



# NATO Force Integration Unit & ESTONIA Enhanced Forward Presence

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## Enhanced Forward Presence

\* NATO has enhanced its presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, with four multinational battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. These battlegroups, led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States respectively, are multinational and combat-ready, demonstrating the strength of the transatlantic bond. Their presence makes clear that an attack on one Ally will be considered an attack on the whole Alliance. NATO's battlegroups form part of the biggest reinforcement of NATO's Collective Defence in a generation.

\* Approximate total troop number for all four battlegroups (as of November 2017) is 4,762. [www.nato.int/factsheets](http://www.nato.int/factsheets)

**A**S WE APPROACH the second anniversary of the declaration of our Initial Capability, and the first anniversary of the arrival of the lead elements of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP)

here in Estonia, it is a good time to report on progress with the capability development of these two relatively new NATO entities. As many readers may know, the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) initiative formed part of requirement to improve Alliance responsiveness to counter the threat from an emerging number of actors including Russia, and to form an integral part of NATO's Readiness Action Plan (RAP) as it began preparations for the delivery of Graduated Response Plans (GRPs) to take account of threats to the NATO Alliance and its constituent members. Several frontline states of NATO, which included the three Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria and Ro-

mania, established small headquarters-style units, now known as NFIUs, to facilitate the rapid deployment of a NATO force known as the Very High Readiness Task Force (VJTF), or any other Allied force.

The NFIU concept was formally approved by NATO Defence Ministers in February 2015, and the original six NFIUs have now been joined by two others, established in Hungary and Slovakia. Less than a year after the Wales Summit, on 1 September 2015, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) took the formal decision to activate the first six NFIUs as part of the NATO Force Structure and by this time it had also been agreed that the first wave NFIUs would be required to declare Initial Capability in January 2016. The initial concept for setting up an individual NFIU rested on the following fundamentals: First and foremost, the NFIU was to act as a visible, permanent and persistent NATO presence within each of the nations.





Prime Minister of Estonia, Mr Jüri Ratas, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Tapa Army Base, Estonia. **Opposite:** enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) forces at Tapa manoeuvre camp in Estonia and Adazi military base in Latvia. Photos by NATO and Miks Uzans, NATO Channel



Wg Cdr Attrill, the author, at the main entrance of NFIU Estonia headquarters. Photo by SAC Edward Wright, MoD UK

Further, the NFIU should be joint in nature to reflect the role of each service (air/land/maritime) in contributing to any VJTF, and it should be multinational to demonstrate NATO's collective responsibility for delivering security to each Member State. Since each of the NFIUs had been requested by the Host Receiving Nation, they should also be affiliated to their respective Defence Force Headquarters and tailored to local circumstances. In the case of Estonia, the adaptation has been particularly effective with the Unit attaining a very Estonian atmosphere where interoperability with our "parent" headquarters, and the Ministry of Defence, in particular, has been extremely effective.

Every military organisation and entity has a mission statement and NFIU Estonia is no exception. In our case, the initial mission statement was, and remains, "to facilitate the rapid deployment of the VJTF and additional high readiness and assurance elements in or-



## NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNITS

\* During the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed to implement the biggest reinforcement of NATO's Collective Defence, including an Enhanced Forward Presence in the eastern and southeast part of Alliance territory and a framework for NATO's adaptation in response to growing challenges and threats emanating from the south.

\* To reinforce the readiness and the rapid deployment of these forces, NATO Allies set up eight NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.

\* All eight NFIUs are part of NATO's Readiness Action Plan, or RAP, that was agreed at NATO's Wales Summit in 2014.

\* RAP, in turn, is part of NATO's response to the evolving security challenges following

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and ongoing aggressive actions in eastern Ukraine.

\* The RAP includes "Adaptation Measures" which are longer-term changes to NATO's forces and command structure so that the Alliance will be better able to react swiftly and decisively to sudden crises.

\* Adaptation Measures include tripling the size of the NATO Response Force (currently, 40,000 troops), the establishment of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) able to deploy at very short notice, and enhanced Standing Naval Forces.

\* NFIUs play a major role in NATO's defence and deterrence posture, ensuring the Alliance remains ready, relevant and adaptive.

