

Summary

The Swedish Armed Forces' capability
for sustained missions (RiR 2013:22)



DATE: 09-12-2013

The Swedish Armed Forces' capability for sustained missions

The Swedish National Audit Office has audited whether the Swedish Armed Forces has the capacity to carry out sustained missions to the extent and with the focus that the Government and Riksdag (Parliament) have decided. The National Audit Office has also assessed whether the Government has provided the Swedish Armed Forces with the necessary preconditions for planning and carrying out operations that are sustained, and whether the gained experiences from these missions are recorded and utilised.

Audit background

One of the main tasks of the Swedish Armed Forces is to defend Sweden and promote Swedish security through national and international missions.

The defence policy focus bill states that the Armed Forces shall have the capability to launch a mission immediately after a decision has been made, be able to carry out short-term missions and participate in sustained long-term missions, and over time keep around 2,000 persons from the mission based organisation deployed, nationally and internationally. The Armed Forces shall also be able to continually participate in up to four unit missions, of which one shall be on a battalion group level, and be able to wage war across the scale, from low to high intensity conflict levels.

An audit of the Armed Forces' capability for sustained missions is necessary to determine if the reformation of the Armed Forces is being done in the way intended by the Riksdag. No independent body has previously assessed the sustainability of the Armed Forces' operations. This means that there is a knowledge gap regarding a central part of the Swedish Armed Forces' operations.

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate if the Armed Forces has an operational capacity which can be maintained over time during ongoing missions, and if this is done in an efficient way. The primary focus is on the Armed Forces' conditions for conducting sustained operations. The audit does not include effects of completed or ongoing military missions. Neither does the audit include the conditions after a Government decision regarding heightened military preparedness.



DATE: 09-12-2013

The audit answers the following questions:

1. Has the Armed Forces the ability to sustain over time and efficiently conduct missions to the extent and with the focus that the Riksdag and Government have decided on, and have previous experiences been utilised?
2. Has the Government provided the Armed Forces with the necessary preconditions for planning and conducting high-quality operations over time and presented the results to the Riksdag?

To answer the audit questions, the National Audit Office has audited planning and preparations for missions and for the implementation of the reform which the Riksdag has decided on. The National Audit Office has also audited the Armed Forces' needs and access in terms of both staff and equipment, and the follow-up and feedback of experiences from completed missions. Furthermore, the National Audit Office has audited how clear the objectives and requirements which the Government has formulated for the operations are, and how the Government follows up on the development of operations over time and reports this to the Riksdag.

The National Audit Office has based its audit of the supply of staff and equipment on documents that the Armed Forces has provided regarding needs for and access to various staff categories and the type of equipment needed in missions, including ordered and planned acquisition of such equipment.

Interviews have been conducted with representatives of the Armed Forces at a central level at the Armed Forces Headquarters and locally when visiting units and training units.

Audit results

The overall conclusion of the National Audit Office is that the Armed Forces neither currently nor during the coming years will meet the demands made of its operations and decided on by the Government and Riksdag. The National Audit Office also concludes that the inability to meet the demands will persist after Insatsorganisation 2014 has been completed.

The audit shows that there is insufficient staff and equipment to simultaneously handle the Armed Forces' duties when it comes to missions, preparedness and development. The National Audit Office has found that the number of available and planned ground battalions and the number of supporting and function units are limiting in a way that means that the objectives cannot be met, even in the future. The National Audit Office also concludes that the number of continuously employed soldiers, seamen, specialists and squad leaders (GSS/K) is insufficient for both fulfilling national duties and conducting missions abroad. There is also lack of a number of key competences in the mission based organisation which therefore need to be recruited through special procedure.



DATE: 09-12-2013

The National Audit Office's calculations also show that the Armed Forces' equipment is insufficient for fully carrying out both national and international tasks to the extent that the Government and Riksdag have decided. Another impeding factor according to the Armed Forces is the long-term imbalance in both unit and equipment funding. This can result in staff recruitment and planned acquisitions not being completed.

There is also a lack of operative planning regarding all the requirements that the Government and Riksdag place on the operations. The National Audit Office also deems that the Government's steering is partially vague and insufficient and that the presentation to the Riksdag is partially incomplete.

The conclusions are elaborated on below.

The Armed Forces needs to develop its method for presenting and assessing mission capability

The National Audit Office believes that it is important that the Government and Riksdag receive a complete and accurate picture of the Armed Forces' capability. The audit shows that the Armed Forces' annual report has not assessed capability based on all the capability requirements included in the appropriation directions and instructions. This primarily applies to the demand for, in a few years' time, having around 2,000 persons deployed in up to four simultaneous missions, of which at least one is on a battalion group level.

These shortcomings in the assessment result in it currently, and for the near future, being hard to form a clear picture of the Armed Forces' capability. Planning can be negatively impacted and it will be harder to make appropriate prioritisations. In the longer term it means that the data that the Government and Riksdag use when exercising its control and its follow-up becomes incomplete.

Insufficient planning provides insufficient preconditions for operations

According to the instruction, the Swedish Armed Forces shall have a current operative planning for its operations and tasks. The planning shall include all resources necessary for conducting the Armed Forces' operations.

The National Audit Office has found that there is a lack of planning for a scenario which concerns all the requirements that the Government and Riksdag have placed on the operations, such as planning for up to four simultaneous missions over time with around 2,000 persons deployed. The National Audit Office believes that the Armed Forces should begin such planning.

The National Audit Office has also found that when the Armed Forces implements the Government's objectives and requirements in its planning of operations, it partially deviates from



DATE: 09-12-2013

what the Government has specified and plans for operations that in many ways reflects a lower level of ambition. Examples include the number of persons and units that are to be used in missions.

