewed the capabilities gap. When the North Atlantic Council met in November 2002, a sense of urgency, driven largely by a newfound vulnerability to terrorism, was the impetus for dramatic changes in NATO. According to a NATO Press Release (2002) the November meeting in Prague, dubbed the "Transformation Summit," launched several initiatives aimed at bridging the transatlantic capabilities gap. First, the Council

<sup>1</sup> NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson's Speech at the "Welt am Sonntag Forum", Berlin, 4 November 2002, [http://www.foreignpolicy.org.tr/eng/nato/robertson\\_041102.htm](http://www.foreignpolicy.org.tr/eng/nato/robertson_041102.htm)

announced the advent of the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC). Nearly identical to the DCI in means and ends, the PCC was the Alliance's attempt to reinvigorate its stalled predecessor of 1999 by focusing on the ways in which improvements could be implemented, such as requiring specific commitments from individual NATO members and promoting the benefits of multinational efforts. Next, the council announced it would streamline its command structure in order to better meet "the operational requirements for the full range of Alliance missions." Lastly, it announced the creation of the NATO Response Force, a rapidly deployable military force composed of members from all NATO partners. The NRF would serve two purposes. First and foremost, the organization would consist of a "technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed, as decided by the Council." Secondly, the NRF would serve as "a catalyst for focusing and promoting improvements in the Alliance's military capabilities." From ESDI to the NRF, one thing was clear: NATO had come to realize its militaries were in need of improvement.

#### **A. THE EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE IDENTITY**

During the decade following the fall of the Soviet Union the pace of military modernization among EU members lagged well behind that of the U.S. Combined NATO operations in Bosnia and Kosovo only served to highlight the disparity. By 1999 during Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, over 70% of strike sorties were conducted by the U.S. military. Most European allies lacked the capability to drop precision munitions at night and during inclement weather, conditions considered favorable for the survival of allied air. But even larger shortfalls in the areas of communications and sustainability among European militaries became evident. The European Union, increasingly aware of the widening capabilities gap, initially attempted to address the issue via the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI).

##### **1. DoD Transformation in the Post-Cold War Era**

At the end of the Cold War, NATO found itself in a unique position after a decades-long singular approach to European security. The battle to defend the west

against Soviet aggression was envisioned to be a conventional clash fought in the Fulda gap, assuming, of course, nuclear annihilation could be avoided. NATO created a conventional force in preparation for just such a battle. As the Warsaw Pact crumbled and the iron curtain fell, America, and by extension NATO, celebrated its unprecedented victory. Suddenly without an adversary, the huge conventional forces positioned strategically around the globe became obsolete. After the Gulf War in 1991, the Department of Defense (DoD) instituted the largest cutbacks in its history. Defense expenditures plummeted and debates as to how the “peace dividend” would be spent sparked national debate. Just as the security threat imposed by the former Soviet Union diminished, so too did the perceived need for a U.S. presence in Europe. DoD cutbacks coupled with a growing dissatisfaction with an American presence on European soil paved the way for a force reduction of over 120,000 troops in just a few years. While the military downsized, planners began to rewrite doctrine based on post-conflict analysis of the Gulf War, shaping the perceived battle of the future. With few troops prepositioned in or near the Middle East, the U.S. military had to undertake an unprecedented movement of personnel and equipment in order to prosecute the war. Defense planners were forced to shift their paradigm from a massed Cold War force to a smaller, more mobile force able to address smaller regional conflicts likely to occupy U.S. troops in the future. According to Cohen (1996), “when the Clinton administration formulated its defense policy in 1993 it came up with the Bottom-Up Review, which provided for a force capable of fighting simultaneously two regional wars assumed to resemble the Gulf war of 1991 (p 52). This two major theater war scenario served as a catalyst for the DoD’s force modernization. Regional conflicts in the early 1990’s, namely U.S. involvement in operations in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, also had a hand in shaping the transformation of U.S. forces.

In 1993, Operation Restore Hope was launched to stem the effects of a massive famine in Somalia. The initial operation was considered an unprecedented success. Food aid was delivered and distributed; millions of lives were reported saved. Afterward however, policymakers directed U.S. forces to capture a local warlord, Mohamed Farrah Aidid, after a vicious attack that killed 23 UN peacekeepers. Without the necessary assets to perform such a mission, 19 U.S. service members were killed during a raid to

capture two of Aidid's lieutenants. Video footage of angry Somalis dragging the bodies of dead American soldiers through the streets of Mogadishu was broadcast throughout the world, causing an abrupt change in U.S. policy. In response to what was later dubbed the "CNN effect," the president announced the immediate withdrawal of troops from Somalia, despite their not having achieved their objective.

Operations in Bosnia proceeded at a much more cautious pace. Reluctant to put U.S. combat troops on the ground when U.S. national interest was not directly at stake, policymakers instead conducted most of the operations from the air. High altitude airdrops early on in the war fed countless refugees, while high altitude bombings conducted later drove Serbian troops from Kosovo. The thinking was that technology, applied via airpower, could reduce if not eliminate the need for ground troops, and, therefore, spare American soldiers' lives.

These two conflicts had a lasting effect on the reshaping of the U.S. military in the post-Cold War era. When U.S. servicemembers were killed in Somalia, Americans questioned the policy that put troops in harms way when national security was not at stake. The DoD redoubled its efforts to acquire technology that could reduce servicemembers' risk while still accomplishing the mission. Combat operations in Kosovo were the culmination of these efforts. With no U.S. troops on the ground and operations conducted from 30,000 feet, the risk of troop loss was minimal. Another policy contributing to the reshaping of the military was the continued military endstrength reduction throughout much of the 1990's. Any dividend reaped by force reductions was plowed back into the procurement of technological advances aimed at better protecting troops. From Hunter's perspective

the United States had a clear incentive to continue modernizing its military forces, and it was embarking on its Revolution in Military Affairs and other efforts, with an accent on taking advantage of a wide range of technological advances in sensors, computation, communication, and the capacity effectively to integrate and act upon great quantities of information. This has included spending sums on military research and development that are more than triple the comparable spending by the rest of the NATO allies combined. (2002, p. 48)

The DoD, anxious to develop a military ready to deal with 21<sup>st</sup> Century threats, spent much of the 1990's wrestling with the concepts of modernization and transformation. The end result was a smaller, though much more capable force, able to rapidly deploy to virtually any corner of the world with little notice, and clearly technologically superior to any potential adversary. The U.S. military had transformed into a force able to conduct combat operations while minimizing combat losses.

## **2. European Transformation Efforts**

According to the NATO handbook (2001), "The threat of war which confronted Europe for over four decades, as a result of ideological conflict, political hostility and military opposition, [had] very significantly diminished." Instead, NATO focused much less on deterrence, as foreseen under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and focused more on dealing with the dual threats of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or on the peacekeeping, conflict prevention and crisis management tasks it faced (p. 50). Despite this acknowledged change in its security environment, Europe's military modernization and transformation remained stagnant as compared to the efforts undertaken by the DoD. There was little effort to incorporate advanced technologies into military systems as was the case in the U.S. Personnel reductions took place across all western European militaries in an effort to reduce defense expenditures. The negative effect reductions had on military readiness in the early post-Cold War days was eclipsed by the economic boon the drawdowns created. Soon, however, attitudes changed. Concerns of a Europe unable to defend itself against emerging threats grew. During the Cold War, individual Western European nations did little more than augment a U.S. opposition force. Under the auspices of NATO, European contributions to the allied force were disproportionately small. In a post-Cold War environment the resulting indigenous European forces, often duplicative and not all-encompassing, were unable to provide comprehensive security for Europe without significant changes. The question of why to transform at all, debated hotly in the first days after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, subsided when a largely unexpected event changed even the most extreme pacifistic European attitudes.

In 1991 longstanding ethnic tensions exploded in Yugoslavia, sparking a civil war that caught most of the world off guard. At first no nation intervened. The U.S. distanced itself from what it considered a European problem while European countries themselves were deeply divided over which course of action to pursue. According to Kaufman (1998),

The Western governments' resistance to getting involved was based on the belief that they had no vital interest at stake, certainly not enough to warrant sending troops to the region. Because of the interpretation of national interest, the conflict was defined as an "out-of-area" question that carried with it another set of issues for NATO, which had avoided such situations in the past.

As the war escalated in Europe's back yard, it became more evident that ignoring the problem wouldn't make it go away. The European Community, no longer able to stand by and watch, attempted to stop the war. Frustrated at their inability to effectively intervene diplomatically to halt the growing violence, European policymakers found themselves equally unprepared to intervene militarily. The UN by default became the sole organization to act in Bosnia, charged with peacekeeping and protecting aid convoys, but ill-equipped to put an end to the war. Continued Serbian aggression in Bosnia eventually drew NATO forces into the fight. By 1995, NATO found itself embroiled in the largest battle in its fifty year history. Airstrikes against Slobodan Milosevic's forces were finally effectively employed in response to a Serb mortar attack on Sarajevo. However, successful as its campaign may have been, NATO found itself on the brink of self-destruction. As Kaufman puts it

attitudes toward Yugoslavia...deeply divided the countries of Western Europe and the United States. [...] The differences in perspective within NATO reflected in part the lack of unified alliance policymaking. They were also a manifestation of national decisionmaking...as well as the tenuous relationship between NATO and the UN forces in Bosnia.

European Alliance members found themselves in an untenable position. They had neither the political power to dictate how the war in the former Yugoslavia would be prosecuted nor the military prowess to prosecute it themselves. Fragmented, they were

beholden to American National Security Policy dominating NATO. According to the NATO Handbook (2001), Foreign and Defense Ministers, meeting in Berlin and Brussels in June 1996

decided that the European Security and Defence Identity should be built within NATO, as an essential part of the internal adaptation of the Alliance. This would enable all European Allies to make a more coherent and effective contribution to the missions and activities of the Alliance. It would allow them to act themselves as required and would simultaneously reinforce the transatlantic partnership (p. 100)

ESDI, in other words, was the European Alliance members' attempt to transform disparate European militaries into a cohesive force that could better support NATO, but could, more importantly, also act independently of the Alliance (e.g. the U.S.) when it felt the need.

It is important to note the means by which the EU effected the changes envisioned under ESDI. As mentioned above, the European pillar of NATO incorporated few technological improvements as compared to the DoD. The Europeans' changes were primarily organizational. The NATO Handbook summarizes the changes to NATO defense posture in the late 1990's by stating:

The net effect...has been to transform NATO forces into a substantially reduced, but more mobile structure. Ground forces committed to the Alliance by member nations through NATO's integrated defence and force planning processes have been cut by 35 percent. Major naval vessels have been reduced by over 30 percent and air force combat squadrons by some 40 percent since the beginning of the 1990s. There have also been major reductions in the number of forces held at high states of readiness. In general, NATO forces have been reorganised in a manner which will facilitate their flexible regeneration and build-up whenever this becomes necessary for collective defence, crisis management, or peace support operations. (p. 50)

These organizational changes applied to the whole of NATO, not just the European partners, and resulted in a smaller but more structurally effective force. But while European forces grew leaner, U.S. forces grew leaner and increasingly more combat effective. As peace keeping and peace enforcement operations continued in the former republic of Yugoslavia, the capabilities gap between European and American forces became obvious to even the most casual observer. The U.S., largely through efforts

initiated by then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen, pushed the EU to bridge the ever-increasing capabilities gap. The culmination of his efforts became the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI), an ambitious project unveiled at the 1999 North Atlantic Council Summit held in Washington, D.C.

## **B. THE DEFENSE CAPABILITIES INITIATIVE**

The capabilities gap between the U.S. military and its European counterparts continued to widen. Apparent since the 1991 Gulf War, the disparity was dramatically highlighted in 1999 during Operation Allied Force, the NATO mission in Kosovo. The superiority U.S. forces enjoyed in advanced secure information systems created difficulties when they attempted to communicate with their technologically limited allies. Further, the allies experienced problems in several basic military competencies, such as joint deployment, target identification and weapons compatibility. Although the European Union's militaries comprised almost two million people, as compared to 1.45 million in the United States, it could draw up only half the number of properly equipped and trained professional soldiers required for Kosovo.

NATO decisionmakers were all too aware of the need to improve their overall defense capabilities. As they met in Washington in 1999, Operation Allied Force, an air campaign designed to force Serbian troops to withdraw from Kosovo, was being prosecuted by NATO. Night after night, U.S. aircraft struck Serb targets with unprecedented accuracy. Collateral damage remained low despite poor weather conditions and high altitude flight profiles, due in large part to the expanded use of precision guided munitions. Media coverage was extensive during the operation. However, largely absent from the daily television highlights was footage of European aircraft performing strike missions.

The US provided 70% of the aircraft for the campaign... The US preponderance is even more marked in terms of the estimated amount of weapons delivered, of which the US accounted for over 80% (The Military Balance, 1999-2000, p. 30).

What had started out as a somewhat unbalanced force early on in the NATO intervention in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia had reached a point where the scales were tipped

overwhelmingly toward the technologically superior U.S. forces. Under increasing pressure from Cohen, the North Atlantic Council developed several initiatives, unveiled at the Washington Summit, aimed at reversing the trend. A NATO Press Release (1999) outlined the changes envisioned by the Council:

The NATO of the 21st century starts today - a NATO which retains the strengths of the past and has new missions, new members and new partnerships. To this end, we have:

- approved an updated Strategic Concept;
- reaffirmed our commitment to the enlargement process of the Alliance and approved a Membership Action Plan for countries wishing to join;
- completed the work on key elements of the Berlin Decisions on building the European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance and decided to further enhance its effectiveness;
- launched the Defence Capabilities Initiative;
- intensified our relations with Partners through an enhanced and more operational Partnership for Peace and strengthened our consultations and co-operation within the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council;
- enhanced the Mediterranean Dialogue; and
- decided to increase Alliance efforts against weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

Of all the changes announced by the Council, the Defense Capabilities Initiative proved the most expansive and most difficult to implement. The goal of DCI, according to a NATO Press Release (1999), was to address “[p]otential threats to Alliance security...likely to result from regional conflicts, ethnic strife or other crises beyond Alliance territory, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.” The Alliance’s Strategic Concept encompassed developing capabilities beyond traditional NATO operations as well as developing the means to project forces beyond NATO borders. The lessons learned from the protracted conflict in the Former Republic of Yugoslavia prompted Cohen and Shelton (1999), in their statement to Congress after Operation Allied Force, to conclude:

the operation highlighted a number of disparities between U.S. capabilities and those of our allies, including precision strike, mobility, and command, control, and communications capabilities. The gaps in capability that we confronted were real, and they had the effect of impeding our ability to operate at optimal effectiveness with our NATO allies. For example, because few NATO allies could employ precision munitions in sufficient

numbers (or at all), the United States conducted the preponderance of the strike sorties during the early stages of the conflict. The lack of interoperable secure communications forced reliance on non-secure methods that compromised operational security. These problems persisted throughout the campaign.

