

SUMMARY:

How should any Swedish military intervention be presented in the case of different types of future crises in the Baltic region? The question is raised by Karlis Neretnieks in his chapter in the book *Till bröders hjälp* [Help between brothers],

published by the Royal Academy of War Sciences. This abbreviated version is intended to give an idea of the Swedish Armed Forces' capacity in the context of solidarity actions in the Baltic region after parliament decided to implement "Structure of the Armed Forces after

2014". The intention is also to describe the management and collaboration environments that could be encountered in this type of operation and to identify some of the demands they may make on the Armed Forces.

Swedish military solidarity around the Baltic Sea: Three scenarios

BY: KARLIS NERETNIEKS

The scenarios chosen for this analysis all take place in the Baltic States and are as follows:

1. Peaceful crisis such as the "Soldiers' Monument incident" in Tallinn in 2007, but which leads to a relatively severe political crisis between Russia and Estonia. The purpose of a foreign intervention in this case would be to highlight the fact that Estonia has the support of NATO (and its neighbours) and to help Estonia to assert its territorial integrity. Although the risk of an armed conflict is considered almost non-existent, incidents could occur.

2. A situation in which the Baltic States (and the surrounding world) perceive that there is a possible military threat to some of them, i.e. a preliminary situation in which an early military response from other countries could be stabilising. The possibility that the situation could develop into an armed conflict is considered relatively unlikely but

cannot be completely excluded.

3. A situation in which Russia launches a surprise attack on the Baltic States. A variant, with the same outcome, could be that NATO was in fact warned but not in time to deploy reinforcements to the Baltic States in order to deter an attack. The aim is to see what it could mean for Sweden in the event that NATO ended up in a catch-up situation and had to quickly launch military operations to try to stave off the Russian attack.

It is important to note that the scenarios do not in any way constitute a forecast of a more or less probable course of events but will only be used as an instrument to see what the "Structure of the Armed Forces after 2014" could or could not do in the event of a crisis in our region.

Since all the scenarios are based on today's military and political situation, namely that Sweden

remains non-aligned, NATO still exists in its present form and the EU has not developed into a military alliance with related planning and management resources, it is extremely unlikely that any other organization than NATO would conduct military activities aimed at showing solidarity with the Baltic States. All three Baltic States are now fully integrated into NATO's management both on land and at sea and in the air. The NATO countries are responsible for incident preparedness in the air and are currently drawing up plans for how the Baltic States could be supported militarily in the event of an armed threat. All international exercises in the Baltic States are led by NATO (or the USA). There is no other realistic alternative.

In all the scenarios it is assumed that Sweden will in one way or another consider taking part in a solidarity action in support of the

Baltic States as part of the military capabilities which the "Structure 2014" allows. **The question to be answered is: what can the proposed structure achieved in the event that the declaration of solidarity has to be implemented?**

Of course, in all the scenarios there is also the option of trying to avoid a direct Swedish military involvement. But even these scenarios could lead to various consequences and requirements for the Armed Forces. For example, the need to defend Gotland against both sides in a conflict that we do not participate in (the need will be demonstrated clearly in the analysis of scenarios 2 and 3), or even in a case such as scenario 3 in which Sweden has to have the ability to forcibly prevent any overflights by NATO air power.

It is important not to read each scenario as an "all or nothing" solution. Rather, the analysis operates both within a framework within which the public authorities will have discretion, along with various components of the Armed Forces,

for participation in different types of solidarity actions, and in those areas where deficiencies in the structure may involve risks and limitations.

Scenario 1: Peaceful crisis

A more serious version of the "Soldier's Monument Crisis" in Estonia in 2007, including major incidents between parts of the Russian-speaking population and other groups. The authorities have obvious difficulties in maintaining order. Russia is acting very aggressively and accuses the government of persecuting the Russian-speaking minority.

In addition to extensive, hard to trace cyber attacks against various government functions and noisy media campaigns there are also military provocations, such as overflights of Estonian territory and violations of maritime territory by naval vessels. The Russian media call for Russia to intervene to protect "our sisters and brothers". The scenario could either affect Latvia or both Estonia and Latvia. The

likelihood that the crisis will lead to acts of war is judged to be very small. Serious incidents cannot, however, be completely excluded.

To show its solidarity with Estonia, NATO decides to reinforce air surveillance ("air policing") in the Baltic States and carry out a major naval exercise in the Baltic Sea. There are requests from both NATO and Estonia for Sweden to participate in some of the planned activities. Moreover, requests are also made for participating vessels to use Swedish ports and for NATO aircraft occasionally to use a Swedish air base for refueling and rest.

The situation can be described as a "peaceful crisis". There is effectively no military threat to the Baltic States (and Sweden). The risk of a military conflict in the Baltic region is low. The potential threats that may exist - cyber attacks or other hidden aggression - are essentially those which it is for agencies other than the Armed Forces to deal with. However, the possibility cannot completely be ruled out that hard

Structure of the Armed Forces 2014

The future of the armed forces will broadly consist of: 8 manoeuvre battalions (some will be mechanised, others will be armoured car-borne infantry battalions), 2 artillery battalions, 2 anti-aircraft battalions, 2 engineer battalions, 1 hunter battalion, 7 pc corvettes, 4 submarines, 4 air divisions (about 100 units of JAS 39 Gripen), 1 helicopter battalion (transport helicopter), a militia of about 20,000 men and various logistics and management units. The organisation will be "modular" in the sense that the manoeuvre battalions will be given reinforcement resources, such as tanks, depending on the task they have to solve. Naval and aviation units will mainly have permanent full-time duty personnel. The soldiers of the army units will consist for approximately 65% of the employed but demobilised personnel (approximately like reserve officers in the previous system), called in when there is a possibility of an intervention, nationally or internationally.

to trace actions could be directed at the Armed Forces installations and foreign forces involved in the operation.

