



## □ Dual operational readiness: concept tested by the army in the terretr protective posture

Land Forces Doctrine Review

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Engagement opérationnel

**The POD experiment, initiated in the autumn of 2017, following on from exercises MINERVE (April 2016) and NIRBANUM (May 2017), was conducted by the land forces under conditions adapted to the level of activity to which the units potentially concerned were subject. The Land Command for the National Territory (TN COM), in its role as coordinator between the Joint Territorial Defence Organisation (JTDIO) and the Land Forces Command (LFC), was responsible for assessing its relevance.**

In a deteriorated security context that exposes soldiers to a very high level of demand on national territory (TN), the land forces must optimise their possibilities. In a degraded security context that exposes soldiers to a very high level of demand on national territory, the French Army must optimise its training possibilities to ensure its commitments in external operations, while remaining ready to face any situation in mainland France and overseas.

POD is based on a three-dimensional concept: it is in fact a question of land units manoeuvring in open terrain as part of their operational preparation, while enhancing their visibility, particularly in military deserts, and offering a capacity for "reflex time" action for the benefit of OTIAD in the event of a crisis.

This innovative concept, which is based on the PPT, is part of a "win-win" logic: the land forces gain in operational preparation while strengthening their capacity to intervene on national soil. In order to go beyond the a priori, it is necessary to go back over some of the considerations that prevailed when this concept was defined, to fully understand its evolution and to assess its relevance, through the lessons learned from an experiment that has now come to an end.

### **The foundations of a concept that would allow the resumption of operational preparation in the context of a strong commitment on the national territory**

Initially conceived as a first response to the heavy constraints imposed by the

deployment of nearly 10,000 troops for 20 weeks on the coast of the Mediterranean, the period 2015-2016, the concept of "derived<sup>57</sup> operational readiness" (POD) is immediately part of the wider field of land protection posture.<sup>58</sup> (PPT) and in a logic of efficiency<sup>59</sup> The POD "enabling the units concerned to work across the full spectrum of the operational contract, while ensuring a deterrent presence on the ground, being able to collect intelligence and working in liaison with the internal security forces and local administrative authorities".

In December 2016, following on from the Government's report to Parliament<sup>60</sup> which points out that: "this posture (PPT) also implies the reorientation of part of the operational readiness activities as well as of its reorientation The EMA entrusts EMAT with a mandate for the implementation of the TPP.<sup>61</sup> The study stated that "the TPP has two complementary and interdependent components : the commitment of forces on national soil...; units under derivative operational readiness (DOP), deployed by land forces on national soil and capable on short notice of being requisitioned in accordance with the procedure in force".

It is in the response to this mandate<sup>62</sup> that the objectives to be assigned to this concept of POD are specified: The main aim is to ensure wider territorial coverage, offering "deterrent visibility", to improve knowledge of the territory and of the NT actors, to enable army units de Terre army units to regain their initial autonomy, to reappropriate their tactical fundamentals and to offer a reaction capacity on a zonal scale in a logic of reversibility of posture. It is finally in June 2017 that the EMA validates<sup>63</sup> the principle of experimenting with this POD whose primary purpose - the operational preparation of land forces - effectively excludes it from the arrangements for the forces involved (today corresponding to the 1st SENTINEL level).

The context in which the POD was created has since evolved significantly, but the principles that prevailed at the time of its conception have finally retained all their relevance in the context of the implementation of a now sustainable land protection posture (LPP).

### **Acceptable constraints with regard to the expected benefits of POD for land forces**

Engaged in highly standardized operational readiness cycles, land forces units had gradually abandoned all forms of operational readiness. They had gradually abandoned all forms of open-field operational preparation and concentrated their training and instruction periods in military camps and specialized training centres. At the same time, the introduction of the fleet management policy, on the one hand, and the establishment of the base, on the other hand, had significantly reduced the regiments' capacity to deploy in open terrain under the combined effect of severe resource and support constraints.

However, this POD experimentation for more than a year now has shown that the joint directorates and services (DSIA) are still able to provide support to elementary units in POD when these activities are sufficiently anticipated, planned and organised. It was also found that the only real limit that could not be overcome was the availability of tactical range vehicles, often requiring recourse to commercial range vehicles if this capability is actually achieved and available.

Of course, the POD experiment revealed implementation constraints that were difficult to

perceive and identify in the design phase, such as the need to re-engineer the vehicle and the need for a new vehicle. These constraints included the reallocation of equipment (vehicles, human support, etc.) or the preparation efforts that it would require from elementary units that had lost all know-how in this area.

However, without hiding the residual difficulties, the fact remains that, on balance, the benefits are clear. The open terrain offers unique training conditions whose high added value cannot be underestimated. Indeed, on the one hand, POD is a real lever for transformation, acculturation and sensitisation of units to the commitment to the NR, in that it forces the elementary unit to prepare for a real MISSINT that may surprise it at any time, in conditions that are not those of operation SENTINELLE. On the other hand, this type of deployment in sometimes very isolated areas, in contact with the population, on unknown terrain, similar to that which soldiers in Operation SENTINELLE may face. On the other hand, this type of deployment in sometimes very isolated areas, in contact with the population, on unknown terrain, like that with which soldiers in operations may be confronted, helps to strengthen their capacity for initiative, their ability to adapt to various hazards and their knowledge of the "ecosystem of actors" in the TN.