The North Atlantic Council, in agreement with Cohen and Shelton, declared in a NATO Press Release (1999), its defense capabilities would “be increased through improvements in the deployability and mobility of Alliance forces, on their sustainability and logistics, their survivability and effective engagement capability, and on command and control and information systems.”

According to a NATO Fact Sheet (2000), DCI aimed at improving capabilities in the following five overlapping areas:

- Mobility and Deployability: The ability to deploy forces quickly wherever needed, including areas outside Alliance territory
- Sustainability: The ability to maintain and supply forces far from home bases and to ensure sufficient fresh forces are available for long-duration operations
- Effective engagement: The ability to successfully engage an adversary in all types of operations, from high to low intensity
- Survivability: The ability to protect forces and infrastructure against current and future threats
- Interoperable Communications: Command, control and information systems which are compatible with each other, enabling forces from different countries to work effectively together.

These overarching goals were translated into specific achievable goals, Forcieri (2000) states, by NATO’s Executive Working Group, who

together with senior officials from national capitals developed a list of 58 specific items to be addressed, particularly looking at those capabilities needed to ensure continued interoperability among Alliance forces. Divided into the five headline categories...these items were arrived at after examining the priorities of NATO's strategic commands and identifying shortfalls.

In order to implement DCI, a High Level Steering Group was created to consider how the 58 items might best be addressed. Composed of senior defense ministry officials from the 19 NATO capitals, the group served as a catalyst for NATO committees to work together on common solutions to DCI objectives. It also worked to include DCI

objectives in the NATO force planning process. The steering group focused on “short-term items with high potential payoffs, long-term items that require immediate short-term action, and ‘low-hanging fruit’; i.e., items requiring little effort to achieve.”

Despite the high priority and visibility it received, the initiative never saw significant progress for two reasons. First, it lacked focus. According to Hunter, Joulwan, and Nelson (2002, p. 4), “The strength of the DCI, which was also its weakness, was its comprehensive nature, including some 58 tasks for the alliance.” It was as if the sheer number of tasks was overwhelming; because there were so many initiatives no one could agree where to start. The second reason DCI never saw sufficient progress was the simple fact that the Alliance’s European partners lacked commitment. Other national priorities outweighed the demand to increase defense spending to improve military capabilities. At a time when economies were strong and security was a back-burner issue, nations focused on improving infrastructure. Participation in DCI was voluntary and, according to Forcieri, “while NATO may request that a given member provide a given capability, the final decision [was] up to national governments and parliaments. NATO itself [was] almost totally reliant on the forces of the 19 countries that [made] up the Alliance” Nevertheless, NATO policymakers strove to improve the vehicle for change, convinced that their cause was necessary. Undeterred by DCI’s lack of progress, they looked to the next NATO summit for just such an opportunity to close the capabilities gap.

### **C. THE PRAGUE SUMMIT**

The Prague Summit, held in November 2002, was originally planned to be a showcase event, introducing seven new members into NATO. The summit had three main topics on its agenda: new capabilities, new members, and new relationships. New capabilities became the most important issue in no small part due to the timing of the summit. Held just over a year after the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks, the Council felt a sense of urgency to improve European capabilities in support of NATO in order to more effectively assist the U.S. in its War on Terror. The focus of the summit agenda was shifted from NATO enlargement to a redoubling of efforts to improve NATO capabilities.

Before 9/11, the Prague Summit was generally expected to be focused on NATO enlargement. In the event, the issuing of invitations to seven new countries became part of a much broader transformation agenda. ...together with the expansion of the European Union, NATO's enlargement will help consolidate Europe as a common security space. And this will be a great step towards turning Europe into a continent from which wars no longer originate. (Robertson, 2003, March)

In the weeks prior to the summit, leaders quietly downplayed the celebration of the accession of new NATO members and instead focused on assisting the U.S. in its war on terror. Additionally, the European NATO members realized they, too, were vulnerable to attack. The summit turned into a sober affair, intent on developing attainable goals for the improvement of NATO, approving a package of measures aimed at meeting the “grave new threats and profound security challenges of the 21st century” (NATO Update, 2002). First, leaders announced their intent to streamline NATO’s military command structure in order to meet the operational requirements for the full range of Alliance missions. Next, leaders announced the creation of the NATO Response Force. And lastly, they announced the advent of the Prague Capabilities Commitment. Progress on Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and the NRF has been successful. These initiatives provide a conduit through which progress on PCC can be measured, so long as Alliance members honor their commitments made in Prague.

### **1. The Prague Capabilities Commitment**

Because of the limitations inherent in the DCI structure and execution, both EU and U.S. policymakers struggled to find a better way to strengthen the European pillar of NATO. Their avenue was the 2002 NATO Summit held in Prague. Defense ministers had prepared for the summit in advance by jointly discussing initiatives aimed at regaining parity between the U.S. and its European partners. According to Hunter et al. (2002, p. 1), they agreed to

focus on a small number of capabilities essential to the full range of alliance missions. The ministers also noted the need to strengthen defenses against terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), to ensure secure communications and information superiority, to improve interoperability, to deploy rapidly and to sustain combat forces. Their

agreement on improving strategic lift and logistics [was] particularly encouraging.

The improvement of these critical capabilities would allow NATO to meet the emerging challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Equally important, it would allow the European members of NATO another opportunity to honor their lofty commitments made in Washington under the auspices of the Defense Capabilities Initiative. The vehicle for capabilities improvement, announced by the Council, was the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC), described in a NATO Press Release (2002) as

part of the continuing Alliance effort to improve and develop new military capabilities for modern warfare in a high threat environment. Individual Allies have made firm and specific political commitments to improve their capabilities in the areas of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defence; intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition; air-to-ground surveillance; command, control and communications; combat effectiveness, including precision guided munitions and suppression of enemy air defences; strategic air and sea lift; air-to-air refuelling; and deployable combat support and combat service support units. Our efforts to improve capabilities through the PCC and those of the European Union to enhance European capabilities through the European Capabilities Action Plan should be mutually reinforcing, while respecting the autonomy of both organisations, and in a spirit of openness.

The PCC, one of three initiatives designed to improve NATO's overall capabilities by narrowing the capabilities gap, would prove as difficult as the DCI to implement. Despite high hopes at the summit, progress on meeting PCC initiatives remains slow.

## **2. Honoring the Commitment**

The Prague Capabilities Commitment was considered a second chance for the European Alliance members to honor their pledge to strengthen the European pillar of NATO. Where the Defense Capabilities Initiative failed, the PCC intended to succeed. Monaco (2003, April) explains that the goal of the PCC was to effect changes initially identified via the Defense Capability Initiative. It reduced the 58 identified tasks down to eight and required member states to make specific commitments to improve their capabilities in areas such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense; strategic air and sealift; air refueling; and air-to-ground surveillance. Means identified to

achieve these objectives included “multinational efforts (joint co-operation by a group of states on specific capabilities), role specialisation (states focusing on few specific capabilities) and reprioritisation (abandoning certain projects to concentrate on others)” (p. 1). Further, PCC encouraged European allies to focus their defense spending on the most critical combat shortfalls identified by NATO: deployability, sustainability, interoperability, information superiority, and chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear defense (CBRN). In this way, the capabilities gap could initially be bridged, allowing European allies to more effectively contribute to NATO. As momentum and defense budgets increased, the gap could be further reduced. By effectively instituting the changes called for in Prague, the PCC would bring the European members of NATO more in line with their DoD partners.

#### **D. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NRF**

At Prague, the Council announced its intentions to initiate three main topics; new capabilities, new members, and new relationships. As mentioned above, in an effort to improve its capabilities, the Council unveiled the PCC, a more streamlined and obtainable version of the DCI, as well as an improved command structure in order to meet the operational requirements for the full range of Alliance missions. It also unveiled the NATO Response Force, “consisting of a technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed, as decided by the Council” (NATO Press Release, 2002). The NRF was envisioned as the vehicle by which improved capabilities could be objectively measured. The Prague initiatives could be thought of as a two-phased approach to capabilities improvement; the PCC would institute the changes, while the NRF would employ them, comprising an essential element of the Alliance’s transformation agenda.

NATO leaders declared the NRF capable of operations in October 2003, when it stood up a small prototype force whose size remains adjustable until NATO leaders better understand its missions and capabilities. Initial operational capability will be declared as soon as possible, but no later than October 2004 with full operational capability set for no later than October 2006. According to NATO’s SHAPE website, when Full Operational

Capability is reached the force will comprise 21,000 troops across the spectrum of land, sea and air operations. The NRF will also include combat service support, logistics, communications and intelligence functions to ensure its credibility as a readily deployable force. The NRF will not be a permanent or standing force. Rather, it will be constituted from NATO forces and tailored as necessary for the specific operation. It will be able to carry out certain missions on its own, or serve as part of a larger force contributing to the full range of Alliance military operations. “In general terms, it will be based on a brigade size land element, including special operations forces... [and] will include a joint naval task force and the air element...capable of 200 sorties a day.”

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### III. THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE: FROM CONCEPT TO EMPLOYMENT

*Once the NRF is operational, NATO will for the first time in its history have a standing, integrated force with sea, land, air and special operations components under a single commander.*

#### *NATO Review*

In Prague, NATO unveiled its plans to field the NATO Response Force, a highly mobile, rapidly deployable, technologically advanced interoperable and sustainable joint force. Implementation of this ambitious project, never before attempted on such a large scale, was a high-risk venture for NATO. The NRF, however, was only one of several risky initiatives announced at the Prague Summit. Held just a year after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the North Atlantic Council announced its intentions to institute what it termed a “Package of Measures” intended to strengthen NATO; transforming the Alliance in order to better deal with emerging threats. The NRF was arguably the most important initiative in the package. Critics, however, preached its implausibility, listing such barriers to success as national versus Alliance priorities, the duplicative nature of the NRF and similar European Security and Defense Policy initiatives, and complicated and confusing command structure issues within NATO. Yet, less than two years after its introduction, the NRF is already in its third rotation and some of its elements have been successfully deployed, participating in new or continuing operations. But the NRF is more than just a highly mobile, rapidly deployable force. It is also designed to be the conduit through which European military units can pass, improving their capabilities via participation.

Our vehicle for tackling capability improvements is the NATO Response Force - an operational tool, but also a mechanism, a test-bed, for injecting Transformational thinking into the Alliance. Its emphasis on high readiness, rapid deployability and high tech capability, should help to move us to a common interoperability standard in terms of doctrine, training and ultimately kit. (Forbes, 2004)

The dual roles of the NRF are compatible in the sense that its capabilities improvement function is intended to create an ever-increasing ready pool of forces able to participate in expeditionary operations.

The question as to which operations the NRF will be best suited to respond remains somewhat ambiguous. NATO is in the process of developing certification criteria in order to measure a units' ability to participate. They are also defining typical missions in which the NRF may become involved. NATO is up front about the evolutionary nature of the NRF, declaring limited, though continuously increasing, capabilities as it works towards full operational capability in 2006.

#### **A. PRAGUE PACKAGE OF MEASURES**

Creating the NRF was one of seven initiatives in a package of measures intended to allow NATO to proactively face the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In a declaration issued at the end of the Prague Summit, the Council announced it had approved a

comprehensive package of measures, based on NATO's Strategic Concept, to strengthen our ability to meet the challenges to the security of our forces, populations and territory, from wherever they may come. Today's decisions will provide for balanced and effective capabilities within the Alliance so that NATO can better carry out the full range of its missions and respond collectively to those challenges, including the threat posed by terrorism and by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. (NATO Press Release, 2002)

In addition to describing its vision for the NRF, the Council detailed the six other measures it deemed necessary in order to preserve the Alliance. First, it called for streamlining NATO's command structure based on defense ministers' recommendations "with a view to meeting the operational requirements for the full range of Alliance missions." The second measure, approval of the Prague Capabilities Commitment, was viewed as critical in the "continuing Alliance effort to improve and develop new military capabilities for modern warfare in a high threat environment." Third, the Council sought the endorsement of a previously agreed upon military concept to defend against terrorism, focusing on improved intelligence sharing and crisis response arrangements.

Fourth, the Council sought the endorsement of five nuclear, biological and chemical weapons defense initiatives, designed to enhance the Alliance's defense capabilities against weapons of mass destruction. The fifth initiative sought to strengthen NATO's capabilities to defend against cyber attacks, while the sixth and last initiative was to examine "options for addressing the increasing missile threat to Alliance territory, forces and population centers." This package of measures set the most aggressive agenda NATO had seen in recent history. Progress on all initiatives has been positive since the Prague summit, though only the command restructure and the NRF initiatives were assigned timelines for implementation. NATO has been able to meet those self-imposed constraints, and in the case of the NRF, has actually exceeded the implementation timeline.

## **B. IMPLEMENTING THE NRF CONCEPT**

In September 2002, one year after the al Qaeda attacks on the U.S., President George W. Bush approved a new National Security Strategy (NSS). In the document, Bush called for NATO to institute a rapid reaction force able to protect all NATO members.

The attacks of September 11 were also an attack on NATO, as NATO itself recognized when it invoked its Article V self-defense clause for the first time. NATO's core mission – collective defense of the transatlantic alliance of democracies – remains, but NATO must develop new structures and capabilities to carry out that mission under new circumstances. NATO must build a capability to field, at short notice, highly mobile, specially trained forces whenever they are needed to respond to a threat against any member of the alliance (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002, p. 25).

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld brought Bush's message to NATO during a meeting among defense ministers days after the NSS was released. He echoed the need for a rapidly deployable force as defined in the NSS. "The alliance must be able to act wherever our interests are threatened, creating coalitions under NATO's own mandate, as well as contributing to mission-based coalitions." Rumsfeld (2002) stated "I think it's critically important that NATO have a capability that can be deployed in a matter of hours and days. A warfighting capability." The NRF, one of several initiatives in the

Package of Measures, was officially unveiled at Prague less than two months later. The Alliance declared it would create

a NATO Response Force (NRF) consisting of a technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements ready to move quickly to wherever needed, as decided by the Council. The NRF will also be a catalyst for focusing and promoting improvements in the Alliance's military capabilities. We gave directions for the development of a comprehensive concept for such a force, which will have its initial operational capability as soon as possible, but not later than October 2004 and its full operational capability not later than October 2006, and for a report to Defence Ministers in Spring 2003. (NATO Press Release, 2002).

