

# NATO Response Force (NRF) Fact Sheet

## **NATO Response Force (NRF)**

The NATO Response Force (NRF) was established in 2002 as a high readiness force comprising of air, land, maritime and Special Forces units capable of rapid deployment. The NRF is capable of performing a wide variety of tasks including the provision of an immediate collective defence response capability (prior to arrival of other forces), crisis management & peace support operations, and disaster relief and the protection of critical infrastructure.

Overall command of this force belongs to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). NATO's two Joint Force Commands (based in Brunssum, the Netherlands and Naples, Italy) have operational command of the NRF each year on a rotational basis. Rotating forces through the NRF requires contributing Allies and partner nations to meet strict standards and adopt procedures required for defensive and expeditionary operations. As a result, participation in the NRF is preceded by a six-month NATO exercise programme in order to integrate and standardize the various national contingents. Additional training serials are carried out by contributing nations during the 6-18 month period prior to assuming the role of an NRF high-readiness unit.

## **NRF 2018**

Joint Force Command Brunssum is the lead headquarters for the NRF in 2018, and is supported by the following command and control elements:

- Land: Italian NATO Rapid Deployable Corps (NRDC);
- Air: German Joint Force Air Component (JFAC);
- Maritime: French Maritime Task Force Command (FRMARFOR);
- Special Operations: Spanish Special Operations Component Command;
- Joint Logistic Support Group (JLSG) from JFC Brunssum;

Air, land, maritime, special forces, and logistics troops from across the Alliance have been placed on a high level of readiness and are available to support NRF 2018 if required. The details of the exact composition, locations and readiness of these forces is not publically releasable in order to protect operational security.

## **The Enhancement of NRF: developing the VJTF concept**

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO Allies agreed to enhance the capabilities of the NATO Response Force (NRF) in order to adapt and respond to emerging security challenges, as well as the risks emanating from the Middle East and North Africa.

Having carefully considered the options presented during post-Wales discussions, the decision to incorporate a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) within the overall NRF structure was taken, increasing the size of the NRF to 40,000 and providing NATO with a highly capable and flexible air, land, maritime and Special Forces package capable of deploying at short notice when tasked, between two to seven days.

## **The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)**

The VJTF comprises a multinational brigade (approximately 5,000 troops), with up to five manoeuvre battalions, supported by air, maritime and Special Forces. The VJTF is fully operational and can be enabled as a rapid reinforcement capability, in case of a major crisis. If activated, the force will be available to move immediately, following the first indicators and warnings of potential threats before a crisis begins, to act as a potential deterrent to further escalation. The rapid arrival of this capable military unit would send a very clear message to any potential aggressor: "any attempt to violate the sovereignty of one NATO nation will result in a decisive military engagement with all 29 allied nations".

The VJTF is established on a rotational and persistent basis and will not be permanently based. Contributions to NRF will rotate between different NATO countries each year, with the need for a number of lead or framework nations to stand up the force. These framework nations, the core of the new force, are expected to provide headquarters, combat forces, logistics and enablers.

In addition, NATO Allies have a wide range of other forces at their disposal. For example: Allies often send forces to conduct exercises in various locations across Europe; all Allies have national troops at high states of readiness that can quickly respond to a crisis.

The VJTF's rapid yet flexible response times are what set it apart from other components of the NRF; some units will be ready to deploy in just two days, whilst the majority of units will be ready to move in less than seven days. In ensuring a high level of readiness the VJTF will be regularly exercised and deployed at short notice.

## **NRF Structure**

- Command and Control element: based on a deployable Joint Task Force HQ;
- Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF): a new component of the NRF consisting of forces at the highest level of readiness. It is a joint force, consisting of a land component with appropriate air, maritime and special operations components, as needed, able to deploy within a few days in response to any threats or challenges that may arise on NATO's flanks;
- Initial Follow On Forces Group (IFFG): These are high-readiness forces that can deploy quickly, following the VJTF, in response to a crisis.
- Follow-on Forces Group (FFG): The FFG consists of a broad spectrum of military capabilities - encompassing command and control, combat, combat support and combat services support units. FFG forces are nominated by Allied and/or Partner Nations and drawn from their deployable forces.

## **NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs)**

Rapid deployment of the VJTF, if activated, will be facilitated by small command and control nodes enabling deployment and sustainment activity called NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs). Six of eight NFIUs are in JFC Brunssum's area of responsibility: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia.

NFIUs are working in conjunction with host nations to identify logistical networks, transportation nodes and supporting infrastructure in order to ensure that NATO high-readiness forces (VJTF) can deploy to an assigned region as quickly as possible, within two and up to seven days.

Each NFIU will provide a vital link between national forces and multinational NATO forces, and will have a key role in planning, exercising, and assisting potential reinforcements. In short, the NFIUs will facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the region, support collective defence planning and assist in coordinating training and exercises.