

Summary

The Nordic Battle group 2011
(RiR 2012:11)



The Nordic Battlegroup 2011

The Swedish National Audit Office has carried out a review of the setting up of a second Nordic Battlegroup 2011, NBG11. NBG11 is a so-called EU battlegroup for deployment within the framework of the EU crisis management. The battlegroups are part of the EU concept of military rapid reaction capability. A battlegroup is in this context the smallest effective, reliable and rapidly deployable composite military unit that is capable of carrying out independent operations or can be deployed in the initial phase of a major operation. Characteristic of the EU battlegroups is that they have a rapid reaction capability, i.e. they can be deployed at a very short notice. Given its small size, the battlegroup is deployed to solve specific and time-restricted tasks from humanitarian assistance to peace-enforcement missions.

Review background

Motive: The Nordic Battlegroup (NBG11) was put on standby for the first half of 2011. This was the second time that Sweden took responsibility for the completion of a battlegroup in the context of the EU crisis management framework. The Swedish National Audit Office did also review the first Nordic Battlegroup 2008 (NGB08) and found then serious production deficiencies, which collectively led to the Swedish National Audit Office refraining from making recommendations and instead advising of its intentions to carry out a review of the second battlegroup.

The Government's defence policy bill of 2009 stipulates that the Swedish Armed Forces should have set up a mission-based organisation (IO14) of useful and readily available units for both national and international deployment by 2014. This means, among other things, that the Armed Forces must occasionally be able to make a rapid reaction force available for deployment within the framework for national responsibility as seen in the concept of the EU battlegroups. In addition, the Government has stated that the setting up of serviceable, available and flexible battalion battlegroups should be the priority of the Armed Forces during the period of 2012 – 2014.

Purpose: The review was based on the following questions:

1. To what extent does the Government make use of the experience gained from NBG08 when now monitoring the Armed Forces setting up NBG11?
2. To what extent do the Armed Forces make use of the experience gained from NBG08 when setting up a temporary composite unit such as NBG11?

These questions were also used to review the progress made by the Government and the Armed Forces as regards the reformation of the Armed Forces based on the Swedish Parliament's



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(Riksdagen) objectives of an international rapid reaction capability. Another purpose of the review was to identify the processes requiring development in order to improve the production of mission essential and temporary composite units like NBG11.

Implementation: The review applies to the period as of December 2007, when the Government commissioned the Armed Forces to set up NBG11, up to and including the standby period during the first half of 2011.

The review is a case study of the set-up of the temporary composite unit NBG11, i.e. military units forming part of the battlegroup. The Swedish National Audit Office's review is based on the experiences gained by the Government and Armed Forces in connection with the setup of NBG08. The Swedish National Audit Office's review of NBG08 constitutes a basis for comparison. The review assesses to what extent the Government and Armed Forces make use of past experiences in the monitoring and set up of NBG11. The review is applicable to the entire process of the NBG11 setup, i.e. the material and recruitments needed in addition to training and co-ed training of military units.

Review results

The review shows that the setting up of the Nordic Battlegroup 2011, i.e. NBG11, was overall an improvement on the setup of NBG08. NBG11 was reported without any national caveats to the EU for deployment in connection with which the Swedish National Audit Office, despite having observed some deficiencies during the development of NBG11, found no reason to raise any concerns. However, the Swedish National Audit Office would like to draw attention to the importance of not forgetting that a military unit of this size and structure is often less effective in situations of potentially high levels of conflict. The Swedish National Audit Office believes that the Armed Forces have learnt from past experiences with NBG08 but there are still weaknesses in a number of areas. Negotiations with other countries on troop funding, i.e. force generation, are crucial for the production of military units. The force generation process, which involved both the Armed Forces and Government Offices of Sweden (Ministry of Defence), was delayed. Moreover, the Armed Forces failed in time to identify the objectives for NBG11, which among other things had a knock-on effect on the procurement of military equipment for the units. Although NBG11 was planned and setup by the Armed Forces' line organisation, it was never given sufficient priority by the operational management of the Armed Forces. The management personnel were assigned to delegate coordination responsibilities, which lead to a poor follow-up. Consequently, important policy documents were not ready in time and hence, could not be used as a basis for the planning and procurement of materials, some of which had to be reiterated. Furthermore, the Armed Forces took risks in the planning and procurement of materials for NBG11 as, for example, in the case of motor vehicles. Replacement vehicles had to be acquired at a later date. Problems with the supply of equipment to the military unit interfered with training and exercises. Despite a few problems, the recruitment of personnel to NBG11 went well. When NBG11 was put on a



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standby on 1 January 2011, certain supplementary training was still required. This was implemented by the Armed Forces during the initial phase of the standby period.

