



Bundeswehr Logistics

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Expériences alliées

The "reorganization" of the German Armed Forces currently under way can be regarded as the major reform of the Bundeswehr since the 1990s. This reform, conceived in 2010 by German Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Gutenberg, launched by his successor Thomas de Maizière in 2011 and continued by Ursula von der Leyen, affects both the structures and the modes of action of the German Armed Forces. Of course, it also concerns the area of logistical support, in particular with the publication of the Bundeswehr Concept on 1 July 2013 and the signing of the Bundeswehr Logistics Subconcept on 22 April 2015.

PrMain elements from the Bundeswehr Logistics Planning Directive and the German Defence White Paper 2016

German definition of logistics

In the Bundeswehr logistics subconcept, logistics is defined as "the overall planning, control, coordination, provision and monitoring of services and service processes to ensure the operational readiness of the Bundeswehr and the provision of services and to support the operational readiness of personnel, sustainability, mobility and accommodation in theatre. This definition is very close to the definition of French logistics. So what about Germany's national level of ambition?"

National level of ambition

The dimensioning and tasks of the Bundeswehr Joint Support Service, which is an army in its own right, are of course defined in accordance with the level of national ambition chosen by Germany for its military commitments. Conflict prevention and crisis management were seen from the outset of the "reorganization" as structuring elements of

this positioning. The new Defence White Paper adopted by the German Council of Ministers on 13 July 2016 further reinforces Germany's level of ambition. Indeed, there was a greater consideration of the responsibilities induced by its economic, political and military importance, and more particularly a willingness to become a more attractive military partner across the entire spectrum of operations. This is reflected in particular in an increase in the defence budget to 2% (excluding pensions) of national GDP, in accordance with the standards defined by NATO, and in the first increase in Bundeswehr personnel numbers since the 1990s, from 185,000 at present to 192,000 by 2023, whereas they had initially been limited by "reorganization".

What are the objectives for logistics planning?

This increased level of ambition leads logistically to the design of sustainable and simultaneous support in two theatres, the first major one hosting large military capabilities and the second, smaller one hosting only essential military capabilities. Germany would intervene in both theatres in the framework of military operations, primarily for stabilization but also for evacuation. In addition, several additional short-term missions could be added. Alternatively, the White Paper envisages support for a high-intensity operation on national territory.

In theory, the Bundeswehr's Joint Support Service is therefore to provide long-term command, reachback and resupply from Germany, both for Germany and for two major theatres, and in practice for many other missions with a strength of up to 10,000 soldiers (instead of the previous 7,000). A six-stage cycle has been established for a two-year period: four months in operation and 20 months for regeneration, training and education. So what exactly does SKB have at its disposal to carry out its missions?

The Bundeswehr Logistics System

Logistical capacities after the reorganization: what means?

The "reorganisation" of the German logistics system takes into account ceilings on the number of employees. Logistics personnel in the Joint Support Service have been reduced by 44% in favour of other tactical elements. This means that the Joint Support Service currently has just over 41,000 personnel. By 2018, the fixed logistics facilities dedicated to storage will be reduced to 40, attached to the SAP system and refocused on their original core business to end the cross storage of ammunition and equipment throughout the country.

The tasks of joint logistics have been consolidated and centralized in the Bundeswehr Logistics Command (LogKdoBw) in Erfurt. All mobile logistics units of the Joint Support Service (six identical logistics battalions and one engineer deployment assistance battalion), the Bundeswehr Logistics Center and its fixed logistics facilities (FSL) located in The Bundeswehr Logistics Center and its fixed logistics facilities (FSLF), the Bundeswehr Logistics Center and its fixed logistics facilities (FSLF) on national territory, and the Bundeswehr Logistics School with its driver training centers are under the command of a single general (Generalmajor Volker Thomas since 14 January 2016).

Each army also has its own capabilities. This is particularly the case in the Army, where each of the six joint brigades has an organic support battalion.

Operational structure

The Bundeswehr logistics system is organized on three levels: the national logistics base (located in Germany), the theatre logistics base, and the organic logistics of the units in theatre.

The central exercise of tasks is carried out by the Joint Support Service. The Joint Logistics Base in Germany, in addition to managing logistics capabilities, is responsible for operations in Germany, support in operations, projection and replenishment from Germany. The Theatre Logistics Base is the interface between joint logistics and operational logistics in theatre. Operational logistics provides support for forces in metropolitan France and theatres as well as resupply, albeit with limited autonomy in time and space.

The services of the Bundeswehr Joint Support Service and its limitations

The mobile logistics services of the Bundeswehr Joint Support Service have a wide range of skills and services. However, resources are limited and their sustainability is planned at different levels. In accordance with the national level of ambition, it will be possible in the future (the reorganization of the Bundeswehr is planned to be completed in 2017) to cover the requirements of a theatre of operations. The Bundeswehr will be able to cover the requirements of a theatre of operations primarily with military logistics forces, which will be supplemented, depending on the situation and requirements, by services provided by third parties, host nation support (HNS), foreign partners in multinational cooperation, and commercial partners. Support in the secondary theatre will be provided by key military capabilities, but will mainly consist of the use of HNS services, foreign partners in the framework of multinational cooperation and commercial markets, especially local ones.

