

Discussion Group B: Multinational Cooperation in the Field

Introductory Presentation: Military Multinational Cooperation – The Experience of SHIRBRIG

Colonel Willem VAN DULLEMEN
Chief of Staff, SHIRBRIG

The Multinational Stand-By High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations (SHIRBRIG) is a multinational brigade that can be made available to the UN as a rapidly deployable peacekeeping force.

Background

Begun in 1994, the SHIRBRIG initiative brings together a group of like-minded countries interested in pursuing efforts to reinforce the United Nations Stand-by Arrangement System (UNSAS) through effective and continuous pre-deployment planning, and by promoting interoperability through the establishment of common operating standards and procedures, as well as joint training of the headquarters staff and the Commanding Officers of the SHIRBRIG assigned units.

Experience has shown that the deployment of military assets within the first six to seven weeks is crucial for the success of a Peacekeeping Operation. In his 1995 statement “Supplement to an Agenda for Peace”, the UN Secretary General recommended that the UN consider the idea of a rapid deployment force, consisting of units from a number of member states, trained to the same standard,

using the same operating procedures and inter-operable equipment, and taking part in combined exercises at regular intervals.

Membership

Currently, 15 nations are members of SHIRBRIG: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. Argentina is also a member, but has temporarily suspended its active participation.

Eight additional countries participate as observers: Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Hungary, Jordan, Portugal and Senegal.

SHIRBRIG is working towards global representation, as well as the establishment of similar regional peacekeeping organizations around the world.

The general membership criteria are:

- Small and medium sized nation;
- Peacekeeping experience;
- Well equipped and trained to meet rapid reaction time lines; and,
- Ability to pay own contribution.

Foundation Documents

A set of Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between participating nations was used to establish SHIRBRIG. These documents also govern the functioning of the

SHIRBRIG entity, the Steering Committee, the Planning Element and the Force Pool. In addition, a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) has been developed by SHIRBRIG nations with the host nation of Denmark.

Composition

SHIRBRIG consists of the following entities:

- The **Steering Committee** – This executive body is a political-military structure responsible for oversight and supervision, policy-making and for the SHIRBRIG decision-making and force generation process. Its members comprise Defense and Foreign Affairs representatives from all SHIRBRIG nations. The Chair of the Steering Committee rotates annually amongst the full member participants. In 2005 Romania chaired the Steering Committee, currently it is Spain and, in 2007, it will be Italy.
- The **Contact Group** – Located in New York, this group comprises the Ambassadors and Military Advisors of the SHIRBRIG nations' Permanent Missions to the UN. They provide an essential communication link between SHIRBRIG and the UN.
- The **SHIRBRIG Headquarters (HQ)**, comprises four groups that, when combined, form the nucleus of a Force, Division, or Sector level Headquarters on a UN Mission:
 - The **Commander**, a Brigadier-General, appointed for two years and stationed in Høvelte Barracks in Denmark. The position rotates between nations.

- The **Planning Element (PLANELM)** also located at Høvelte Barracks in Denmark, is the permanent, multinational, military staff composed of a Chief of Staff (Colonel), and 15 Senior Staff Officers from contributing member countries. The Planning Element develops standing operating procedures, carries out operational preparations for deployment, and conducts training of the SHIRBRIG staff and unit commanders. The Planning Element also serves as a cohesive and well-practiced team providing additional planning assistance and military expertise to the UN DPKO when needed.
- **Specialist Clerks** from Denmark who work with the PLANELM on a full time basis.
- **Non-Permanent Staff Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers** who fill assigned positions in the HQ Staff, and who undergo annual training with the PLANELM, but who otherwise work in their own nation until they are called upon to deploy on operations.
- A **Defence and Security Company (D&S Coy)** and a **Headquarters Company (HQ Coy)** provide support and protection to the SHIRBRIG HQ. Together, these three elements (HQ, HQ Coy, and D&S Coy) form the “**SHIRBRIG HQ package**” which is currently the contribution offered to the UN for operational deployments.

- **Force Pool**, from which units can be made available by member nations. Although the concept allows for a deployment of up to a brigade-sized force from this pool, SHIRBRIG maintains the flexibility of deploying a smaller force.