Also, the Swedish National Audit Office found deficiencies in the Armed Forces' cost accounting for NBG11. In the absence of a system support, the cost accounting was done manually.

The review shows further that the Government tightened its control by setting a limit for 1,600 Swedes but this and any other control measures occurred relatively late in relation to the Armed Forces' production of military units. The Swedish National Audit Office is of the opinion that the Government has provided the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen) with an essentially accurate report. However, the report is open to improvement, as the Parliament ought to be given further details of the rapid reaction capability development of the Armed Forces.

The Swedish National Audit Office confirms that NBG08 and NBG11 are temporary composite military units consisting of sections from the original mission-based organisation. Technically, these military units were set up from scratch, which has involved a considerable amount of work. The Swedish National Audit Office confirms further that NBG08 and NBG11 were set up on the basis of the previous mission-based organisation, i.e. under the conditions then existing.

Gradually, as the new mission-based organisation was being developed, the prerequisites for the setup of a battlegroup improved. The new mission-based organisation, ready for deployment in 2014, will consist of stationary and contractual units, the missions of which will be governed by the equipment available. The recruitment process for the new mission-based organisation 2014 will begin as and when there is sufficient funding. Hence, demands are placed on the Armed Forces to prioritise wisely and make balanced decisions. The Swedish National Audit Office is of the opinion that the Armed Forces need to define more clearly what demands the development of expeditionary capability puts on the mission based organisation so that available resources can be appropriately prioritised.

Recommendations of the Swedish National Audit Office

The Swedish National Audit Office gives in its review a number of examples of how the Government and Armed Forces have drawn on the knowledge gained from prior experiences with NBG08 for the control and monitoring of the second Nordic Battlegroup NBG11. The Swedish National Audit Office's recommendations relate in principle to how the Government and Armed Forces can best develop their controlling and monitoring procedures so as to ensure that important experiences gained are utilized to build up knowledge and improve on operational efficiency.

Recommendations to the Government

The Swedish National Audit Office recommends the Government to:

- Create a better time alignment between the Government's control procedures and the Armed Forces' production of military units.



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- Further develop the way in which it reports to the Swedish Parliament to clarify the way in which the battlegroups contribute to the reform and development of the Armed Forces.
- Review how to best formulate demands made on the Armed Forces in terms of feedback and reporting on battlegroups so as to make it easier for the Government to advise the Swedish Parliament of the development and progress of the Swedish international rapid reaction capability.
- Look at ways of reducing lead time of the force generation process.

Recommendations to the Armed Forces

The Swedish National Audit Office recommends the Armed Forces to:

- Consider giving the responsibility of coordinating and developing composite units with the command personnel or alternatively, commission the Force Command to coordinate the headquarters.
- Look at ways of reducing the lead time of the force generation process.
- Ensure that the Armed Forces Command will methodically take into account compilation reports on experiences gained by the Armed Forces or a critical aspect of its operations. In addition, the Armed Forces should draw up a plan for what actions are needed, who should be responsible for implementing such actions and when.
- Ensure that the costs and activities of temporary composite units or any other with the mission-based organisation- interconnecting missions can be planned and followed up in the operational support system of the Armed Forces.
- Develop a new working methods so that more frequent processes can occur in parallel through developed forms of coordination and a cohesive production of units and equipment systems.
- Ensure that overall system perspectives are taken into account as early as possible in the process of setting up temporary composite units.
- Ensure that quality assured information about material assets is made available early on in the process of defining objectives and requirements.
- Make an initial risk assessment of equipment that is in short supply and the effects of a possible alternative on objectives and capability.