NATO aggressively developed plans to implement the force, meeting the tight timeline imposed at Prague. By late 2003 NATO had declared a prototype NRF operational, and claimed it was well on the way to meeting the initial and full operational capability milestones.

The Alliance inaugurated the first prototype NRF rotation force, the so-called "NRF 1" ...on 15 October 2003. The first two NRF rotations, while operational, are experimental. They have been designed to be small and limited in scope. SHAPE, [Allied command Transformation] and the Regional Headquarters are experimenting with this force to develop the necessary doctrines, training and certification standards, operational requirements, and readiness reporting requirements to ensure the NRF's success... (NATO Review, 2004, p. 58)

The first two prototype forces, which became operational in October 2003 and January 2004 respectively, consisted of roughly 8000 members from 14 European nations. As time progresses the size of the NRF will increase. According to NATO's SHAPE website, when full operational capability is reached, "troop size will be set at 21,000. The NRF will have dedicated, cutting-edge fighter aircraft, ships, army vehicles, combat service support, logistics, communications, intelligence, and whatever is required to make it a highly readiness, credible force." The NRF will not be a permanent force in terms of size or membership. Rather, it will be constituted from rotational NATO forces and tailored as necessary for a specific operation. It will be able to carry out certain missions on its own, or serve as part of a larger force contributing to the full range of Alliance

military operations. The size and makeup of the prototype forces, NRF 1 and NRF 2, can be seen in Figure 3.1.

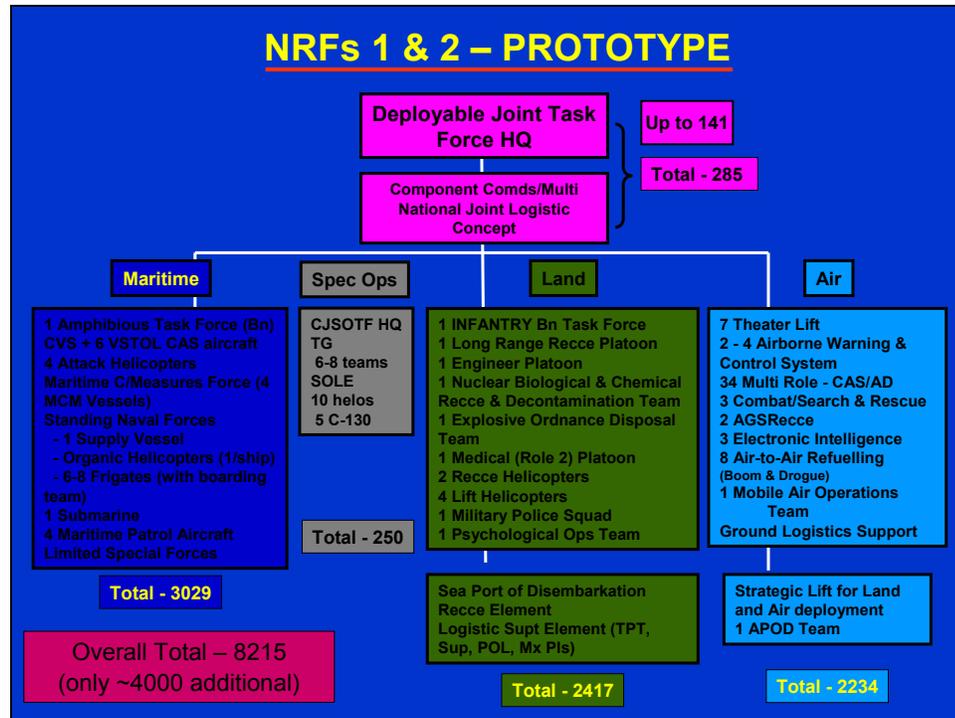


Figure 3.1: NRFs 1 and 2 Force Structure (After NRF – NATO’s Expeditionary Capability)

As it fielded its first two prototype forces, NATO attempted to derive explicit guidance directing the execution of the NRF’s dual role as a vehicle for capability improvement and as a credible projection force. Meantime, a rotation schedule was developed in order to establish headquarters responsibilities and to serve as a planning tool for nations to prepare prospective units for participation (see Figure 3.2). One of NATO’s three operational headquarters will serve as the “parent” headquarters for a period of one year, covering two NRF rotations<sup>2</sup>. JFC N had responsibility for NRF rotations 1 and 2, JFC S is currently handling NRF 3 and 4 and JHQ W is scheduled to assume command of NRF 5 and 6. One level below the headquarters are the component commands: land, maritime

<sup>2</sup> Joint Forces Command North (JFC N) is located in Brunssum, the Netherlands, Joint Forces Command South (JFC S) is located in Naples, Italy, and Joint Headquarters West (JHQ W), is a sea-based command based out of Lisbon, Portugal.

and air. The air and maritime component commands (ACC and MCC) each are designated to serve for a period of one year, while the land component command (LCC) is rotated every six months. At the unit level, the sequence of rotation of forces assigned to the NRF is based on a period of individual unit training, then a six month period of NRF systems and interoperability training, followed by a six month “on call” period. Force Generation Conferences are held periodically to determine which candidate units will compete for inclusion into a forthcoming NRF rotation.

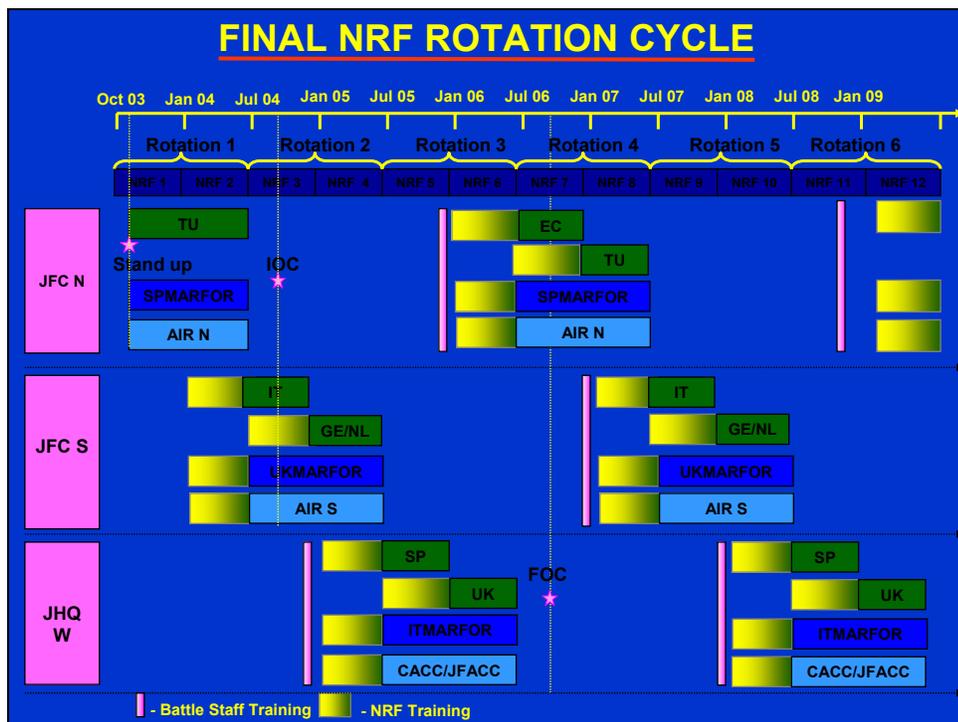


Figure 3.2: NRF Rotation Cycle (After NRF – NATO’s Expeditionary Capability)

During the current rotation, NRF 3, the land forces are provided by the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps – Italy of Solbiate Olona. The UK Maritime Force (UKMARFOR) serves as the maritime force. The air forces are comprised of a mix of assets available to NATO’s AIRSOUTH.

The ideal size and structure for the force has recently been determined by NATO. “In general terms, it will be based on a brigade size land element, including special

operations forces... [and] will include a joint naval task force and the air element...capable of 200 sorties a day.” Presently, according to Calha:

The force will have a land component composed of one brigade combat team with forced entry capability, an air component of 72 combat aircraft, and a maritime component composed of one carrier battle group, an amphibious task group and a surface action group of six to ten combatants. Those forces would be commanded by a Combined Joint Task Force headquarters on a rotating basis among three groups, so that one would always be ready to be deployed on short notice. (2003, p. 2)

While overall troop strength will be approximately 21,000 per response force, the size and makeup of the deployed force will be optimized based on the scope and location of the operation.

### **1. Mission One: Projection Force**

NATO is banking on the fact that the NRF’s most striking characteristic will not be its rapid deployment capability, but its intransience. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO forces have only been called up for specific missions on an as-needed basis. The two exceptions to its ad-hoc nature are NATO’s Airborne Early Warning Force and the Standing Naval Forces. According to NATO Review (2004, p. 58), the NRF will now also be a standing force on call and “available for immediate use for any mission deemed appropriate by the North Atlantic Council.” One main difference between the NRF and its predecessors, however, will lie in the response force’s complete force integration. The NRF will not only be combined, drawing from the 24 European members of NATO, it will also be joint, drawing from the individual components within each country’s ministry of defense. “Once the NRF is operational, NATO will for the first time in its history have a standing, integrated force with sea, land, air and special operations components under a single commander.” The results could rival the best joint efforts U.S. policymakers are undertaking within the DoD today.

NATO hopes to capitalize on what it sees as a range of missions for the NRF. Having a rapidly deployable force at the ready will afford the opportunity for NATO to end conflict, but it also creates a forward-projection opportunity in order to prevent hostilities. According to NATO Review:

As important as it is for the NRF to be able to operate effectively at the high end of the intensity spectrum, its agility and expeditionary nature could help forestall conflict in the first place. In addition to being able to participate in peacetime engagement programmes that will help strengthen national institutions, the NRF's agility and expeditionary nature gives the Alliance the military capability to insert a small force onto the ground during the deterrence phase of a deteriorating situation. The presence of this force, during a humanitarian crisis, for example, could help stabilize a situation before it escalates and might even help bring about the conditions for an eventual political settlement without a significant loss of life occurring first. With a humanitarian crisis in particular, it is better to deploy in advance of a potential disaster rather than waiting until it has occurred and having to deal with the consequences. (pp. 58-59)

This statement by NATO provides some insight as to how the Council envisions employing the NRF. In fact, it not only reflects the proactive stance outlined in U.S. National Security Strategy, forestalling conflict using deterrence, it also reflects the recently published EU's Security Strategy, developing a culture that fosters early, rapid and robust intervention. A recent NATO publication defines several specific missions a fully operationally capable NRF will be capable of undertaking.

- Opposed Entry Scenario against limited opposition
- Flexible Deterrence, for example, the counter-terrorism role
- Crisis Response Missions
- Peace Enforcement Missions
- Embargo operations – maritime, land, and no-fly zone
- Maritime Interdiction Operations
- Naval Mine Countermeasures Operations
- Non-Combatant Evacuation
- Humanitarian Relief Operations

All of these tasks can require the rapid response which the NRF ultimately will possess, whether the mission is to deploy as a show of force and solidarity to deter aggression; as a stand-alone force for Article 5 (collective defense) or non-Article 5 (crisis management, stabilization) operations; or as an initial entry operation in advance of a larger force. Exactly how and when the NRF will be employed remains to be seen. Although

officially in its third six-month rotation, in reality the NRF is still in its infancy and has much to accomplish before it can claim full operational capability in 2006.

## **2. Mission Two: Transformation Force**

As designed, the NRF fits neatly into NATO's transformation plans. Apart from its primary role as a highly trained and well-equipped projection force available to deploy at a moments' notice, the NRF is also a vehicle by which the capabilities of NATO's European forces can be vetted. The idea is to filter national troops through the NRF in order to effect continuous improvement.

NATO nations will contribute formations to the NRF and these units will become recipients of national 'high-tech' reform. Once these units receive these upgrades, they are rotated through the highest NRF readiness window and then spread their experience and institutional knowledge back to their national forces and ultimately into an Alliance-wide military culture of modernity. (Mariano & Wilson, 2003, p. 3)

Even the poorest of NATO countries will eventually benefit from this improvement-driven rotational concept, raising the overall capabilities of NATO in the process. Nations must downsize and retool their legacy forces in order to adapt to a changing security environment according to NATO Review (2004). The end result, providing a clear incentive to participate, is a leaner, less costly military force to maintain.

NATO is conducting a troops-to-task analysis – using the NRF as its basis – that will define the minimum number of troops and capabilities needed for NATO to carry out its 21st century missions. With the completion of [a] statement of requirements, each member nation will then be asked to contribute whatever troops or capabilities they believe they are in a position to provide. (p. 59)

Once NATO requirements are met, any national requirements, over and above those of the Alliance, can be debated at the national level. Initiating the process is difficult, however. It requires a certain amount of up-front capital, something largely absent from current European budgets. In some countries it also requires significant cuts in military personnel, a political and social tarbaby, not to mention the potential dent in national pride fielding a less formidable force may cause.

## **C. EMPLOYING THE NRF**

On 29 June, 2004 at the NATO Istanbul Summit, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld declared the NATO Response Force up and ready for its first mission, possibly to support the Olympics in Athens or the national elections in Afghanistan. Those comments came on the day that NRF 3 became operational and after much discussion at the summit on continuing and future operations involving NATO. Since the Istanbul summit and Rumsfeld's announcement, elements of the NRF have been employed in both areas.

### **1. Operation Distinguished Games, Athens, Greece**

At the request of the Greek government, NATO launched several operational activities entitled "Distinguished Games" to assist the Hellenic Government in ensuring the safe conduct of the recently concluded 2004 Summer Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece. The North Atlantic Council formally agreed to provide security assistance including:

- AWACS aircraft for the surveillance of airspace
- Maritime surveillance through NATO's Operation Active Endeavour
- Deployment of elements of the NATO Multinational Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense Battalion
- Enhanced intelligence sharing

While the majority of NATO assets were standing forces redirected to the Olympic mission, the CBRN Battalion had just been certified as part of NRF 3. Participation of the battalion in the operation marked the first use of an NRF unit. Personnel, vehicles and equipment from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Spain deployed to Halkida, Greece in early August, ready to assume their mission supplementing the Hellenic CBRN forces by conducting surveillance, detection, identification, decontamination, and CBR laboratory operations. Authority for the operations was exercised through the Commander of Joint Forces Command South (JFC S) Naples, Admiral Gregory G. Johnson, for all the NATO assets. JFC S deployed a Forward Deployed Command Element to facilitate the coordination between the operational commanders and the Hellenic Military authorities.