The commitment to the TN, the prospect of which had been anticipated from the very first sketches of the new "In Contact" model of the army, is now the result of a lastingly deteriorated security situation that calls for the following. This calls for innovation in modes of action to ensure the protection that the French expect from their army while preserving the units' training capabilities for engagement in much more severe theatres of operation.

During the experimental phase, the return of the Army to certain military deserts sometimes resulted for units in POD in stretches that were perceived as restrictive and whose interest was not always well understood. The aim was in fact to assess the services' capacity to provide logistical support to units far removed from their garrisons and deployed in areas not covered by defence bases (BODs). In the end, no real difficulties were found in providing such support.

This greater visibility of the land forces throughout the national territory can usefully contribute to encouraging a disengagement of the 1st SENTINELLE echelon, without prejudice to the new army protection contract (7 000 men in the long term, with peaks of one month to 10 000 men). It should be remembered that units engaged in a POD sequence are systematically drawn from the 2nd echelon of the SENTINELLE system, so there is no additional TN load.

### **An encouraging RETEX advocating the implementation of POD in cruise mode**

During the experiment, a total of 44 elementary units from all weapons (infantry, cavalry, engineers, trains, etc.) were trained in 22 metropolitan departments. To these 44 units should be added the infantry companies of the 7th BCA and the 13th DBLE which participated respectively in the exercises MINERVE and NIRBANUM where they were trained in 22 metropolitan departments. The purpose of these exercises was to engage, under requisition, units on manoeuvres in open terrain in a joint action with the National Gendarmerie, based on a crisis scenario. A real prefiguration of what was to become the POD concept.

Practically all the units that took part in this experiment encountered difficulties in obtaining the necessary armoured vehicles and/or tactical range. Despite this, however, unit commanders, like that of the 5th Company of the 21st RIMA, recently involved in the HERMES interdepartmental exercise through its POD sequence, have very largely

The units in POD are deployed in "zones of interest" previously defined by the defence zone headquarters by means of an approach combining both security considerations and the desire to meet the objectives of a wider coverage of the national territory.

The return of the Army to areas where it had not been seen for a long time after the gradual closure of multiple garrisons clearly aroused a marked interest among the population. The welcome given to the soldiers and the relations that have been established with the security forces and the local population have confirmed the extremely positive perception of this concept. The original sequence of PODs conducted by the 515th RTRN across three departments (Charente, Charente-Maritime and Gironde) clearly illustrated the surprise effect that the arrival of military units was quickly replaced by an expression of sympathy that encouraged and strengthened the commitment of soldiers "in contact". This same phenomenon was reported by the 13th DBLE during its deployment in the Yvelines. Beyond this capital of sympathy and the very positive image that this type of action conveys, it is quite clear that the Army contributes by its presence alone to reinforcing the feeling of security.

[illegible]



12 hours). POD units are therefore intended to replace 2nd SENTINELLE 2nd SENTINEL Echelon garrison alert units.

### **POD, a response to the Army's operational readiness requirements in an uncertain security context**

After three years of design and experimentation, in a context that has gradually evolved, the methods of implementation of this POD have been adapted. Measures have been taken, jointly with the CFT, to reduce as much as possible the constraints that may have weighed on the implementation of this concept, which is above all intended as a complementary operational preparation mechanism.

Experimentation of the POD made it possible to evaluate all the expectations: seizing the opportunities and advantages of operational readiness in open terrain, a more visible presence in rural areas and particularly in "military deserts", reversibility "in reflex time", conditions for supporting activities conducted outside the BdD, C2 and SIC zones...

Real difficulties have been identified and brought to the central level such as, for example, the impossibility of receiving secure information - the ongoing development of the Intradef will resolve this issue in the near future - or the problem of vehicle availability, which is already well known and to which the implementation of the TN plan in the French Army should gradually provide answers.

However, the bottom line is that, through this POD concept, units benefit from training sequences with high added value, particularly in territories without preThe result is that the units benefit from this POD concept, particularly in territories that have been deprived of military presence for many years and in the midst of a population for whose benefit they have shown themselves ready to react quickly if the context so requires.

The POD is based on this vision of the role of the army in the NT, which was already based on the first sketches of the "Contact" model. From an intuition, to which events have proved to be right enough to draw the necessary conclusions. In the current state of a more multifaceted, endogenous and insidious threat, it is more necessary than ever for the Army to be ready to intervene at any time and in any place. This is the meaning of this new land protection posture (LPP), which has now been perpetuated and of which the LPP is a component perfectly adapted to the stakes of the national territory. Its flexible and dynamic nature makes it an excellent tool, in the hands of the Chief of the Land Staff, to assume concrete responsibility for the protection of our national territory. The flexible and dynamic nature of the POD makes it an excellent tool, in the hands of the Chief of the Land Staff, to concretely assume its responsibilities towards a population that expects its army to be able to ensure its protection if the situation so requires.

57 This is the original name that will be followed by "deterrent operational presence", to become established with the current acceptance of "dual operational readiness".

58 Letter No. 513126/DEF/EMAT/OAT/DR of 27 October 2015.

59 Letter No. 500024/DEF/EMAT/MG/OAT/ADJ/DR of 4 January 2016.

60 Report to parliament on the conditions of service of the armed forces when they intervene in the TN to protect the population of March 2016.

61 Letter No. 0-16-010251/DEF/EMA/EMA/EMP.3/NP of 02 December 2016.

62 Report No. 502848/DEF/EMAT/OAT/BEMP/DR of 22 March 2017.

63 Message No. 2017/177/ARM/EMA/EMPLOI of 29 June 2017.

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