\* The British Army is leading a battlegroup of about 1,000 NATO troops in Estonia.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visiting the headquarters of NFIU Romania with Prime Minister Klaus Werner Iohannis, and talking to staff, 2015. Photo by NATO

**In developing the NFIU concept, much has been made of the RSOM task, which is often understood to be a logistics responsibility with the perception that the NFIU is a logistics unit. This is not the case.**

der to enhance Alliance responsiveness". As with any effective organization though, there is a regular requirement to review the mission, and as the NFIU has evolved over time and has been exercised and evaluated, it has become clear that our mission may be subjected to some change if we are to remain relevant in an ever-changing world.

In terms of Command and Control (C2), Headquarters Multi-National Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE), home-based in Szczecin, Poland, is responsible for operational control of the NFIUs within its nominated Area of Re-

sponsibility, which includes the three Baltic States, Poland, and more recently, Hungary and Slovakia. As the proclaimed "NATO custodian of regional security", HQ MNC NE undertakes several tasks for which they rely heavily on the NFIUs. The HQ is under remit to maintain high levels of Joint Comprehensive Situational Awareness (JCSA), and NFIU Estonia has a key role to play in constantly updating a wide range of information relating to Estonia, with extensive coverage across the six functional domains encompassing Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure and Information (PMESII).

The maintenance of JCSA for Estonia is a major part of our daily work and information is disseminated to HQ MNC NE via a number of sources, including our regular reports and returns, site surveys and reconnaissance reports, Key Leader Engagement readouts and video tele-conferences. Linked to this work is a requirement to regularly update information on ongoing and future NATO assurance measures and in-country bilateral or multilateral training or exercise activities.

In all of this, NFIU Estonia has played a key role in filling information voids and then maintaining up-to-date situational awareness. Ultimately, the NFIUs work for SHAPE and

SACEUR, and although it is envisaged that we regularly work closely with Joint Force Command Brunssum through HQ MNC NE, SACEUR can also provide Direct Liaison Authority with Joint Force Command Naples or any other NATO Command Structure organization as the early planning for a potential NATO operation evolves. In order to conduct its main mission, NFIU Estonia currently has six main tasks, as directed by Allied Command Operations (ACO)/SHAPE. These main tasks are as follows:

1. Prepare and support the Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) of the VJTF, and other NATO Response Force (NRF) elements at high readiness levels.
2. Support Article 5 operations, planning and exercises, including fostering coherence with national defence planning.
3. Support to Non-Article 5 operations, where appropriate, and agreed by Nations.
4. Coordinate and assist multinational training and exercises in relevant nations.
5. Prepare and support the sustainment of the VJTF, and other NRF elements.
6. Support the ongoing assurance measures, including preparing to receive and support the integration of forces into operational C2 and to enable the sustainment of combat





Ambassador Tacan Ildem, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, shaking hands with General Milan Maxim, the Chief of Staff of General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, during the inauguration ceremony of NFIU Slovakia, 24 January 2017. Photo by NATO

SHAPE and the Host Receiving Nation in identifying the shortfalls or surpluses in Estonia's enabling capabilities and capacities for the all important RSOM task in the widest possible sense, taking into account a wide variety of factors to enhance and maintain situational awareness on a daily basis to higher authority within NATO. This task includes environmental awareness to survey and report on the availability of assembly and training areas, main deployment and supply routes (air/land/sea) and locations to facilitate other support activities. The successful outcome of this work relies on the establishment and maintenance of a suitable network of contacts, whether these are with the Estonian Defence Forces, Ministry of Defence, other Government departments or other bodies, such as airport operators or port authorities. One of the most important tasks is to provide support and advice to HQ MNC NE, other NATO HQs and VJTF HQs and Units and to link them up with corresponding Host Receiving Nation organisations, headquarters and Units as part of our promotion of international cooperation.

and combat support elements engaged in those assurance measures.