## **2. International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan**

On 28 July 2004, NATO's Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, announced the authorization for further expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. ISAF's main task is to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority in Kabul in the maintenance of security so that the Transitional Authority and United Nations personnel can operate in a secure environment, allowing the conduct of free and fair elections, the spread of the rule of law, and the reconstruction of the country. ISAF forces make up roughly 6,500 of the 18,000 coalition forces in Afghanistan. The ISAF expansion is intended to improve security in order to allow for free and fair elections throughout the country in September 2004. Forces promised by de Hoop Scheffer included United Kingdom-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Mazar-I-Sharif and Meymana, a German-led PRT in Feyzabad, and a Netherlands-led PRT in Baghlan. ISAF already commands a PRT in Kunduz. The announcement came after heated debate among NATO decisionmakers regarding which forces to deploy in support of the elections. While the U.S. suggested NATO expand its role in Afghanistan by employing the NRF there, not all NATO members agreed. In a press conference held a few days after de Hoop Scheffer's announcement, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld commented on NATO's decision not to send the NRF to Afghanistan.

All of the 26 NATO nations agree[d], except one. France did not. The proposal was to send in the NATO Response Force which [has a partial] capability, but not its complete capability. And the United States proposed that it go in and everyone agreed except France. (2004)

France's opposition stemmed from its insistence that the NRF should only be used when there is a security crisis, not for routine operations. French President Jacques Chirac (2004) commented the NRF "isn't designed for that and we mustn't use things for the wrong purpose or for just anything."

As a result, the NRF is not officially participating in ISAF operations. Instead, NATO claims the ISAF mission is "linked" to the NRF. In any case, for the first time an

NRF-certified unit has been deployed to a combat zone. An Italian Battalion will be stationed in the Afghan capital, Kabul, as part of NATO's ISAF expansion in order to facilitate peaceful elections.

#### IV. LIMITATIONS AFFECTING THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE

*Alliance Transformation in the 15 months since the Prague Summit has been primarily organizational and rhetorical. Delivery and product are developing but associated bureaucracy and processes remain cumbersome and insufficiently agile.<sup>3</sup>*

*Admiral Sir Ian Forbes*

The NATO Response Force is widely touted as the solution which best addresses the growing problem of regional conflicts erupting in the post-Cold War era. However, there are several issues standing in the way of the effective employment of the NRF. German military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz claimed the purpose of war was politics and described war as a continuation of political intercourse by other means. The politics involved in waging war using the NRF will likely be a battle unto itself. The bureaucratic process of getting NATO forces to the field is unprecedented, requiring a multifaceted approval process within and among European nations as well as within the Alliance before the NRF can be deployed. There is also growing concern in Europe over whether the population will be able to effectively finance defense expenditures. Negative birth rates and an ageing population could create a financial crisis for the EU, further reducing defense expenditures in favor of social programs. There are also some very real operational limitations the NRF will have to overcome before NATO can claim success. Forces from the newest NATO countries are lacking in equipment and training as compared to their neighbors to the west, creating a capabilities imbalance within the European pillar. The NRF may also find itself suddenly short of troops if an all-European contingency arises. Currently, forces earmarked for NRF rotation could also be on alert as part of a European Rapid Reaction Force. If the European force deploys, the NRF could find itself with a decimated force unable to respond. In light of these limitations, it could be a difficult debut for the NRF. The will of the Alliance as a whole, not just that of the U.S., must prevail in order for the NRF to be considered a success.

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<sup>3</sup> Admiral Sir Ian Forbes KCB, CBE, United Kingdom Royal Navy, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (DSACT). Speech to the Conference of National Armaments Directors, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, 6 May 2004.

## A. POLITICAL LIMITATIONS

In October 2003 NATO Defense Ministers gathered in Colorado Springs to conduct Dynamic Response 07, a crisis management seminar designed to highlight deficiencies associated with deploying the NRF in future conflicts. The decision to deploy the NRF will ultimately be made by the North Atlantic Council; however, approval by nations whose members are part of the NRF can also be required prior to deployment. Some European countries, such as Germany, require parliamentary approval before troops can be involved in out-of-area operations (see table 4.1)<sup>4</sup>. During the seminar, according to Stoop (2004), “being presented with a situation that was changing by the hour, ministers were not able to comply with national procedures, such as parliamentary approval, fast enough.” In other words, during an evolving simulated crisis scenario the institutional limitations placed on troop movement and employment forced some European countries to halt NATO from using the troops they had committed to the NRF. Today, disparate European political viewpoints could cause decisionmaking delays that might damage the NRF’s reputation as a rapidly deployable force. NATO Review offers a plausible, though perhaps politically unrealistic approach to resolving this issue:

Many of the capability problems that NATO is currently facing could be alleviated relatively easily if Allies were to eliminate or at least reduce the frequent restrictions or caveats accompanying their contributions on the ways in which they may be used. These include limiting the availability of a particular asset to troops from a contributing nation and preventing troops from being involved in certain activities, such as crowd control. The effect of these restrictions is to complicate the operational commander’s task and necessitate the deployment of additional forces and capabilities to compensate. (2004, p. 35)

Changing national parliamentary procedures in order to cede approval on troop use to NATO is simply unrealistic in the short-term. The change process within each nation’s bureaucracy takes time. More importantly, the will of the people to relinquish a degree of civilian control over their militaries must be considered. Even if parliamentary procedures could quickly be changed, it would still take more effort to eliminate the

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on individual NATO members’ parliamentary approval processes, see the Center for European Security and Disarmament “NATO Notes Annex, Parliamentary Approval of Military Missions Abroad” at [http://www.cesd.org/natonotes/notes37\\_annex.htm](http://www.cesd.org/natonotes/notes37_annex.htm)

impediments blocking a unified Alliance position regarding the use of member troops. These national obstacles must eventually be eliminated. In order for the NRF to meet its rapidly deployable mandate, dissenting nations must be willing to defer when a voting majority directs the NRF's employment. The NRF can never become an effective force in being so long as individual members can trump the majority. NATO must require each of its members to answer "Yes" to the following two questions: The first and more difficult question is: Will your troops automatically participate if the majority of Alliance members are willing to undertake a mission? Second, if you are willing to commit troops to a particular mission, are they authorized to participate along the full spectrum of conflict? The current answer to both questions, based on results from Dynamic Response 07, is a resounding "No."

<b>SURVEY OF SELECTED NATO MEMBERS ON PARLIMENTARY APPROVAL FOR MILITARY MISSIONS ABROAD</b>	
<b>Question 1:</b> Does your country require parliamentary approval for military deployment abroad?	
<b>Question 2:</b> Does your country require parliamentary approval for military deployment abroad within non-Article V collective NATO actions, such as in the Balkans?	
<b>Question 3:</b> What are the procedures, including parliamentary approval if necessary, within Article V collective NATO actions?	
<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	<p><b>Yes to Question 1.</b> With the accession to NATO in 1999, adjustments to the constitution were made in order to allow the deployment of foreign troops on Czech territory and the sending of Czech troops abroad. Article 43 of the constitution requires parliamentary approval, which consists of more than a half of all Deputies and Senators. [<i>Exceptions:</i> The government has full authority to deploy troops up to 60 days if ‘they fulfil obligations from international joint defence against aggression’; or if it is a participation in ‘peace operations in accordance with the decision of the international organisation, of which the Czech Republic is a member, and subject to the consent of the receiving state’, (e.g. NATO Operation Essential Harvest in Macedonia), or if ‘or if they provide assistance in natural disasters, industrial or ecological accidents’.]</p> <p><b>Yes to Question 2.</b> Parliamentary approval is required for military deployments abroad for non-Article V collective NATO actions exceeding 60 days as well as for those not covered by the exceptions above. (Czech participation in SFOR and KFOR were approved by parliament, but prior to the change of the constitution).</p> <p><b>No to Question 3.</b> Within Article V, the government is authorised to approve deployment for up to 60 days; for longer periods parliamentary approval is required. They are also authorised to approve the stay of foreign troops in the Czech Republic for up to 60 days.</p>
<b>France</b>	<p><b>No to all.</b> If French military means were involved, parliament would be consulted and regularly informed, e.g. Kosovo. No approval in form of a vote is required.</p>
<b>Germany</b>	<p><b>Yes to all.</b> Following a decision by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1994, the constitution requires that the government must seek parliamentary approval prior to any deployment. This is based on cases involving German participation in international peacekeeping missions conducted by the UN, but is also applicable to NATO operations –Article V or non-Article V. ‘In exceptional circumstances such as specific time constraints,’ ... approval may be sought after deployment, in which case the parliament would be entitled to terminate the ongoing operation. (Since 1994, there has only been one operation with no prior approval: the evacuation of German and other EU nationals in Albania in 1997). [<i>Exception:</i> In case of deployment of armed forces abroad for humanitarian relief or for conduct of support operations no approval is required, as long as there is no involvement in armed operations.]</p>
<b>United States</b>	<p><b>No to all.</b> Technically, the US President, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, does not need Congressional approval for engaging in military missions abroad. In practice, a resolution is sought from Congress endorsing missions foreseen as being longer term. A joint resolution to authorise the use of US Armed Forces in response to the terror attacks was passed. In most cases of a one-off, short-term mission, like the bombing of a suspected chemical weapons plant, the President would act without Congressional debate or approval, but would inform Congressional leaders of the impending action. Congress alone has the power to declare war (not invoked since World War II) and is the sole body with the competence to initiate programmes such as an operation in the Balkans.</p>

Figure 4.1: Survey of selected NATO members on parliamentary approval for military missions abroad. (After NATO Notes Annex, Parliamentary Approval of Military Missions Abroad)

To further illustrate how unlikely it is that these questions will ever be answered in the affirmative, one needs look no further than NATO's KFOR mission, discussed in Section III. C. According to Lugar,

many individual countries place restrictions, sometimes undeclared, on what their forces can actually do in the field. For instance, NATO has 19,000 troops on the ground in Kosovo, where the biggest threat to security is rioting, as we saw in March. But thanks to these various national caveats and other restrictions, commanders estimate that only 5,000 to 6,000 of those troops are available for riot control. [...] Committing troops to a NATO operation under heavy restrictions makes no more sense than sending them into battle with guns but no ammunition. We need real capability to engage in real work. (2004)

It is true that governments are attempting to bring their own procedures more in line with NRF requirements, but progress is slow, political viewpoints are diverse, and national memories in Europe are long.

As if parliamentary obstacles were not enough, NATO faces another political challenge as it fields the NRF. In December 1999, the European Council met in Helsinki, Finland. Like NATO leaders, the Council clearly saw shortfalls in the capabilities of national militaries, not to mention the various multinational organizations such as the Eurocorps<sup>5</sup>, to adequately protect European interests. But unlike the North Atlantic Council, the European Council felt pressure to address the shortfalls from a strictly European standpoint. As a result, among several initiatives the EU announced it would undertake, the most ambitious was clearly the Union's intent to develop a new military capability known as the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF). Also known as the "Headline Goal," the ERRF will be a contingent drawn from EU Member States able to deploy a force of up to 60,000 troops within 60 days, and to be sustainable for as long as a year. The role of this all-European force is to conduct what have become known as the Petersberg Tasks: humanitarian and rescue missions; peacekeeping missions; and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. Apart from its primarily peacekeeping nature, the ERRF concept sounds strikingly similar to that of the NRF. In all likelihood troop contributions to either initiative will at least overlap, if they are not

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<sup>5</sup> The Eurocorps, created in 1992, is a military force comprised of troops from France, Germany, Spain, Luxembourg, and Belgium. For more information, see <http://www.eurocorps.org>

completely identical. According to Kempin (2002, p. 2), the “NATO Response Force’s crucial challenge is a political one.” The NRF and the “EU’s European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) with its military component the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF) will – on the long run – be politically incompatible. The two are based on completely different concepts of security.” Neither the NRF nor the ERRF are considered standing forces. In other words, members from a European NATO unit will serve a rotation with one of the forces, then return to their national unit. Kempin goes on to ask:

How is it possible...that European soldiers – with the ‘helmets’ of NATO Response Force – fight wars or do preemptive strikes against a state, then change the NATO Response force ‘helmets’ in order to do – on the same ground – peacekeeping and peace enforcement with European Rapid Reaction Force hats? (p. 18)

The solution Kempin poses is to “establish a ‘peacekeeping track’ inside NATO” essentially incorporating the ERRF under the NATO umbrella and tagging it as a specialized force employed specifically for Petersberg task operations. The idea is not without some merit, but it is likely unexecutable for two reasons. First, creating a specialized peacekeeping force in addition to maintaining a contingency force would double the size of the response forces on alert, further stretching tight defense budgets. Second, task assignment by nationality would only serve to reinforce the rift between the U.S., with its high-tech war-making ability, and Europe, on the other side of the gap, resigned to its lower-tech, peacekeeping function. This arrangement does not sit well with EU defense ministers, not least of all because it leaves Europe vulnerable if it chooses to forego a high-end military capability. A more plausible scenario might be parallel efforts by NATO and the EU in developing response forces that will be able to address the full range of military operations. Assuming this happens, using the NRF for high end operations, then switching to the ERRF to institute stabilization operations after a mission phase change, would not be necessary. The issue would instead focus on which force to employ in the first place; the answer would be determined based on the organization with the most at stake. On the surface, it would appear that expanding the mission of the ERRF to include operations on the high end of the conflict spectrum would also drive additional cost, based on the need for training and equipment required to

conduct combat operations in addition to Petersberg task-oriented operations. Of course, this would not be an issue so long as the same troops and equipment are used for the NRF and the ERRF, similar to the way American troops seamlessly switch from a U.S. to a NATO mission. But this would only be possible if the ERRF mandate and the current restrictions levied on European troop use are revised.