There is a significant lack of staff and units

The audit has shown that the Armed Forces currently and in the near future lacks sufficient staff and expertise to conduct missions to the extent and with the focus that the Riksdag and Government have decided on. Here, the number of available ground battalions and supporting functional units (such as artillery, anti-air and engineering units) is directly limiting. The ground battalions ("manöverbataljonerna") and the supporting units are not organised and co-ordinated to the extent that is needed.

Another reason for why it is currently hard for the Armed Forces to meet the requirements for missions and preparedness is that over half of the staff with the required expertise for such operational units are currently missing. Examples include medical staff and various kinds of qualified technicians.

The National Audit Office also deems there will be lacking capability for meeting the requirements after Insatsorganisation 2014 has been completed. An initial impeding factor is the limited number of ground battalions combined with the fact that these will largely consist of fixed-term employees in the soldiers, seamen, specialists and squad leaders (GSS/T) category, which cannot serve as frequently as would be required. Another impeding factor is the limited number of supporting units, which simultaneously are needed for national duties.

In addition to the problems above, the Armed Forces may in the longer term have problems recruiting key competences quickly enough when the need for missions arises. As far as the National Audit Office has been able to tell, there is no unified strategy for how to ensure the supply of the right number of personnel with the right expertise for missions.

Access to equipment risks limiting missions

The National Audit Office's calculations show that there is a general lack of important equipment in the mission based organisation. A significant portion of the equipment which has been deemed important when placing requirements on the mission based organisation (organisational and principal equipment [OE-material]) is missing. There is a risk of this limiting the capacity for conducting several, sustained missions simultaneously while maintaining national preparedness. The lack of equipment is even more noticeable when it comes to access to such equipment that is especially important in missions. Here, the National Audit Office's calculations show that an even bigger portion of the equipment is missing.



DATE: 09-12-2013

The Armed Forces can conduct several international and major missions, but only as long as the national preparedness units and other units in the mission based organisation are ready to give up equipment which is important to them. This will negatively impact national preparedness and the development of other units is postponed. The National Audit Office has found that there is a lack of a clear overall prioritisation for cases where the Armed Forces must choose between participating in international missions and maintaining national preparedness.

The systematic follow-up of wear and tear is also lacking in the Armed Forces. This means that during planning, not much is known about how the wear and tear of international missions affects the overall need for equipment.

The audit has also shown the monitoring that the Armed Forces has over existing equipment to be insufficient. The data that has been acquired from information systems used by the Armed Forces to determine the need for and account for supplies of equipment has significant flaws.

The Government has provided partially unclear preconditions for operations

The National Audit Office believes that the Government has not provided the Armed Forces with all the necessary preconditions for effective operations. There are parts of the Government's steering that are unclear, for example the meaning of some central terms such as "missions", "sustained", and "over time". This means that it is partially left to the Armed Forces to interpret what is meant by important terms regarding capacity and ability, and this in turn affects the operations that the Armed Forces are establishing.

The National Audit Office has also found that the Government and Armed Forces have not produced a planning scenario for all the requirements made regarding size and number of missions in the defence policy bill, focus decision and appropriations instructions for the Armed Forces.

The Government has not requested that the Armed Forces account for its ability to match all the requirements specified in the defence policy bill. In its annual report, the Armed Forces does not assess its ability to meet all objectives and requirements within the coming years.

Nor has the Government presented a collected and complete overview to the Riksdag, based on the objectives and requirements made of the operations. The reporting has been general in character with an overall account of participation in missions during each respective year. However, there is no report of, for example, to what degree the Armed Forces is able to fulfil the specific time and numbers requirements that the Government and Riksdag have established. Considering that the Government has specified the requirements for operations in such detail in the defence policy bill, the National Audit Office finds that it is reasonable to have a clearer account of all objectives and requirements.



Recommendations

The Government should

- Ensure that an operative investigation is conducted regarding which requirements are to apply in the future for the Armed Forces' operations, especially regarding the design, staffing and equipment provision of its mission based organisation. This should include clarifying what long-term overall prioritisation should apply to national and international missions, preparedness and development of the mission based organisation.
- Clarify important terms such as "missions", "sustained" and "over time" and clarify which time and numbers requirements apply to the Armed Forces' operations. This should include clarifying if persons participating in national missions, in an EU Battle Group and in rescue, evacuation and reinforcement operations are to be included in the requirement of having around 2,000 persons in missions.
- Set clearer requirements regarding the Armed Forces' reporting of all objectives and requirements for its operations, and present this to the Riksdag.

The Armed Forces should

- Develop its methods for assessing its ability to carry out missions based on all objectives and requirements for its operations that the Government and Riksdag have decided on.
- Take initiatives to, during operative studies and games, test the preconditions for what is limiting for carrying out operations to the extent and with the focus that the Government and Riksdag have decided on, especially when it comes to units, staff categories and important equipment, and inform the Government of the results.
- Ensure that it takes into consideration the need for expertise and important equipment for international missions when establishing unit objectives. This should include summarising and analysing the experiences of wear and tear on equipment used in completed missions.
- Produce a joint strategy for how the provision of the right number of staff with the right expertise shall be handled for missions, especially regarding what categories need to be added to missions, when they are to be recruited and in what way.
- Improve the management and quality assurance of basic data regarding staff and equipment. This should include ensuring that the same categorisation of expertise is used in the Armed Forces' staff administration system (Prio) and the operations' register (IOR) and ensuring that information about needs and access to equipment within various units is readily available.