In developing the NFIU concept, much has been made of the RSOM task, which is often understood to be a logistics responsibility with the perception that the NFIU is a logistics unit. This is not the case. The RSOM task is an operational activity since it relates directly to the manner in which a commander will want to undertake his mission, so it is important that the makeup of the NFIU reflects the various demands that may be placed upon it in facilitating the RSOM process within a NATO deployment. For this reason, the NFIU possesses representation across all of the functional areas that are normally provided for in a "traditional" HQ. As a result, with a relatively small establishment of forty-one personnel in total, the NFIU would be unable to undertake a full planning role of its own accord, and this is reflected in our main tasks which call for, in primacy, a "supporting and facilitating role" with the relevant authorities from within the Host Receiving Nations.

Here in Estonia, in essence, the NFIU is to complement, and not complicate, the role of the Host Receiving Nation by providing additional staff support during a critical period in

the Crisis Response Planning phase of a potential operation or deployment.

So, how does the NFIU go about fulfilling its primary mission and tasks? First and foremost, NFIU Estonia is here to support

The staff of the NFIU rely heavily on the national and regional expertise and advice provided by national authorities, principally the Estonian Ministry of Defence and Estonian Defence Force HQ Staff. NFIU staff

**BELOW:** British Prime Minister Theresa May visited Tapa Army Base with her Estonian counterpart Jüri Ratas and French President Emmanuel Macron on 29 September 2017. Photo by NFIU Estonia



members will, therefore, regularly attend co-ordination and planning meetings with their counterparts in the Ministry of Defence or the Defence Force HQ in recognition of a growing role in providing additional staff support, in particular for those activities that require a multinational input. Since our overall role is to comprehensively support and facilitate the deployment and employment of multinational forces, whether on exercise, or during times of crisis, it is equally important for the NFIU staff to regularly engage with other government departments or national entities engaged in Crisis Response Planning or management. NFIU Estonia membership of the Host Nation Support Steering Committee, an Ministry of Defence-led cross-government Crisis Response Planning and management body, is testament to the recognition of the NFIU's role in boosting national planning capabilities during a time of crisis, where further NATO assistance is likely to be called upon.

In terms of our responsibility to establish and maintain a local network of contacts, in order to assist with the deployment of multinational Force Elements, this particular activity recently came to the forefront following the decision during the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, to deploy eFP Force Elements to the three Baltic States and Poland. As a result of the eFP initiative, NFIU Estonia worked extremely closely with both the Estonian Defence Force HQ and military authorities from the United

Kingdom (as Framework Nation for Estonia), Denmark and France, to facilitate and support the deployment of the eFP in early 2017.

The NFIU has also been tasked to assist HQ MNC NE with the fulfilment of their main tasks, which includes the maintenance of JCSA in their Area of Responsibility and to monitor the deployment and employment of NATO Assurance Force Elements, U.S. Atlantic Resolve Force Elements and other bilateral and multilateral forces, whether they are on exercise, or maintaining a persistent presence within Estonia. As if to reflect the Joint nature of our overall mission, these assurance measures regularly include the enduring Baltic Air Policing Mission at Amari Air Base and maritime operations associated with exercises and operations in the Baltic Sea area.

Early work focused on the execution of our Implementation Plan, for which Estonia and NFIU Estonia were set a formidable task; to establish, develop and deliver an operational in-country capability for NATO in less than 12 months. It was quickly determined that five key areas would contribute to the delivery of an effective Implementation Plan: Command and Control, Standard Operating Procedures, Effective Reporting, Manning and Training and Exercises. Concurrent with the execution of the Implementation Plan was the requirement to carry out the primary NFIU Mission as outlined above, and to include the monitoring of ongoing assurance measures.

As previously mentioned, the NFIU Estonia Personnel Establishment was set at forty-one with a broadly 50 per cent split between national and multinational contributions. The first multinational member of staff arrived in July 2015, to be joined by a steady stream of both Estonian and multinational staff in the run up to the declaration of Initial Capacity in January 2016. As the staff numbers grew in the autumn of 2015, so we were able to build up our situational awareness on Estonia and to establish and maintain an effective network of contacts. We were also faced with the requirement to understand and report on an impressive number of defence related initiatives, which preceded the establishment of eFP and in doing so witnessed the arrival and employment of a wide range of military capabilities in all of the domains.