One last troublesome limitation affecting the full realization of an unfettered NRF is the difficulty EU members will likely have financing their overall defense efforts over time. Defense budgets among NATO's European members, already small in percentage of GDP as compared to the U.S., will continue to remain low and will in all likelihood further decrease (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3). According to Grant, Hoorens, Sivadasan, Van Het Loo, DaVanzo, Hale, Gibson, and Butz, "Europe's ageing population, which is itself a consequence of low fertility and increased life expectancy, is likely to force governments to rebalance social insurance systems." (2004, p. 1) At issue is the shifting distribution of the population.

Normally, the age distribution of a population is determined largely by fertility but modified by migration and mortality. As younger age groups continue to make up a shrinking percentage of the population, this has implications for the whole population. The major concern is whether a sufficient working-age population is available to support an increasingly older population. [...] For example, for Italy in 2001 every 100 economically-active people supported approximately 27 old people, compared with only 19 old people in 1985. (p.49)

The old-age dependency ratio of retirees over 65 to workers between 15 and 64 among EU Member States and Applicant Countries is shifting dramatically, increasing the burden on youth to care for the elderly (see Figure 4.4).

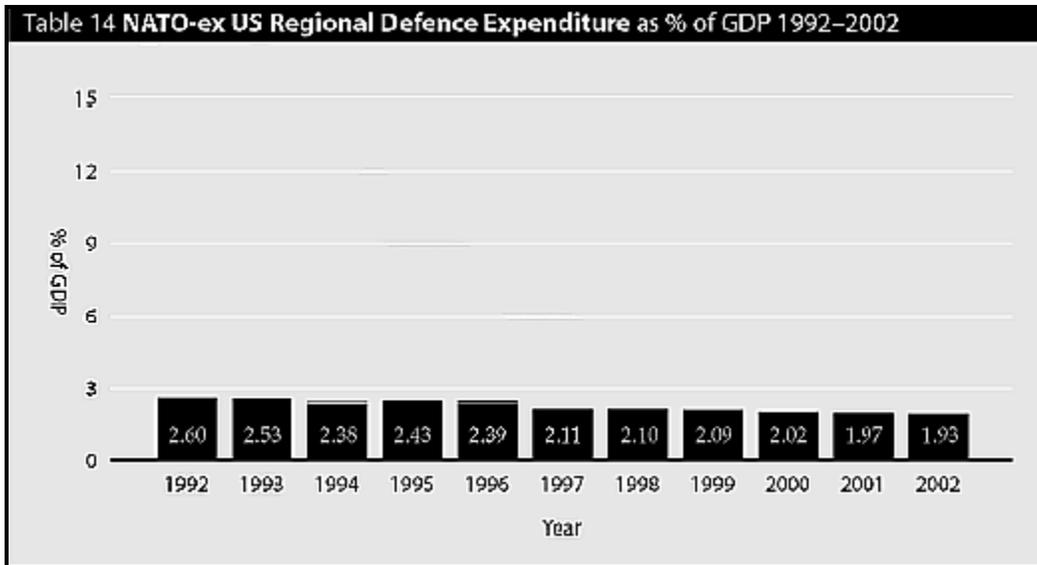


Figure 4.2: European Defense Expenditures as a percentage of GDP (From The Military Balance 2003-2004)

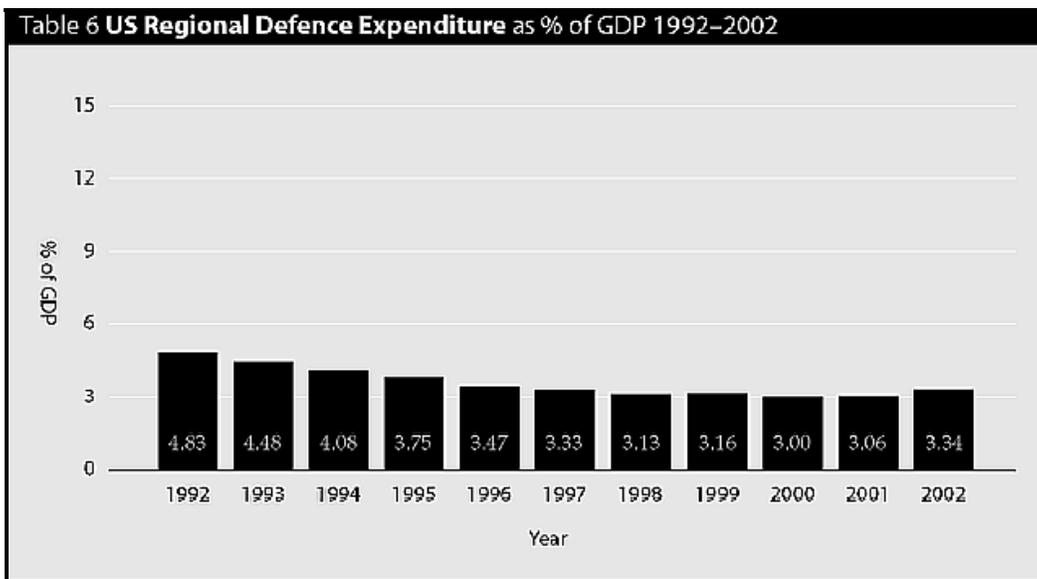


Figure 4.3: U.S. Defense Expenditures as a percentage of GDP (From The Military Balance 2003-2004)

As Europe faces what looks to be an extended period of negative population growth, parliaments will be forced to deal with critical financial restructuring issues in order to care for its ageing population. Defense budgets will surely be on the chopping block. Naumann (2004) claims

by the year 2050, the population of the enlarged European Union will shrink and the average age will increase from 37 to 55 years, by which time the U.S. population will in all likelihood outnumber that of the

enlarged Union and will continue to have an average age of 36 years; in other words, the European Union will in future be required to invest a significant proportion of its gross national product to maintain social order and will as a result be unable to catch up with the United States in terms of defence expenditure. (p. 65)

EU policymakers are already facing difficult decisions regarding the redistribution of GNPs in order to deal with social programs designed to support the elderly. If defense expenditures among European NATO members are reduced, the effect on NATO-led initiatives will likely be hit first, cutting funding for out-of-area operations before homeland defense. EU members are keenly aware of the importance the U.S. places on Alliance programs, including the NRF, and know the DoD will not let them fail. Therefore, they may withhold funding earmarked for NATO programs in favor of European defense. This would obviously affect the readiness level of the NRF.

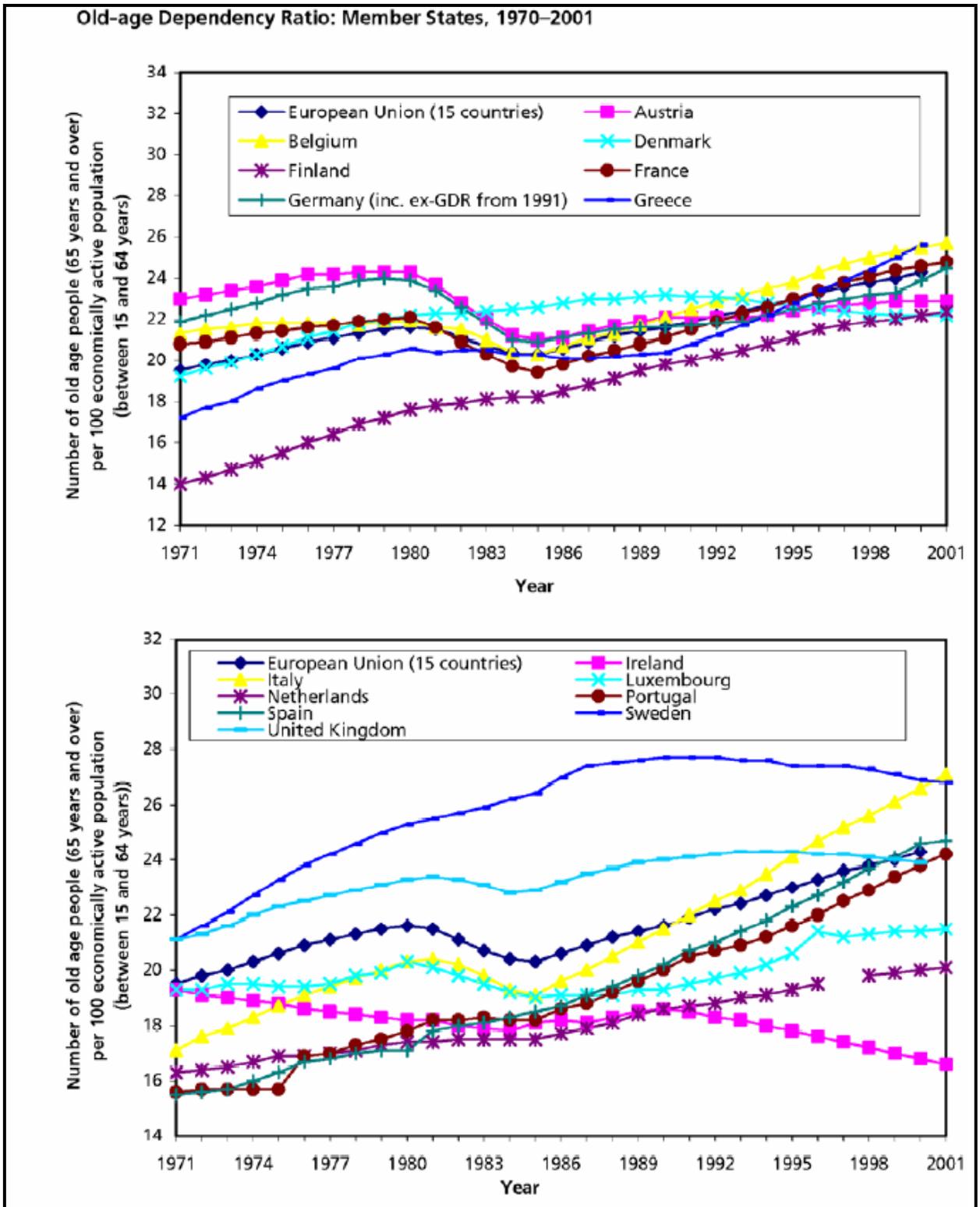


Figure 4.4: Old Age Dependency Ratio, EU Member States (From Grant et al.)

## **B. OPERATIONAL LIMITATIONS**

In order for the NATO Response Force to become a credible fighting force, it must overcome operational limitations in addition to the political limitations listed above. The first issue at hand is the previously mentioned capabilities gap (see Part II). If the EU is serious about strengthening the European pillar of NATO, and every indication points to this eventuality, it is critical the Alliance foster their endeavor using the NRF as the vehicle. Today, several capabilities shortfalls exist within the NRF. The force itself is unable to remedy these shortfalls. Instead it is dependent on many of the initiatives instituted at the Prague summit, requiring NATO's EU members to improve their military capabilities. According to Feith

NATO's first challenge is for Allies to remedy their military shortcomings. NATO will not be able to perform its military missions if it does not fix longstanding shortfalls in such areas as strategic lift, communications, nuclear, biological and chemical defense equipment, and precision guided munitions. Allies promised to redress these shortcomings through the Prague Capabilities Commitment, but NATO suffers from a long history of unfulfilled force goals. Continued failure in this regard will jeopardize the NATO Response Force. (2003)

Unless the capabilities gap is successfully bridged, the U.S. may be forced to “go it alone” in future operations in order to maximize its chances for success. Alternatively, it can generate a “coalition of the willing” as it did in Iraq, matching allied capabilities with appropriate roles, sharing the burden without increasing risk. However, acting as an equal partner in a NATO operation where capabilities are dissimilar risks failure, not just for the U.S., but for all members. Conducting operations with incapable allies would undermine the NRF's credibility and purpose, causing unnecessary risk, and perhaps rendering it ineffective.

Next, there is a subtler, though no less serious capabilities gap among the European members of the Alliance. NATO's newest members bring to the organization readiness and equipment limitations. The NRF's transformational nature is designed specifically to deal with this capabilities shortfall, but it will take time to propagate through the lesser-capable units in order to improve their readiness. Meantime their participation level will be lower than that of their Western European partners, perpetuating the disparity between eastern and western European members. As if to

counter the lack of parity, many western European members of NATO are choosing not to honor their EU-imposed defense funding commitments. As Lugar puts it,

Many components are lagging far behind – some may not reach their initial capabilities until 2010 – and many individual nations are falling behind in their funding commitments. This is symptomatic of the greatest single problem facing the Alliance: despite the talk, too many NATO nations act as if they are not committed to a robust military program. In 11 member countries, defense spending has fallen below the agreed-on floor of 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product. So far, less than eight percent of the national commitments made in Prague have been implemented. (2004)

Lastly, there is the concern that the pool of European forces may not be deep enough to sustain the NRF and a European-led operation at the same time. This issue has political implications, as mentioned in section IV.A. above, but there are also operational issues that must be dealt with to ensure the NRF has a reserve of certified troops from which to draw.

[T]he NRF and the EU's RRF rely on the same pool of forces. Most countries have the same units assigned both to NATO and the EU, a.k.a. 'double hatting.' As both institutions are expanding their areas of engagement, one NATO insider fears this will spark a 'competition for resources' (Monaco, 2003, July, p. 2).

As the EU becomes more militarily independent, the potential for competitive conflict between the NRF and the ERRF will increase. In theory, the two forces are being developed to address different, complimentary missions. The NRF, rapidly mobile and designed to deal with crises on the high end of the conflict spectrum, will be the first on the scene, meeting the mandate of being able to deploy within five days. The ERRF, on the other hand, is a larger, more traditional follow-on force, able to address operations meeting the Petersberg task criteria. Its mandate is to be able to deploy within 30 days. According to Binnendijk & Kugler

By design, the NRF will not interfere with the EU's European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF). The missions of the NRF and ERRF are different. Whereas the NRF is intended for high-intensity combat and expeditionary strike missions, the ERRF currently is slotted primarily for peacekeeping and other Petersberg tasks. The NRF is also to be smaller than the ERRF and differently structured. Whereas the NRF will have only 21,000

personnel, the slowly evolving ERRF will have 60,000 ground troops and enough air and naval assets to bring the total to 100,000 personnel. (2004, p. 48)

But this presupposes several unrealistic assumptions. First, despite mission differences, the same troops and equipment will likely be earmarked for participation in both forces – possibly at the same time – as a cost saving measure. Second, the idea that the forces’ complimentary missions would not overlap assumes they would only ever respond to a single operation sequentially; initially, the NRF as a first response, then the ERRF as a follow-on, neatly returning home before repeating the cycle. The current global situation suggests otherwise. For example, the EU is set to take over the SFOR mission in Bosnia from NATO at the end of 2004. Force strength for this operation stands at roughly 7000. In neighboring Kosovo, more than 17,000 NATO troops are currently keeping the peace. Both of these missions are expected to carry on for the foreseeable future, ostensibly with the same number of troops, currently drawn from the same pool the NRF and ERRF will draw from. The bottom line is continuing missions will reduce the finite number of troops from which either organization draws, and must be taken into consideration when attempting to calculate the “depth” of the pool. The utility both the NRF and the ERRF will possess virtually guarantees their frequent and extended use. To assume otherwise and not plan troop strength accordingly would be naïve.

