

Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) and NATO Burdensharing

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It is four years ago now that the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula meant a violation of international law and thus a serious challenge to the peace and security architecture in Europe.

The decisions taken at the NATO summits since then are the Alliance's answer to these developments – more emphasis on national and collective defense, with a focus on the European continent in general and the eastern boundaries of Alliance territory in particular.

Situated in the heart of Europe, Germany will in many cases be a critical part of NATO's strategic hub, mounting base, transit country and rearward operating base for re-assurance and collective defense. Many of our neighbors face similar challenges, so it is quite natural to look for a common approach to master them.

To this end – among other measures – Germany introduced the Framework Nations Concept, the FNC, into the Alliance. The FNC offers very flexible tools to build-up and maintain multinational military capabilities.

The FNC aims at combining European efforts in the development of military capabilities and the provision of operationally ready forces to NATO, thus strengthening NATO's European pillar.

One partner – the framework nation – provides all necessary elements – the frame – that constitute a military capability, e.g. command and control, training, infrastructure and force packages. All other partners from NATO nations and beyond are then invited to join, be it just with a few elements or with all of their resources. The decision is up to each individual nation.

So, the capability in its entirety will be provided by the framework nation but it will be enriched and enlarged by contributions from other nations. My service, the German Joint Support and Enabling Service (JSES), provides supporting and enabling capabilities jointly for the Bundeswehr.

With regard to the FNC, we now lift this up on the multinational level. The aim is to develop a combined and joint military service – a CJSES – that offers crucial supporting capabilities to NATO and others in Europe.

We've stepped up and opened all our operationally relevant military capabilities for multinational cooperation – command and control, logistics, military police, protection against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, civil-military cooperation and host nation support.

The capacities in these military capabilities are scarce all over the Alliance in Europe. So, enhancing them is in the interest of all: NATO, EU, and partners.

Very importantly: the FNC allows each nation to choose where and to what degree it wants to cooperate with us – from mere coordination to deep integration. There is always the possibility to opt out! This design of Armed Forces of Europe w.r.t. critical enablers might seem disappointing in light of the current discussion about European Armed Forces. But as long as we don't have a more binding political comment on the common use of multinational forces, as long as nations put emphasis on their full sovereignty the Armed Forces of Europe is the best we can get. And by the way - it is a very effective construct.

To proof this - we have just been able to declare FOC of the first FNC cluster on CBRN-Defence after displaying our ability to prepare and conduct successfully NATO's largest CBRN-Defence exercise ever! Operationally ready multinational forces, that's what we are looking for!

Basis for this are the already existing FNC capability clusters Logistics, CBRN Protection und Civil-Military Cooperation supplemented by the new ones for Military Police, enhanced Host Nation Support and Deployable Field Camps.

The establishment of the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) for NATO will give a real boost to this. My JSES is charged with mounting and supporting this new German lead NATO command. Thus we are building up a multinational command and control capability for NATO that can draw on relevant multinational capabilities under development within JSES.

In close coordination with the host nations the JSEC will be responsible for security, freedom of movement and support of NATO forces in the rear area. It will ensure rapid forward deployment of allied reinforcements to the respective operations area.

The rear area could extend from the North Cape to Anatolia, from Portugal to Poland, so this is quite a task. Also the set timelines are challenging! We have to achieve IOC next year and FOC in less than two years.

But we are adamant to send a clear signal to our partners that Germany is willing to take a fair share of the burden.





Our significant participation in TRIDENT JUNCTURE is just another example for this. We were there with almost 10.000 men, a very good overture for the German lead Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) Land in 2019.

And not the least, our strong engagement in strengthening European defense capabilities within NATO. We want to combine the efforts and proceed as inclusive as possible – fully in line with the Joint Declaration of NATO's SecGen, the President of the European Commission and the Chairman of the European Council.

In practical terms: our support to the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) within the EU and our concrete projects are all designed to support the European pillar in NATO, thus both organizations.

A good example for this is the Military Mobility project initiated by the NLD and co-sponsored by DEU. Or should I say: initiated by General Ben Hodges by his demand for freedom of movement for his forces in Europe?

With this PESCO project, we simplify and standardize procedures for cross-border military transports in Europe to the benefit of NATO as well. And we are combining EU efforts to enhance infrastructure with NATO's requirements for rapid military mobility in Europe.

We will link it with the German/French PESCO project to establish a "Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations" and also our FNC cluster "Logistics". These and several more initiatives fit perfectly well with the JSEC. We net together a HQ with the respective capabilities.

To sum it up: We are willing to deliver. With respect to critical enabling and supporting capabilities, the CJSES could become the nucleus of the Armed Forces of Europe and even the European Armed Forces serving both, Europe and NATO.