Concept

The SHIRBRIG concept of operations is summarized as follows:

- Any deployment involving SHIRBRIG must be mandated by the UN Security Council;
- Once deployed, the SHIRBRIG forces come under operational control of the UN mission leadership;
- Although originally established for UN missions under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, more robust missions are considered on a case-by-case basis;
- SHIRBRIG decisions to undertake missions are taken by consensus, but member countries decide on a case-by-case basis whether or not to participate, thereby preserving national sovereignty;
- For the foreseeable future, SHIRBRIG's level of ambition for deployment to UN missions is to act as the nucleus of a Force HQ, supported by a HQ Coy and a D&S Coy;
- In this FHQ role, and due to its High Readiness and Rapid Deployment characteristics, SHIRBRIG can expect to be called upon to:

- Start-up new Chapter VI or more robust missions;
 - Establish a new Division or Sector when a current mission is expanded, or
 - Enable the transition from existing, non-UN missions into UN ones.
- SHIRBRIG will deploy for a maximum of six months following which the mission is either terminated or replaced by a non-SHIRBRIG contribution;
 - In principle, SHIRBRIG could be deployed anywhere in the world. The SHIRBRIG reaction time is 7 days for departure of reconnaissance teams, and 15 days for advance parties. These timings are after the decision of participating countries; and
 - SHIRBRIG HQ will be self-sufficient for at least 60 days.

SHIRBRIG's African Capacity Building Initiatives

The SHIRBRIG Steering Committee, assisted by the Commander and the Planning Element, have embarked on a series of initiatives to assist the African Union (AU) and the various African Regional Economic Communities (REC) in their desire to establish similar, regional peacekeeping standby forces, based on the SHIRBRIG model.

Recent SHIRBRIG efforts have included:

- Provision of expert advice and support to AU workshops;

- Sponsorship of Senior African Defense and Foreign Affairs officials to attend SHIRBRIG Steering Committee meetings;
- Sponsorship for African Military Officers to attend major SHIRBRIG training events;
- Attached posting of two African Officers to the PLANELM for three month periods; and,
- Assistance in establishing AU and REC Planning Elements.

Budget

All expenses for national participation in training, conferences, and meetings are the responsibility of the participating Nations. On deployment, operational costs are financed under national, bilateral arrangements with the UN.

Nations pay the costs related to the move and living expenses for their own Officers posted to the PLANELM. Nations that send Officers to the PLANELM also share the operating costs of the PLANELM and the Steering Committee. Per nation this is approximately 50,000 EUR per annum.

The total annual budget for the PLANELM operating costs is approximately EUR 670,000.

Brief Chronology of SHIRBRIG:

- 1994 Denmark launched an initiative to create the Multinational Stand-by High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations (SHIRBRIG);

- 1995 Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and Sweden participated at Denmark's Working Group to develop the concept for a multinational stand-by high readiness brigade for UN peacekeeping operations. UN DPKO Secretariat took part as an observer;
- 1996 Official signing of the first Memoranda of Understanding between Nations, thereby creating SHIRBRIG;
- 1997 The Planning Element was officially inaugurated by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan;
- 2000 SHIRBRIG force pool was declared available to the UN in January 2000;
- 2000 SHIRBRIG deployed a headquarters, an infantry battalion, and a Headquarters Company to the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), from November 2000 to May 2001. COMSHIRBRIG, MGen Patrick Cammaert, served as Force Commander;
- 2003 In March, SHIRBRIG provided a planning team to assist ECOWAS in the planning of a peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire

- 2003 In September, SHIRBRIG deployed 20 members to assist the UN to form the core of UNMIL's interim UN headquarters in Liberia;
- 2004 PLANELM deployed 27 members to SUDAN as part of the UN Advance Mission in Sudan (UNAMIS), from October 04 to March 05;
- 2005 SHIRBRIG provided the nucleus of the Force HQ, the Joint Military Committee Office, and the Integrated Support Services for the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) from April to October 05. COMSHIRBRIG, BGen Gregory Mitchell, served as Deputy Force Commander;
- 2006 SHIRBRIG called upon to assist DPKO in planning for a possible deployment to establish a Divisional HQ in Juba, Sudan, as part of the transition of the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to UNMIS; and,
- 2006 December, SHIRBRIG will celebrate its 10th Anniversary.

For such a young, relatively small, and inexpensive organization, SHIRBRIG has an impressive record of achievement – and a healthy outlook for the future.

Conclusion

SHIRBRIG's sole raison d'être is peacekeeping; its sole client is the United Nations.

Recognizing that peacekeeping itself is becoming ever more complex, multidimensional, and demanding, SHIRBRIG has embraced a culture of continuous learning and improvement in order to remain relevant, highly capable, and fully prepared to meet the evolving challenges.

In summary, the SHIRBRIG initiative is a significant, practical and achievable way for nations to contribute to an effective - and proven - high readiness, peacekeeping capability for the UN. As our motto states, we continue to be:

Rapid, Flexible and Prepared.