One of our biggest challenges was to tackle the training and exercise programme and how it would relate to the newly arrived staff. We had to take account of both individual and collective staff training if we were to achieve our aim of building an effective and cohesive unit in time to meet our Full Capacity evaluation and declaration in June 2016. It soon became clear that the speed at which the NFIU concept had been developed in NATO had created significant challenges for the broader training community, who were keen to use the "shiny new toy" but were not quite sure how!

Fortunately for NFIU Estonia, the NATO operational-level exercise programme during our first two years has provided sufficient training opportunities to allow us to exercise a major element of our role; even more fortunate is the fact that one of the baseline scenarios used for collective NATO training at the Operational level is that known as *SKOLKAN*, which has Estonia as a central component of a fictitious but evolving security crisis in the Baltic Region. The scenario and supporting documentation is owned by the Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) in Stavanger, Norway and has been used several times since our creation.

**O**N TWO RECENT occasions, Joint Force Command Naples (JFCNP) and the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps HQ, Turkey (NRDC-T) have sought the assistance of the NFIU to test and analyze their Operational Li-



JWC's SKOLKAN scenario uses the Baltic Sea Region. Civil and military experts from the Estonian Defence Forces and the Ministry of Defence regularly support the TRIDENT Series of Exercises directed by the JWC. Pictured above is Colonel Aivar Kokka, Deputy Chief of Staff, Estonian Defence Forces, supporting the White/Grey Cell at JWC. Photo by JWC PAO





Major General Andrzej Reudowicz presenting the JWC plaque to Wing Commander Attrill during a visit to NFIU Estonia, 17 August 2017. Photo by NFIU Estonia-PAO

**Joint Force Command Naples and NATO Rapid Deployable Corps, Turkey have sought the assistance of NFIU Estonia to test and analyze their Operational Liaison Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) capabilities.**

aison Reconnaissance Team (OLRT) capabilities during Exercise STEADFAST JUNCTURE 2016 and EURASIAN STAR 2017, respectively. In spite of the fictional nature of the overall scenario, NATO Nations have to be accurately represented, so the data for Estonia was as “real world” as it could be, in terms of place names, facilities, population makeup, etc.

During the Crisis Response Planning phase of an exercise (or operation) the Joint Force Commander’s OLRT will deploy to the potential area of operations to gather real time data, conduct Key Leader Engagements and build Joint Comprehensive Situational

Awareness on behalf of the nominated NATO commander and his joint planning staff in the NATO headquarters. Much of the work of a standard NATO designated OLRT is very similar in nature to that of an NFIU so the potential synergy between both entities was obvious. As a result, the commanders of both JFCNP and NRDC-T took the decision to deploy their respective OLRTs to Tallinn to work alongside NFIU Estonia. This proved to be a major accomplishment for the NFIU since it not only provided us with a valuable collective training opportunity for our staff, but also for the wider Estonian Defence community with which we had now built strong ties.

Estonian Defence Force HQ staff and colleagues from the Ministry of Defence and other government departments involved in security in its widest sense, all got the opportunity to engage and work with major NATO operational headquarters and this activity would all help to cement our own role as a newly invited member of the Estonian Host National Support Steering Committee, the body responsible for much of Estonia’s cross government crisis response management.

At the same time, the OLRT staff from these two southern-orientated NATO headquarters, JFCNP and NRDC-T, would get a much better appreciation of the challenges

they would face in a part of Europe with which they had little previous knowledge and by physically deploying to Estonia would better appreciate the “atmospherics” of living and working in this corner of northeast Europe. The presence of a team from a major NATO headquarters in Estonia and the nature of what they were doing would also send a powerful message that NATO was demonstrating its flexibility of response to any evolving crisis and providing further visible assurance of its commitments towards the Baltic States and Estonia, in particular.

Concurrently, and during Exercise STEADFAST JUNCTURE 2016, Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (HQ ARRC) made a formal request to Estonian Ministry of Defence to host their annual RECCEX in Estonia, which would test and evaluate their own OLRT and involve the physical deployment of teams across the country and Exercise SABER STRIKE 2016, a LIVEX involving the deployment of U.S. and multinational forces elements through Poland and the Baltic States would also culminate in Estonia during the first week of June 2016. As a result, NFIU Estonia was faced with supporting or facilitating no less than three exercises, from the tactical to the strategic level during an extremely busy two-week period in early summer. These activities provided an extremely valuable tool with which to test and evaluate the NFIU concept and the staffs’ ability to adapt and facilitate a



NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller visiting troops in Estonia, 12 May 2017. Photo by NATO



wide range of activities across those domains which need to be taken into account during any NATO Crisis Response Planning.