Further exacerbating the shallowness of the pool of forces is Europe’s continued resistance to transforming its militaries to meet the security needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Part of the problem lies with the legacy forces maintained by many of the EU members of NATO. While the aggregate European forces, at 2.4 million, are roughly twice the size of the U.S. military, they possess only a fraction of the expeditionary capability.

Today, only 10-20% of European ground forces can deploy outside their borders. A transformation roadmap could endorse reductions of 30-40% in existing European force structures while shifting toward deployable forces. This step would reduce Europe’s forces to about 1.6 million military personnel, 35 divisions, 2100 tactical combat aircraft, and 200 naval combatants. Ample forces would remain for performing NATO missions and national missions. (Binnendijk & Kugler, 2004, p. 55)

With the exception of France and Great Britain who have invested in extensive military reforms over the last decade, Europeans must make the leap toward more expeditionary-

like militaries in order to reap the benefits of streamlined forces; i.e.: savings in training, operations and maintenance, and in improved capabilities. Closely coordinated reductions among European partners will make it possible to derive a cohesive force with an end strength of 1.6 million as suggested by Binnendjik and Kugler, a pool that can easily accommodate supporting both the NRF and ERRF.

[T]o achieve the desired level of readiness and the lethality (and then maintain them indefinitely) NATO nations require enough forces and headquarters to maintain one NRF ready to go into action within days, one NRF undergoing training and certification, and another NRF being generated from forces not included in either of the first two ‘rotations’ (or in a recovery or refit cycle). Considering each rotation will involve about 20,000 personnel, the complete package could easily require 60,000 people. (Mariano & Wilson, 2003, p. 4)

In addition to the roughly 60,000 NRF troops at various levels of readiness, the ERRF will draw another 120,000 personnel: 60,000 “on alert” troops, plus another 60,000 in training for the next rotation. Even with no overlap, a force this size would only constitute just over 10% of the proposed reduced military end strength.

Both NATO and EU policymakers will need to place particular emphasis on harmonizing the employment of the ERRF with its sister force, the NRF. Because they will draw on the same forces, an adequate pool of equipment and troops must be maintained in reserve. Such an endeavor will likely meet opposition in Europe, where defense spending is already at an all time low, as wasteful or unnecessary. European militaries will, however, need to draw down and transform into expeditionary forces better suited to augment both the NRF and the ERRF when necessary. To lessen the competition for troops between the two forces, policymakers should strive for as clear a delineation of responsibilities as possible. As Monaco argues “Scarce resources and expanding geographical interests would make it advisable for these institutions to embark sooner rather than later on a frank debate about the ambitions of their respective forces” (2003, July, p. 2).

### C. CONCLUSIONS

There are both political and operational obstacles threatening to limit the effectiveness of the NATO Response Force. The current bureaucracy involved in getting the NRF to the fight threatens to undermine the rapid nature of the response force. It requires an unrealistic approval process within the parliaments of several European nations before the Alliance can deploy the NRF. Assuming this problem can be resolved, there is another political hurdle, namely potentially dwindling defense budgets, which must be cleared in order to ensure the long-term success of the NRF. As birth rates decline and the population ages, the EU will find it increasingly difficult to finance social programs. Defense spending, already disproportionately lower among the European members of NATO than the U.S., will likely further decline, forcing cuts in programs considered over and above basic defense, programs such as the NRF. The EU must resolve its role as a military power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If it chooses to develop a common European defense within the ESDP framework, it must find a way to increase its defense spending regardless of social constraints. Otherwise, the EU may be forced to live under the protective umbrella of NATO in order to fund its social agenda.

Operationally, the NRF faces equally difficult challenges. New NATO members lack the experience, equipment, and training enjoyed by western European Alliance members, creating a capabilities imbalance within the European pillar, while the older European members consistently fail to meet minimum defense funding requirements. Undeployable legacy militaries must be replaced with expeditionary forces to support the NRF as well as the ERRF. The monetary benefits reaped by significantly downsizing European forces can pay for its transformation and will actually improve readiness. The EU must remain vigilant as it transforms its militaries, ensuring an adequate pool of troops, whether independent or double hatted, will be available to meet the frequent call-ups both forces will likely face. Both the political influences and operational constraints limiting the unrestricted growth of European defense are significant. Despite the seeming implausibility of the EU becoming the predominant pillar supporting NATO, Europeans must throw their wholehearted support behind the NRF to ensure its future as a credible force.

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## V. WHAT EFFECT WILL THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE HAVE ON THE U.S. AIR FORCE?

*Our US experience and our NATO experience is that we rarely go into a contingency unless we're hooked up with our allies and coalition partners in some way.<sup>6</sup>*

*General Robert Foglesong*

The recently refined mission of the NRF contains many similar characteristics to that of the United States Air forces in Europe (USAFE). The emergence of the new NRF and the potential mission overlap could mean a reduction in Air Force assets in Europe, which translates into DoD savings. But this speculative viewpoint is too simplistic. There are more complicated reasons for maintaining the current Air force presence in Europe, not least of which is to preserve and protect U.S. national interest abroad. The U.S. commitment to NATO remains strong. Despite some theories, the recent announcement of plans to reduce the U.S. overseas footprint in Europe is not founded in a resurgence of U.S. isolationist attitudes or in the belief that EU defense initiatives are proceeding at a rate which makes a U.S. presence in Europe unnecessary. The plan will instead be executed as part of the DoD's transformational strategy aimed at facing emerging threats. The U.S. is crafting expeditionary forces designed to garrison at home but capable of rapid projection.

The EU continues to make a concerted effort to improve its military capabilities via the European Security and Defense Policy. It has already highlighted several major shortfalls and, as a result, developed the European Capabilities Action Plan in order to reduce or eliminate those shortfalls, forming project groups led by EU member countries. Addressing these military shortfalls will not only improve autonomous European defense and strengthen the European pillar of NATO, it will also reduce the dependence of the NRF on U.S. assets. Several shortfalls, however, have yet to be adequately addressed, including the lack of strategic airlift assets, air refueling assets, Intelligence, Surveillance

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<sup>6</sup> Gen Robert Foglesong, Commander, United States Air Forces in Europe, in Air Force Magazine, March, 2004.

and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets, and inadequate Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs) stores and launch platforms. As a result the NRF will require a disproportionate amount of support from the U.S. Air Force until these areas are addressed.

**A. OVERLAPPING OR COMPLIMENTARY MISSIONS?**

Does the NRF mission complement that of the U.S. Air Force, or do the two missions overlap? If there is overlap, will the NRF assume a portion of the role previously filled by the Air Force? According to a NATO Fact Sheet, the missions of the NRF will mirror primarily the requirements of rapid response in the initial phase of a crisis situation, and are as follows:

1. Deployed as a stand alone force for crisis response such as:
  - a. Non-combatant Evacuation Operations
  - b. Support Consequence Management (CBRN or humanitarian crisis)
  - c. Crisis Response Operations, including Peacekeeping
  - d. Support Counter Terrorism Operations
  - e. Embargo Operations
2. Deployed as an initial entry force to facilitate the arrival of follow-on forces in a Joint Operational Area from a benign up to a hostile environment, with or without host nation support, (e.g. Peace Enforcement).
3. Deployed as a force package to demonstrate the resolve of member nations (quick response operations to support diplomacy as required).

The Air Force performs all of these situations either directly or in concert with its sister services as a joint force. The missions of the NRF and the Air Force, at least at the air component level, appear to overlap. In fact, USAFE defines itself as a

mobile and deployable mixed force that can simultaneously operate in multiple locations. Since the end of the Cold War, USAFE's role in Europe has also expanded from tasks associated with warfighting to a mission that includes supporting humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, and other non-traditional tasks. [...] Under wartime conditions USAFE assets, augmented by people, aircraft and equipment from other major commands and the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, come under the operational command of NATO. The command's inventory of aircraft is ready to perform close air support, air interdiction,

air defense, in-flight refueling, long range transport and support of maritime operations. (United States Air Forces in Europe Fact Sheet)

Virtually every facet of the NRF mission is covered in the more extensive USAFE mission statement. Perhaps the only differences lie in the NRF's high state of readiness and smaller force structure. As the missions of the NRF and the Air Force appear to overlap, couldn't the USAF consider withdrawing troops from Europe, deferring to the response force in favor of troop reductions and smaller budgets? The issue, of course, is not that simple. U.S. policymakers have compelling reasons to maintain the current Air Force posture. The first and most important reason is the U.S. wants to preserve its right to act autonomously when in its best interest. Maintaining robust forces strategically around the globe facilitates that capability. In Kosovo, on the one hand, policymakers opted to commit U.S. troops within the NATO framework largely for political reasons, in hopes of bolstering the credibility and legitimacy of NATO. As discussed in Section II, the vast majority of assets employed during Operation Allied Force belonged to the DoD, merely underscoring the fact that the 78 day air campaign could have been carried out by the U.S. alone had it so chosen. Operations in Afghanistan, on the other hand, were a different story. Despite NATO's immediate offer of assistance in the war on terror<sup>7</sup>, the U.S. chose to act independently, not just because autonomous operations prove more expedient, but also because of the singular message the U.S. wanted to send to al Qaeda and to the rest of the world: America had been attacked and was responding in kind. This message would have been diluted had the U.S. conducted initial operations as a coalition force or under the auspices of NATO.

Another compelling reason U.S. policymakers maintain the current Air Force posture in Europe is their ongoing commitment to the Alliance. During wartime, American assets in Europe are assigned as part of NATO; USAFE aircraft and personnel answer to the Alliance and bring fighter, airlift, and tanker assets to the battle. In addition to contributing assets to the overall force, an equally large part of the U.S. commitment is dedicated to assisting NATO's European members in modernizing their

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<sup>7</sup> The North Atlantic Council determined the attacks of September 11th, 2001 were directed from abroad against the U.S. and as a result regarded as actions covered by Article 5 of the Washington treaty, which states that an armed attack against one or more of the allies in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against all.

militaries in order to meet emerging threats. The U.S. continues to encourage Europe in this endeavor in several ways. Exporting technologies, such as the F-16 aircraft to Poland, reduces interoperability issues while at the same time lessens the capabilities gap. U.S. participation in standing up the NRF also demonstrates its commitment to NATO. But the U.S. commitment to NATO is best demonstrated by its financial contribution to the Alliance. The U.S. alone underwrites a full quarter of the annual common NATO civil and military budgets. Further, while the U.S. annual GDP is roughly equal to that of all other NATO members combined, the U.S. spends a third more on defense.

Lastly, it is unlikely the Air Force will change its posture despite overlap with the NRF mission because if the NRF is deployed, the Air Force will likely provide a large part of the follow-on contingent needed to replace them. If NATO decisionmakers employ the NRF as intended, they will need to be replaced after a 30 day deployment. A large pool of European cutting edge forces is as yet unavailable. U.S. forces, especially the Air Force, are needed until the fledgling indigenous European force can meet the need.

The missions of the NRF and the Air Force clearly overlap, as is demonstrated by the similarities in their declared mission statements. It would, however, be false to assume that any overlap might allow a reduction in Air Force assets in Europe. The Air Force in Europe serves a specific function furthering the role of NATO as well as representing U.S. interests abroad. U.S. National Security Policy calls for a military presence able to project forces worldwide, which a strong presence in Europe facilitates. The Alliance also contributes to the furthering of U.S. national security and, as a result, the U.S. feels compelled to assist in strengthening the European pillar of NATO. They do this both in terms of disproportionate financial support of the Alliance and by contributing hardware and technology aimed at reducing the capabilities gap.

## **B. USAF EUROPEAN FOOTPRINT**

The U.S. footprint in Europe is changing. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges facing the Pentagon are driving unprecedented shakeups in traditional basing posture. The post-World War II occupation forces that evolved into Cold War defense forces no longer fit

the transformational strategy envisioned to fight terrorism, quell ethnic conflict, or limit the proliferation of WMD. Instead, the Defense Department is crafting expeditionary forces that can garrison at home but are capable of rapid force projection at a moments' notice. Two simultaneous and interrelated actions are shaping the future U.S. footprint abroad, neither of which are influenced by European defense initiatives in general or by the NRF specifically. First, traditional bases with their large infrastructure are being closed. Campbell and Ward (2003, p. 96) claim the U.S. is shifting "people and assets from safe, secure and comfortable rear-echelon facilities to jumping-off points closer to the flame" This shift will likely eliminate many of the creature comforts enjoyed by military members stationed in Western Europe today, such as exchanges, American schools, or family housing. In fact, Gen James Jones, commander, U.S. European Command "envisions creating a set of what he calls 'lily pads:' small, lightly staffed facilities for use as jumping off points in a crisis" (p. 97). These "warm bases" would be outfitted with prepositioned equipment and supplies in the event of a troop buildup. This makes sense from a security perspective. Fewer Americans living abroad, both military members and their civilian support infrastructure, means fewer terrorist targets and a decrease in vulnerability. This issue concerns some EU policymakers, who believe Europe becomes more vulnerable as the American presence on European soil is reduced. However, this perception is skewed for two reasons. First, Europeans, albeit slowly, are working to improve their own security vis a vis ESDP.

The future rationale for maintaining a U.S. military presence in Europe can no longer be that Europe needs protecting. The main strategy advantage of keeping U.S. forces in Europe in the new era is that they can work with allied forces and then deploy from bases there, allies at their side, to contingencies in adjacent regions, for example, Southwest Asia. (Gompert, Kugler & Libiki, 1999, p. 7)

The EU's transformational actions, which should serve to reduce the capabilities gap, will be the most effective way to address their vulnerability, allowing for a more balanced EU U.S. force. Second, the legacy forces the U.S. is returning home are the ones in need of transforming and are therefore ill-equipped to assist Europe in dealing with an evolving security environment.