Certain capabilities are to be regarded as critical. For example, the establishment and operation of an operational fuel replenishment area as well as the implementation of measures to ensure military airlift are currently planned in only one theatre.

In addition, accommodation in operational cantonments is limited to 4,000 persons for a maximum period of one year: the limits of joint support are reached here.

As a rule, almost all logistics missions will be able to call on external service providers. The only limits to the use of external service providers in operations are security, operational, legal or government related. The Bundeswehr will, however, continue to be solely responsible for the planning and control of logistics (C2 & Control).

(Too much?) emphasis on the private sector and multinationals

Germany's level of national ambition does not allow it to rely solely on the capabilities of the Joint Support Service to provide logistical support for the Bundeswehr if all the scenarios studied were to be realised. For this reason, the use and integration of third-party services were planned from the outset.

The private sector

The use of the private sector is planned across the entire spectrum of Bundeswehr

operations at home and abroad. Germany is considering the use of private services at the national level, primarily in the areas of air transshipment, operational accommodation, fuel support and MCO, which are particularly suitable for the integration of third-party services. A contractual commitment would address any disruption in the supply chain by making these capabilities immediately available, and their possible participation in exercises would ensure their optimal integration at the earliest possible stage.

Land-based MCO is thus largely provided by the company HIL, whose capital is now owned by the German MINDEF after a semi-governmental experience during the first ten years. HIL ensures the availability of equipment at a predefined rate, in particular through the implementation of an information system based on SAP R/3 "Enterprise" linked to the current and future Bundeswehr logistics information system.

Other companies of this type - wholly or partly owned by MINDEF - have specialised in other sectors: pool of commercial and semi-militarised vehicles, clothing, etc.

Host nation support

In the context of recourse to third parties, Germany also plans to make use of the HNS either through services provided by the host country or through the intervention of private providers. However, it is aware of the problems that can arise from the lack of political stability in a theatre, and of the limitations of the limited duration of an operation and the degree of danger to the effective integration of private sector providers. It therefore aims to gain more experience in the field.

Multinational support

Germany clearly places its military action in the multinational framework, both within NATO and in Europe, and reaffirms this in the latest White Paper. It sees such multinational cooperation as an opportunity to optimize the provision of services and reduce the logistical footprint.

At the NATO summit in Wales in 2014, Germany supported the framework nation concept and in particular offered to coordinate and steer the areas Joint Logistic Support Group Headquarters (JLSG HQ) and Reception Staging Onward Movement (RSOM). Its commitment requires the Bundeswehr to have a broad range of logistics capabilities of its own and to adapt its system, processes and training in order to be able to integrate the different procedures and structures of its multinational partners.

The Bundeswehr has fully integrated this and, considering multi-nationality to be normal, therefore applies it not only in the operational area but also in the training and education area. In addition to the Franco-German cooperation within the Franco-German Brigade, the cooperation with Hungary for fuel depots and transport implemented during the CAPABLE LOGISTICIAN exercise in 2015 and the extension of cooperation programmes to Poland and the Netherlands are also worth mentioning. Nevertheless, Germany remains well aware of the political limits to multinational operational cooperation, which is the sovereign decision of each country to participate or not in each of the envisaged operations.

Operational realities, developments and limits

Pensées mili-terre

Centre de doctrine et d'enseignement du commandement

Germany is fully committed to multinational cooperation in joint logistics through smart defence or pooling and sharing, in particular because it has made a political choice to include its military actions abroad in the international framework, but also because it does not have the means to do otherwise. The same applies to the use of contract workers, already used before the "reorganisation", but now reinforced both because of its effectiveness and because there is no other possible solution.

Germany, like all European countries, is faced with the dilemma of having to rely on the services of third parties to support its operations, while retaining a sufficient degree of military autonomy to be able to act in the field of defence policy. It hopes to respond to this with its mobile logistics units, from which it expects flexible and modular solutions through the rapid deployment of duly trained personnel in any theatre. However, there are legitimate questions about the sustainability of these units.

Since the Bundeswehr does not envisage any substantial changes to its own logistics capabilities in the years to come, it has chosen to commit itself fully to multinational cooperation and reliable integration of its external service providers. At the same time, the Bundeswehr is constantly seeking to optimise its structures, in particular with regard to the maintenance procedures for OPEX return equipment. This process of continuous adaptation will continue well beyond "reorganization", as the Bundeswehr logistics system is designed to be scalable.

This choice is consistent with the defence policy set out in the latest White Paper, which affirms Germany's responsibility and its willingness to invest internationally (in particular on the eastern seaboard of Europe and in Iraq). While the Brexit seems to cast a shadow over France's bilateral cooperation with the United Kingdom (although such cooperation may well continue outside the framework of the European Union), the clearly NATO and European guidelines for the future of the European Union are not in line with the European Union's policy. Germany's clear NATO and European orientations could eventually lead to a new stage in the construction of European defence, particularly in terms of multinational joint support, and particular attention should be paid to developments in this area.

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