



THE LAND FORCES – THE MAIN ENABLER FOR OPERATIONS – HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR CAPABILITIES?

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1. Introduction:

Our society is being confronted with a multidimensional, mostly asymmetric threat coming from the areas of

- international terrorism
- the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- organized crime and
- cyber attack.

This fact has brought up new challenges for Armed Forces as a whole and Land Forces in particular.

In addition to that internal conflicts and the effects for the International Community of States resulting thereof are becoming more and more important than conventional state-on-state conflicts.

Of course, state-on-state conflicts will not disappear, but their character will also change and become more complex and asymmetrical.

2. The Role of the Armed Forces in the Event of Threats:

Cyber Attack

This form of threat does not only aim at the society, its politics and economy, but will also affect the highly sophisticated command and control-, information- and weapons systems of Armed Forces.

A massive cyber attack against public installations like power and water supply units, but also banking systems, can rapidly lead to chaos-like situations for the area affected.

In this case, police forces will soon come to their limits, especially as to their self-sustainment capabilities.

Thus, military forces will be called to support and to complement security efforts.

Fighting the Organized Crime

Especially at the beginning of stabilization operations, we often can see a lack of essential governmental security instruments within the assigned mission area, and therefore an increased freedom of action for organized crime.

In this scenario, it is above all the Land Forces which have to assume police tasks to contribute to a safe and secure environment until provided by civil law enforcement agencies.

The Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

In so-called failed states, which do have a potential of such weapons or enable access to them, it is very likely that weapons of mass destruction might pass into the hands of criminal organizations.

Land Forces will have to contribute to the detection and the neutralization of these weapons in order to prevent their proliferation.

Fighting the International Terrorism

In this field, Land Forces are primarily used to actively fight terrorist cells. This fight will take place on badly accessible and urbanized terrain.

In these mentioned threat scenarios – from International terrorism to Cyber Attack – Land Forces are playing an important role even though of different intensity. To successfully counter a multidimensional asymmetric threat, Land Forces – based on their conventional capabilities – will have to be focused more to conduct counterinsurgency operations.

Stability operations, with special regard to counterinsurgency, will represent a or even the main task for Land Forces in order to counter the threats of today and tomorrow.

3. Criteria for the Deployment of Land Forces

To be able to successfully bring to bear the capabilities of Land Forces in the previously mentioned scenarios, the following criteria will be, amongst others, very important:

Land Forces operations will have to be conducted in a

- **joint**,
- **combined/multinational** and
- **comprehensive/inter-agency** environment,
- by **self-sustained**, primarily **small** (company-, battalion-sized) and **mission-tailored** units.

4. Improvements for Land Forces' Capabilities

Starting from the criteria I mentioned before, I will now deduct possibilities to improve the capabilities of Land Forces:

Basic preconditions for a successful mission of Armed Forces are a clear **mandate** and robust **Rules of Engagement**.

The countering of current threats asks for a close, coordinated cooperation of all services within a further improved "**joint**" framework.

For a small country like Austria, the constant Joint Armed Forces structure, which means the concentration of the Land-, Air- and Special Operations Forces under one command, has proven to be successful, in particular for conducting operations at home and abroad.

Basically, missions are conducted in a **multinational** environment, including also non-NATO and non-European states, which, if properly coordinated and led, can increase the capabilities of a Force.

An improvement of multinational cooperation within combined joint operations asks for further efforts in terms of **interoperability** and **standardisation**.

National caveats have to be minimized to increase the freedom of action for the operational and the force commander.

In the countering of multidimensional and asymmetric threats, military forces represent only one, but still an important element.

A final success, however, will only be reached by the use of a **“comprehensive/inter-agency, whole of government approach”**.

It will therefore be necessary to cooperate with the different key players not only at the operational level but also and even more at the strategic level - already during the planning phase of an upcoming operation.

In order to get an updated and comprehensive situation picture, a further improvement of **information gathering**, ranging from the use of technical items to human intelligence, will be necessary.

In the mission area itself, it will be of importance to optimize **information sharing** and **information protection**.

The well-known, unconventional warfare of insurgents and terrorist groupings by means of roadside bomb attacks, suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices requests an additional improvement of **counter-IED capacities**.

Casualties, especially soldiers killed in action, are a very sensitive topic for our society, able to quickly influence the first acceptance of a mission in a negative way.

It is therefore necessary to call for a maximum of **force protection** with special regard to a soldier's equipment and his combat vehicle, still maintaining his mobility and sustainment.

More and reliable electronic safety and security devices will have to be used in order to get “**the boots on the ground**” for combat and combat support tasks.

Combined arms combat capability will in the future also play an important role and will therefore have to be improved especially at the multinational level.

This, however, requires the provision of proper means, which have to show high operational mobility and accuracy of fire in order to reduce collateral damage to a minimum.

Intelligent weapons systems like **UAVs**, with a wide range of capacities, will play an increasingly important role.

Now let's face the **challenges for the military leaders and their soldiers**.

As already mentioned before, in asymmetric warfare the single man or woman in uniform as well as military leaders will take a central position.

They must be able to handle and employ complex weapons systems, they must be fighters and/or leaders and, beyond that, they have to show further capabilities like

- negotiating (being a military diplomat)
- foreign language skills
- intercultural competences
- winning the hearts and minds of the population of the mission area, supported by information operations, and
- acting according to the higher commander's intent

The well trained and well-equipped soldier must furthermore display good physical and psychological fitness, making him or her comparable with a top athlete who is additionally trained for fighting.

In order to satisfy all these requirements, he has to be placed on a solid basis to be able to act according to his commander's intent.

A high identification with the received mission as well as a reliable support by the politics, the society and his family will give him the necessary self-confidence for his actions.

Within this context, I also would like to mention the importance of information operations within the home country as well as the increasing importance of family care for service members deployed to operations abroad.

The individual soldier and the military leader will still be a decisive factor in military operations. That is why they deserve our special attention and appreciation.

5. Summary:

Also in the future, Land Forces will be the main enabler for military operations.

More and more, they will have to be oriented towards a further developed joint, combined, comprehensive/inter-agency approach.

Smaller countries like Austria will have to prepare and provide their contributions in close coordination with multinational organizations and strategic partners.

Land Forces will have to be highly flexible, self-sustaining, and capable to apply mission-type tactics.

The main focus will be on counterinsurgency and stability operations.

Despite high-tech and intelligent information-, command and control- and weapons systems, the ultimately trained, equipped, strong and crisis-resistant soldier and military leader will still remain the key factor for success in future military operations.