The U.S. military establishment...also has a compelling reason to transform itself. It has a national mandate to be able to project enough conventional strike power to render any enemy defenseless and ready to quit, whenever and wherever U.S. interests need defending. The need to develop quickly and to neutralize the WMD threat argues for dispersion and increases in standoff capabilities, which translate into a reduction in the forces that must be placed in the immediate theater” (Gompert et.al., 1999, p. 9)

Transforming forces and infrastructure is good business both for the U.S. and the EU. Closing bases and reducing infrastructure in Europe is necessary.

The second action shaping the U.S. footprint abroad is the Pentagon’s efforts to more acutely focus on the “arc of instability.” The arc, stretching from the Caribbean Basin through Africa to South and Central Asia and across to North Korea, contains what policymakers consider areas of future conflict; many of which are adjacent to Central Europe (see Figure 5.1). New, bare-bones bases are being negotiated closer to these areas of future conflict. “Such an enormous transformation is necessary, American officials argue, because the way U.S. military assets overseas are currently configured does not address the nation’s evolving security challenges. American forces should be moved closer to where threats are likely to arise” (Campbell & Ward, 2003, p. 95). In Europe, specifically, this means a shift east, from Western to Central Europe. Likely locations for U.S. units currently stationed in Germany are Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. Aside from offering a respite from the crippling flight restrictions Italy and Germany impose on training, these countries “offer unfettered access to key regions.” The force projection capability of the U.S. military makes this concept achievable.

With the advent of greater speed and lethality, American troops no longer need to sit at the border in order to deter, and if necessary halt... In general, the changes planned would offer U.S. forces overseas greater mobility and flexibility, allowing them to respond more effectively to the threats of the post-September 11 world. (p. 100)

Policymakers intend to focus more on capabilities than on troop quantities, which will require negotiating pre-existing agreements with allied countries to permit basing if and when the need arises.



Figure 5.1: The Arc of Instability (After U.S. News & World Report, 6 October 2003)

Within Europe, the proposed changes are primarily targeted at the U.S. Army, not the Air Force. It is speculated that over 26,000 troops, more than a third of the worldwide restructure, belong to the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored and Infantry Divisions in Germany and will be moved stateside. If those large land-based units, Cold War hold-overs, are repositioned stateside, they will likely be replaced with a much lighter, more agile Stryker Brigade. Campbell and Ward maintain the replacement of the divisions reflects a U.S. strategy less concerned with supporting NATO or Europe and more concerned with posturing for future regional conflicts out-of-area.

A key premise behind the U.S. global footprint in the 1990s was that American forces helped maintain regional stability. The new posture, deliberately optimized for flexible war fighting, will be viewed as supporting a very different and more controversial strategy, one based on preemption and armed intervention. (2003, p. 100)

Force reductions in the early post-Cold War days significantly reduced the Air Force footprint in Europe, making further reductions unlikely. United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), the air component of the U.S. European Command, currently maintains 230 fighter, attack, tanker and transport aircraft. Typically during operations in the European Theater, these forces are used, augmented by stateside units when necessary. This arrangement has proven effective over the last decade and will likely remain unchanged.

Despite the widely publicized rationale given for the impending force restructure, there has been much speculation that other factors are driving the move. President Bush's recent announcement to reduce U.S. military presence overseas, bringing home roughly 70,000 troops in the next six to seven years, drew much criticism. Officials insist the restructuring is in response to the changing security environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, driven by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. However, claims of resurgent American isolationist attitudes, or assertions the restructure was politically motivated, prompted Secretary of State Colin Powell to publicly insist otherwise. Rumors of troop withdrawals from Germany, the economic benefactor of the largest U.S. military presence in Europe, initially surfaced shortly after Germany's opposition to the Iraq war and were merely bad timing, not a retaliatory move on the part of the U.S. According to Powell

the base structure that was left in place is a combination of where the forces ended up at the end of World War II, some Cold War redeployments -- World War II's over, Cold War's over, time to rationalize the force structure -- and that's what this is all about, and it's not politically motivated. (2004)

Powell also claimed policymakers were taking into consideration the effect long deployments were having on U.S. troops and their families. In an effort to add more stability to servicemembers' lives, he stated

troops would be redeployed back in the United States to try to stabilize their family situations and their home basing situations. This will also be done in coordination with the Base Realignment study that's taking place; in other words, rationalize our base structure.

Figure 5.2 depicts the annual number of Air Force personnel deployed between 1986 and 2003. Even as personnel end strength dropped from a high of 540,000 active duty members in 1990 to the current 360,000, the number of deployments increased 400 percent. Operation Enduring Freedom, which began in October 2001, followed by Operation Iraqi Freedom, turned the trend dramatically upwards. The average number of deployed personnel during fiscal year 2003, at 33,808, was up 17% from the same period in 2002 and up 141% from 2001.

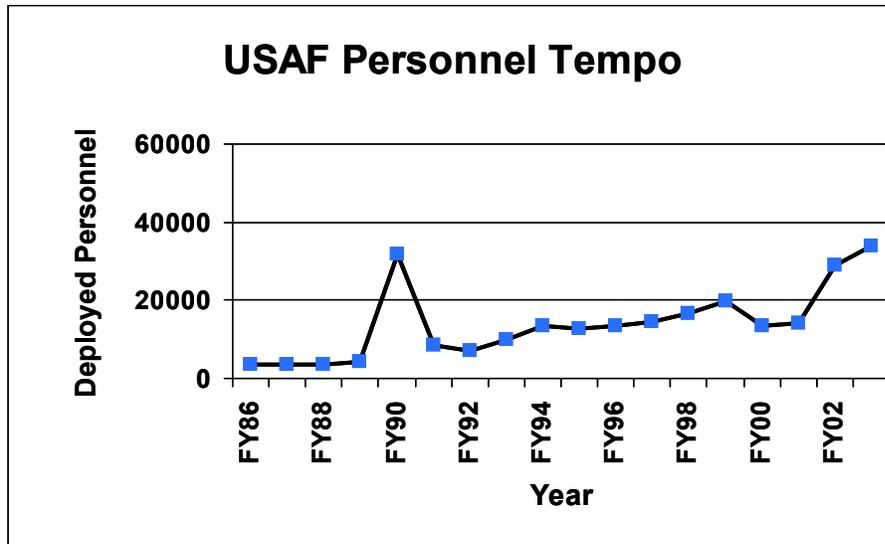


Figure 5.2. USAF Personnel Ops Tempo (After: USAF Ops/Perstempo Brief)

By realigning forces and bases, U.S. policymakers believe they will be better able to prepare for the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The bottom line is U.S. policymakers hear the arc of instability beckoning. In order to better deal with a new security threat using a proactive and sometimes preemptive posture, force restructures are necessary. In Europe specifically, large garrisoned forces are returning to the U.S. and will be replaced by fewer, lighter, and more agile forces. These forces will be deployed to “bare bones” bases as necessary, better positioned to quickly reach areas of potential future conflict. The Air Force footprint in Europe, unlike the Army footprint, has already been transformed to respond to the conflict of the future. The recently announced force restructures are independent of any improvements envisioned for European defense and are also largely independent of any strategic NATO plans. The advent of the NRF will have little to no effect on the Air Forces footprint in Europe. In fact, USAFE currently possesses an ideal structure to assist the NRF in meeting its air requirements.

**C. THE NATO RESPONSE FORCE DEPENDS ON THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

With few exceptions NATO, and by extension the NRF, are dependent upon the contributions of member states’ assets to execute operations as directed by the North

Atlantic Council. In other words, individual national capabilities join together to become an aggregate NATO force<sup>8</sup>. It therefore stands to reason that any improvements to national capabilities potentially improve the capabilities of NATO. The Defense Capabilities Initiative and later the Prague Capabilities Commitment were attempts by NATO to prod the EU into improving European security from a capabilities-based perspective. Again it is clear to see that if the capabilities of EU nations are improved and a more equitable partnership across the Atlantic is established, NATO and the NRF will benefit. But the assumption that the EU can transform its disparate, under-funded militaries into a unified defense institution while simultaneously reducing the capabilities gap is seemingly unrealistic. The EU is, however, framing a common defense policy, as called for in the Treaty of the European Union. The main objective of the European Security and Defense Policy is to support the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) by acting as the CFSP's arm in the security arena.

The EU, eager to create an autonomous defense institution, has found the process challenging. It has made significant progress in the post-Cold War period by incorporating lessons learned from many operations, but primarily those conducted in the Balkans. By 1999 the EU declared its intent to develop the Headline Goal, also known as the ERRF, a 60,000 person-strong force able to address Petersberg Task missions. A comparative analysis of both the Helsinki Headline Goal Catalogue, the document specifying operational requirements for the Petersberg Tasks and the Force Catalogue, the document identifying national commitments, revealed considerable shortfalls. Among the 38 capability shortfalls, 21 were considered significant. As a result, the European Council launched the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) comprised of nineteen panels of national experts formed to address the capability shortfalls. The panels, comprised of member nations and headed by a “lead nation,” were coordinated by the Headline Goal Task Force, which drew upon the support of the EU Military Staff (EUMS). According to Schmitt (p. 2),

The ECAP process has been guided by four core principles: (1) The improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of European defence

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<sup>8</sup> See Section III. B. for two exceptions to this concept; NATO's Airborne Early Warning Force and the Standing Naval Forces, which are NATO owned assets. Another exception is the command and control infrastructure of NATO, whose assets are not credited to a particular nation.

efforts, enhancing cooperation between member states or groups of member states; (2) A ‘bottom up’ approach to European defence cooperation, relying on voluntary national commitments; (3) Coordination between EU member states as well as coordination with NATO; (4) Public support through ECAP’s transparency and visibility.

Assessments found that real shortfalls, for which capabilities did not currently exist, plagued member states. These shortfalls could only be rectified if member states acquired the required capability in the form of large-scale procurement projects, which likely would mean significant increases in defense expenditures. Equipment leasing or upgrading options offer temporary reprieves to the capabilities shortfalls. While EU defense ministers declared “the EU ‘now has operational capability across the full range of Petersberg tasks,’ they acknowledged that this capability remains ‘limited and constrained by recognised shortfalls.’” (p. 2). To better address the issue, member states established several project groups, each led by a single nation, intended to implement concrete solutions through acquisition or other solutions (see Figure 5.3).

<b>PROJECT GROUP</b>	<b>LEAD NATION</b>
Air-to-Air Refuelling (AAR)	Spain
Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR)	Germany
Headquarters (HQ)	United Kingdom
Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) Protection	Italy
Special Operations Forces (SOF)	Portugal
Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence (TBMD)	Netherlands
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)	France
Strategic Airlift	Germany
Space assets	France
Interoperability Issues for Evacuation and Humanitarian Operations	Belgium
Strategic Sealift	Greece
Medical	Netherlands
Attack Helicopters	Italy
Support Helicopters	Italy
ISTAR / Ground Surveillance	United Kingdom

Figure 5.3. ECAP Project Groups (From Schmitt)

Though ECAP is generally considered a promising approach to tackling capability shortfalls, it suffers from several weaknesses. First, participation – and more importantly compliance – is voluntary. While member states may have every intention of pulling their weight militarily, fiscal constraints may dictate otherwise. Next, the process lacks clear, unified leadership. The various panels are charged with decision-making, while the EUMS is relegated to a mere advisory role. Lastly, ECAP has been a pure ad hoc exercise, limited both in time (focusing only on current shortfalls) and scope (dealing only with shortfalls in commitments to the Headline Goal force).

Five of the fifteen project groups highlight shortfalls pertaining specifically to the air forces of EU members. Appathurai claims

Europe's defence establishment has entered the 21st century suffering from significant military shortfalls. These include insufficient air and sea transport to deploy European forces with their equipment; inadequate air-to-air refuelling; a lack of precision-strike, all-weather-offensive fighter capability and precision-guided munitions; insufficient reconnaissance and intelligence capabilities at both the strategic and tactical level; inadequate deployable command and control; inadequate capacity to suppress enemy air defence; and shortfalls in secure, interoperable communications. (2002)

These shortfalls, of course, do not exist within the U.S. Department of Defense. Therefore, when addressing capabilities in a NATO context, the U.S. Air Force must bring many of the the missing pieces to an operation. This was clearly demonstrated in 1999 during Operation Allied Force, the air war over Kosovo. Little improvement in EU capabilities has occurred since then. The situation will likely be repeated when executing NRF operations in the foreseeable future. Anywhere there is a capabilities shortfall within the European pillar of NATO, the U.S. will likely provide the assets as the guarantor of the NRF's success. What does this mean in real terms?

While there is no proviso limiting U.S. participation in the NRF, the concept is to improve the capabilities of contributors and is, therefore, targeted at the Alliance's European members. On this basis it is reasonable to assume that if the EU possessed all the assets required by the NRF, they would provide them. Because this is not the case,

the Air Force will undoubtedly continue be tasked as they were for NRF 1, 2 and 3. The issue is not the number of air and space assets the European Alliance members possess; it is the type and capability.

[A]lthough the United States' NATO allies are, relatively speaking, adequately endowed in combat aircraft, recurring problems continue to be observed in integrating these aircraft at the operational and tactical levels. Although notable exceptions exist, allies are generally not adequately endowed in the sorts of support capabilities that are needed to conduct high-intensity operations. These capabilities include refueling, mobility, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, electronic warfare, and other specialized types of systems. For example, further analysis of potential performance gaps in areas such as precision strike capabilities and sortie generation appears warranted, and to the extent that gaps are substantiated, interoperability planning needs to address their root causes. (Larson, Lindstrom, Hura, Gardiner, Keffer, & Little, 2003, p. xii)

Among the shortfalls determined by ECAP Project Groups illustrated in Figure 5.3 and reiterated by Larson et al. above, there are four primary areas which the NRF will depend on the U.S. Air Force to provide in order to rapidly deploy a force which can then generate 200 sorties a day. The EU lacks strategic airlift, air refueling, adequate precision guided munitions (PGMs), and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) assets.

*Strategic Airlift*<sup>9</sup>. The NRF requires strategic airlift assets to rapidly transport personnel and equipment from home station to a forward operating base in order for them to conduct operations. The current strategic airlift capability possessed by European members is limited to four C-17A Globemaster III aircraft leased by the Royal Air Force from the U.S. government and seven Airbus A-310 Multi-role Transports operated by the German Air Force. The need, however, is much higher as was amply demonstrated when several European countries were forced to lease airlift in order to deploy troops to Afghanistan in early 2002. The German army, for instance, hired Russian and Ukrainian AN-124 aircraft to move its forces in support of ISAF. The deployment of troops and equipment required over 100 sorties during a three month period.