We then cemented our initial capability development by repeating the process with NRDC-T in early 2017, which had the added benefit of testing our ability to support planning activities during the most challenging time of the year in northeast Europe. One should never underestimate the impact of climatic conditions on the terrain on which a force may need to deploy and the speed with which it could do so, during the darkest period of the year too.

## NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP)

As all of this activity was taking place in the training environment, and as the outcomes of the most recent NATO Summit in Warsaw permeated out, we entered the next chapter in our development as we took the NFIU concept forward and evaluated it under "live" conditions. As previously mentioned, the NATO-led eFP initiative evolved very rapidly after Warsaw, as befits the contemporary geopolitical situation, and early planning indicated that the lead elements of eFP in Estonia would arrive in early 2017. Time was of the essence as we prepared collectively, with our Estonian partners in the Estonian Defence Force HQ Staff and elsewhere to host the small liaison team that arrived in October 2016.

Inevitably, the NFIU took a leading role

in establishing a network of agencies and individuals with which to facilitate the arrival and reception of the eFP. At the same time, we maintained a responsibility towards our higher HQ to advise them on the potential impact of eFP on other ongoing initiatives here in Estonia in our role of maintaining JCSA. Without our valuable input and in-country expertise, HQ MNC NE would face significant challenges in reviewing and coordinating the eFP and other bilateral and multinational initiatives across their Area of Responsibility.

During 2018, our focus will turn to experimentation and proof of the concept as we wrestle with the idea of bringing a broader NATO perspective to a national exercise and tackle the very real challenges associated with the deployment and hosting of a sizeable NATO force into a relatively small engagement space, whilst potentially facing several traditional and non-traditional threats.

In the case of the former, the NFIU, in partnership with both the Estonian Defence Force HQ and Estonian Defence League, will look forward to hosting HQ MNC NE during Exercise SIIL 18. SIIL18 is the latest in a series of national Force Generation and Mobilisation exercises, which traditionally culminate in a Field Training Exercise (FTX). Naturally, in 2018, this will feature the NATO eFP in Estonia and several other multinational participants, so the exercise provides HQ MNC NE with an excellent opportunity to develop its capability to exercise C2 in the Baltics, given that the location of the exercise will allow interaction with both

Estonia and Latvia. It is hoped that HQ MNC NE will deploy its Initial Coordination Element to Tallinn during the exercise in order to allow the NFIU to refine its capability to host contingency and crisis response planning and facilitate liaison with the Host Nation.

For later in the year, we would like to explore the possibility of hosting an event, which would allow all of those actors in Estonia responsible for delivering Host Nation Support and Resilience to a large scale military force deployed to the region, to come together and work through some challenging problem sets in order to better understand the very real issues that NATO and the Host Receiving Nation would face in delivery of enhanced security, whilst facing significant traditional and non-traditional threats. We will also continue with our commitments towards broader NATO contingency planning for the region and with preparing the Second Editions of our Comprehensive Preparation of the Environment (CPOE) and Operational Logistics and Planning Manual (OLAM), which are rapidly becoming accepted benchmarks for NATO planners.

It has been a relatively short but exciting journey in developing a new NATO capability on the fringes of the Alliance here in northeast Europe, but it is important that we all keep the *raison d'être* of the NFIU concept at the forefront of our minds: To enhance Alliance responsiveness in times of crisis and to provide the Baltic Region with an assurance that the defence of their nation is a collective responsibility within NATO. ✦



**EXERCISE SIIL 2018 ("Hedgehog 2018"):** Estonia's largest exercise will be held in Southern Estonia in May. Over 13,000 members of the Estonian Defence Forces, Estonian Defence League volunteers, reservists as well as NATO and Partner soldiers from 13 countries will participate in the exercise. Photo by NATO