Planners estimated the required the lift capability for NRF 1 and 2 at ten C-5 aircraft based on a force size of 8000 personnel, less than half the size of the complete

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<sup>9</sup> The U.S. Air Force uses the term Intertheater Airlift.

force expected by NRF 7 in 2006. Lift availability to support the NRF is critical to mission success as the Air Force maintains no strategic airlift capability in the European theater. Lift assets, when moving cargo or personnel, are controlled through the Air Forces' Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC) and will need be managed in such a way that the requisite capabilities are available in theater within the required amount of time to support NRF operations. This will come at a cost.

Conservative estimates put the strategic airlift requirement for a full-up NRF rotation at the equivalent of ten C-5s and another ten C-17s, a capability unachievable without Air Force assets. The only possible alternative is for NATO to lease IL-76 or An-124 airlift assets to meet the NRF's needs. European planners claim the eventual resolution to the strategic airlift shortfall will be the Airbus A-400M aircraft. The program, which the European Procurements Agency put on contract in 2003, will eventually deliver 180 of the medium lift aircraft to Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, Turkey, and the UK. The first aircraft is scheduled to fly in 2008 with deliveries scheduled between 2009 and 2025, ensuring a long-term requirement for U.S. lift in support of the NRF.

*Air Refueling.* The air refueling mission is critical not only to supporting continuing operations in the area of responsibility (AOR) during a contingency by extending the range, endurance, payload, and flexibility of air forces, air refueling also creates an "air bridge," ferrying fighter and attack assets to and from the AOR. The Air Force maintains a fleet of over 600 KC-135 Stratotankers and KC-10 Extenders. Within the alliance, European tanker assets include 35 VC10 and Tristar aircraft operated by the RAF and 11 C-135FRs belonging to the French. Italy is in the process of replacing its KC-135s with four new Boeing 767 tanker/transport scheduled for delivery in late 2005. The German Air Force has ordered the conversion of four of its Airbus A-310 MRT aircraft into A310 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft, adding an air refueling capability to its transport fleet. Deliveries are expected by the end of 2004.

The projected need for refueling capability during NRF 1 and 2 was eight tanker aircraft. Because some European members of NATO already maintain a tanker fleet, the air refueling requirement, as it grows proportionally with the size of the NRF, will be

somewhat easier to meet without an over-dependence on U.S. tanker assets. Like airlift assets, U.S. tankers are controlled by TACC and can be managed in such a way as to have the necessary assets available where and when necessary to support NRF operations, but with some reduction in availability to U.S. forces. The long-term resolution to Europe's air refueling shortfall remains unclear. To date, the only effort managed by the Spanish-led ECAP Project Group on air refueling has been to sign a statement of intent to procure a jointly owned and operated fleet of between 10 and 15 multi-role aircraft that can perform air refueling operations. The project group is considering either the Airbus 310 or 320 or the Boeing 767. The proposed fleet would fill an interim need until a permanent solution could be found.

*ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) Assets* ISR are integrated capabilities designed to collect, process, and disseminate information necessary to plan and conduct operations. ISR assets cover a wide range of ground and airborne platforms, most of which are considered "low density – high demand," highlighting their small numbers and frequent need. Some key enabling air assets the U.S. possesses are the E-3 Airborne Warning and Control (AWACS) aircraft, the RC-135 Rivet Joint, the E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS), and the Global Hawk Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV). The AWACS mission is to carry out airborne surveillance, and command, control and communications functions for both tactical and air defense forces. Besides the Air Forces' 32 E-3s, NATO maintains a fleet of 17 aircraft along with France (4) and the UK (7). The 14 RC-135 Rivet Joint reconnaissance aircraft support theater and national level decisionmakers with near real time on-scene intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination capabilities. The aircraft are unique to the U.S. Air Force as are the 14 JSTARS aircraft which provide an airborne, stand-off range, surveillance and target acquisition radar along with an integrated command and control center. The French maintain a small fleet of C-160 Gabriel and DC-8 Sarigue aircraft to meet their individual ISR needs. Global Hawk provides all weather high resolution imagery and is being procured by several countries at this time.

NRF 1 and 2 required the ISR capability of 2 to 4 AWACS, 2 ground surveillance (JSTARS) and three electronic intelligence (Rivet Joint) aircraft. These numbers will likely double when the NRF reaches full operational capability. Tasking AWACS

platforms should not pose a problem with the number of European assets available, but limited availability of the other assets will likely cause problems. The long term solution for relieving the ISR shortfall lies in what is referred to as the Transatlantic Industrial Proposed Solution (TIPS). TIPS is an industry proposal to provide NATO with a six aircraft fleet providing Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) capability that will meet NATO's transformational capabilities objectives initially articulated in 1995. AGS has the potential to provide the EU with a comprehensive ISR capability when married with its AWACS fleet. In early 2004 NATO endorsed a decision to move towards signing a contract, by spring 2005, to provide the minimum essential NATO AGS core capability by 2010. This core capability could be complemented by an array of other surveillance assets, including helicopters and UAVs, but as of yet no nation has committed to further purchases.

*PGMs (precision guided munitions)* The term PGM describes a range of self-guiding weapons utilizing a control system which directs the weapon to a target. These munitions are designed to maximize target damage while minimizing collateral damage due to their improved accuracy. Because of their precision, PGMs require smaller payloads to produce the intended effect. PGMs can generally be divided into two categories, bombs, which are dropped from aircraft, and missiles which can be launched from ground, air or sea. The use of PGMs by U.S. forces increased dramatically during the 1990s, culminating with an air war, Operation Allied Force, where the predominance of weapons fired were PGMs.

During Allied Force, the inability of European air forces to employ PGMs became evident. Since then, NATO has made some progress in rectifying this shortfall. The European NATO members possess fighter/attack assets which cover a wide range of airframes with an equally wide range of capabilities. According to Mariano & Wilson, "Getting NATO's European allies to modernize their 4500 combat aircraft (a number larger than the aviation assets available to the United States) so all of them are all-weather capable and fitted with PGMs will be a crucial step for the NRF." (2003, p. 4). The Europeans have undertaken several projects in order to fit their aircraft with all weather capabilities and to allow them to drop "smart bombs." On the forefront of improvements projects is the Eurofighter, officially known as the EF-2000 Typhoon. The

aircraft, a multi-role fighter aircraft is capable of utilizing PGMs. 620 Typhoons have been ordered and will be delivered to the UK (232), Germany (180), Italy (121) and Spain (87). The first aircraft entered service in 2004 with deliveries scheduled through 2015. France has developed the Rafale multi-role aircraft with capabilities similar to those of the Typhoon. It plans to procure 320 over the next decade. The U.K., Germany, and Italy are modernizing their Tornado strike aircraft giving them the ability to use both targeting pods and GPS-guided weapons. And Norway, the Netherlands, and Denmark have all modified their U.S. built F-16 aircraft to allow the same capabilities. These programs will improve NATO's ability to employ precision weapons.

In addition to acquiring aircraft or improving the current fleet, European nations must procure weapons as well. The UK will purchase roughly 2000 Paveway IV missiles to meet its future all-weather PGM needs, though it currently maintains an integrated PGM capability utilizing the U.S. Maverick and the European produced Storm Shadow missiles. The Paveway IV is being adapted for the UK's Tornado, Harrier and Typhoon aircraft, and is expected to enter service in 2007. But further procurement plans among European defense agencies are scarce, making it unlikely an adequate pool of munitions will be available to prosecute an air campaign equivalent to Operation Allied Force without U.S. assistance.

The outlook is generally the same regarding the procurement of cruise missiles. Non-U.S. NATO members have little in the way of standoff attack capability. The U.K. recently purchased 61 U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles, and it is cooperating with France on the development of the Apache/Storm Shadow, an air-to-surface missile. Germany is working on its own air-to-surface missile, the Taurus, though the cost of either of these PGMs makes it unlikely they will be mass-produced. For this reason GPS-guided munitions are becoming the weapon of choice. They are considerably less expensive than previous-generation systems, which means that NATO nations are better able to afford them. For example, the current procurement of a Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) is roughly a quarter of the price of a laser-guided bomb with the same warhead. However, there is one issue hampering the proliferation of this inexpensive solution. Shimkus cautions

Technology transfer and encryption issues, however, have slowed the development of European PGM capabilities. The most cost effective means of acquiring PGMs is for European militaries to buy part of the production runs of US-made Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) kits, which essentially bolt a guidance package onto a conventional bomb. The problem is that although the larger bombs extend past the wing of the aircraft and can link directly to the satellite that guides them to their target, the smaller bombs fit completely under the wing and are linked through the aircraft to the satellite. This requires upgrading and installing certain technology and encryption codes in European aircraft, and the US government has not yet resolved how this should happen. (2004, p. 6)

If European nations can take advantage of these emerging technologies, their precision strike capabilities should improve. Until then the NRF will be at least partially dependent upon U.S. platforms while Europeans either modify an adequate number of their own aircraft or have a sufficient number of Typhoons or Rafiels fielded to meet the need. The NRF will also remain dependent on the U.S. to provide munitions to supplement European stores.

#### **D. CONCLUSIONS**

The effect the NRF will have on the U.S. Air Force is perhaps not what one might expect. Despite mission overlap, neither the NRF nor the Air Force in Europe will modify their missions or reduce forces. U.S. forces in Europe serve two purposes; furthering the role of NATO and representing U.S. interests abroad. Worldwide projection of U.S. forces is possible because overseas basing acts as a springboard, launching of troops further afield. The Air Force transformed throughout much of the 1990's and currently maintains a force structure ideally sized to meet NATO and U.S. requirements. Officials have yet to release any details on European base realignments, but while it is likely Air Force units may move east, it is unlikely many units will be redeployed to the U.S.

The real effect the NRF will have on the Air Force will be its dependence on Air Force assets for at least the next decade. Despite the prospects of ECAP, the EU faces significant military capabilities shortfalls for the foreseeable future. The most significant for European air forces are in strategic airlift, air refueling, ISR, and the procurement and use of PGMs. These shortfalls translate directly into a disproportionate burdensharing for

the Air Force when determining NRF participation. Perhaps the most stark example is not so much the virtual absence of strategic airlift capability among the European members of NATO, but the length of time it will take to alleviate the shortfall. The first A-400M is not projected for delivery until 2009. As it reaches Full Operational Capability and beyond, the NRF will likely be increasingly requested; its employment growing in direct proportion to its effectiveness. This can only mean a long-term relationship between the U.S. Air Force and the NRF, which has the potential to tie up U.S. assets for at least the next decade. The dependence of the NRF upon the U.S. will serve as an affirmation of the strength of the United States' commitment to NATO.

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## VI. CONCLUSION

The call for NATO to create a warfighting capability in order to meet the security threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century became the genesis of the NATO Response Force. In a matter of two years NATO has created a joint force comprised of air, land and maritime forces drawn from the Alliance's European militaries, able to rapidly deploy in order to participate in operations across the full spectrum of conflict. The dual nature of the NRF requires it to be a highly ready, rapidly deployable force as well as a catalyst for transforming European NATO members into militaries able to meet the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The NRF's strength will lie in its ability to project a credible and fully integrated force. The NRF will be combined, drawing from the 24 European members of NATO, and joint, drawing from land, sea and air components within each country's ministry of defense. A rapidly deployable force at the ready should afford NATO the ability to end conflict, or to deploy a forward-projection force in order to prevent conflict before it erupts. The missions defined for the NRF include opposed entry scenarios, counter-terrorism, crisis response and peace enforcement, embargo operations, interdiction, and human relief and non-combatant evacuations, reflecting the proactive stance outlined in U.S. National Security Strategy as well as the recently published EU Security Strategy. How and when the NRF will be employed remains to be seen as it marches toward Full Operational Capability in 2006. The NRF's role as NATO's transformational vehicle, improving the readiness of national troops via certification prior to six month rotations, will trickle down to even the poorest of NATO countries. The byproduct will be a stronger Alliance. But it cannot happen until nations downsize and retool their legacy forces, requiring up-front capital and the willingness to let go of national independence in favor of Union interdependence.

Political and operational obstacles threaten to limit the effectiveness of the NRF. The current bureaucracy involved in getting the NRF to the fight threatens to undermine the rapid nature of the response force, requiring parliamentary approval processes of several European nations before the Alliance can deploy the NRF. Dwindling European defense budgets, already disproportionately lower than the U.S. defense budget, threaten the success of the NRF as social programs as they increasingly require more Euros to

support an ageing population. The EU must resolve its identity crisis before it can assume its role as a military power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; otherwise it may be forced to remain under the protective umbrella of NATO. The NRF's operational challenges are no less overwhelming. While older NATO members fail to meet agreed-upon funding and capability minimums, new NATO members bring inexperience, legacy equipment, and poor training to the Alliance. Expeditionary forces in adequate numbers are required in order for the EU to be able to support the NRF as well as the ERRF. The political influences and operational constraints limiting the unrestricted growth of European defense will continue to affect NATO and the NRF. The EU goal of becoming the predominant pillar supporting NATO, however implausible, should provide the wholehearted support necessary to ensure the NRF becomes a credible force.

The effect the NRF will have on the U.S. Air Force may not be obvious at first glance. The two organizations share missions, creating a fair amount of overlap. This will not, however, drive the Air Force to modify its missions or reduce its footprint in Europe. U.S. forces in Europe serve two purposes; furthering the role of NATO and representing U.S. interests abroad. Continued Air Force presence in Europe acts as a springboard, projecting American forces further afield. The Air Force currently maintains a force structure ideally sized to meet NATO and U.S. requirements, therefore while units may move further east; it is unlikely they will be redeployed to the U.S. The tangible effect the NRF will have on the Air Force will be its dependence on Air Force assets for the foreseeable future. Despite numerous initiatives, the EU is unwilling to cooperatively address the plethora of military capabilities shortfalls limiting their independence from NATO. As a result, the NRF will remain dependent upon the DoD in general, and the Air Force specifically, to provide strategic airlift, air refueling, ISR, and the procurement and use of PGMs in order for it to gain and maintain credibility. The EU shortfalls will require disproportionately heavy Air Force support for a considerable time, while the EU determines how to bridge the capabilities gap. By the time it reaches Full Operational Capability in 2006, it is likely the NRF will be increasingly called upon; its employment growing in direct proportion to its value. The effect will no doubt be the NRF's long-term dependence on the U.S. Air Force to conduct its mission.

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