How the Armed Forces' resources should be used and a balance struck between the needs of Sweden and any participation in NATO's solidarity action is not really a major problem.

Swedish participation in the NATO-planned operation, "air policing" and the naval exercise, should generally not cause any practical problems. Much of the outlined activities are therefore a routine already implemented by the Armed Forces in connection with various international exercises in Sweden and the surrounding area.

In the event that Sweden offered and wish to participate in the "air policing" over the Baltic States, this would have to be balanced against the need for incident preparedness in Sweden (for both flying units and base resources) and the ability to relieve the units to be stationed in the Baltics. The latter is only relevant if the activity has to be continued for an extended period of several months. But even an operation that extends over a relatively long period should be able to be implemented since it will hardly require a major resource allocation. The objective is primarily to create better incident preparedness, not to conduct air defence tasks.

There is the alternative that Swedish and possibly foreign "air

policing" could to some extent be carried out from Gotland, in particular to relieve the few air bases in the Baltics. For the Swedish side this would also mean that the basic resources would not have to be moved abroad, which is both expensive and quite time consuming.

In the case of the participation of Swedish warships in the proposed naval exercise, with two or three corvettes, there are no significant practical problems. The naval forces are probably those in the Armed Forces which has the best ability to conduct exercises and operations alongside their foreign counterparts, as they take part in extensive international exercises and have experience of "sharp" operations in the Mediterranean and off Somalia.

The possibility of using Swedish territory is essential for NATO in this situation.

The possibility of using Swedish territory is not essential for NATO in this situation. However, it is obvious that the use of Swedish airports and harbours would facilitate the activities, in particular because the vessels would then be closer to their deployment areas and aircraft could use more of their flight time for exercises.

Temporary basing of a small number of foreign aircraft in Sweden presents no technical problems, provided that they bring their own preparation resources. Nor should temporary basing of foreign

vessels pose any particular technical problems.

Probably the biggest challenge in connection with the basing of foreign combat forces on Swedish territory in the outlined situation, compared to the current purely peace-related training activities with other navies and air forces, is that the need for monitoring is likely to increase. It could be necessary for some of the conscripted "operational units" to be called in to solve the task, and/or for the national security forces (Home Guard) to get involved.

The only activity that would mean somewhat unusual management conditions for the Swedish units would be if Sweden were offered and chose to participate in the "air policing" over the Baltic States. Units involved in the activity would then, with very few restrictions, be being led by NATO's air combat command in a sharp activity. In the naval exercise, the Swedish vessels would, in the usual manner, subject to the NATO-organised practice management, in which Swedish officers would presumably also be included. Given the tense situation in the Baltic States NATO would probably have developed specific "Rules of Engagement" for dealing with incidents in the air and at sea, and it would be necessary for Sweden to accept them if we wanted to participate.

"Structure 2014" does not impose any limits on the type of action outlined. In fact, it is well-suited

for it. The international training activities that the Armed Forces are currently engaged in will probably provide a sufficient knowledge base for any participation. To accelerate the launch of any role in the "air policing", and also to have a better understanding of how the main NATO air defence organisation works, a permanent Swedish presence in e.g. the NATO air defence centre responsible for Northern Europe would be of great value.

Scenario 2: "Georgia"

This is a "Georgian scenario" in which Russia's actions are perceived as a military threat, but in which NATO tries to act before any hostilities break out. This must be done by ground forces being moved into the Baltics and air forces being grouped in the vicinity.

The aim is to clearly demonstrate NATO's willingness and ability to act in solidarity with the Baltic States. This would make Russia refrain from military intervention in any of the Baltic States and understand that military pressure is not a viable option.

Whether Russia would ever intend to resort to military force, and under what conditions, it is of course impossible to know - we are not mind readers. The probability of a military conflict is judged to be small. It could be that the relevant crisis had been preceded by a period of increased tension. But it is (should

be) the nature of things that an attempt is made to nip the crisis in its infancy, and so it is unlikely that the countries would have a relatively long time to prepare the operation. In this case, it is therefore assumed that no major actions have been taken, either in Sweden or in NATO, before it is time to begin the operation.

The NATO action plan reflects the wish of nearby countries, Sweden and Finland, for a rapid response to create a military presence in the Baltics alongside US and German airborne and Polish ground-transported units. The total strength on the ground should be about one brigade in each of the Baltic States, and the Finnish and Swedish contributions could be of the order of one battalion from each country, which would be part of the American and German brigade.

In addition, Sweden and Finland are asked about the possibility of basing US aircraft in the respective countries, and abide the coordination of air battle management, so that NATO aircraft based, for example, in Norway could fly over Swedish territory. In addition, it would also be desirable for German, Polish and British naval units to have temporary bases in the Karlskrona and Stockholm archipelagos. Forward basing of NATO assets to the Baltic States (and possibly Sweden and Finland) would begin within days and be completed within a month.

There is no war. It is also extremely

uncertain whether Russia is really prepared to resort to military operations to achieve its aims. It would mean an attack on members of NATO (and the EU), with all the military, political and economic consequences that might have.

If an attack is still a Russian option, it may in particular be based on doubts about the solidarity of NATO

If an attack is still an option for Russia, it could in particular be based on doubts about the solidarity of NATO, in combination with the fact that NATO has limited ability to provide military assistance to the Baltic States, especially at a late stage.

A clear and quick indication that NATO is both willing and able to defend the Baltic States could therefore be a major restraining factor. The starting point of the analysis is that the probability that Russia would be prepared to hazard a military confrontation with NATO is small, but the risk cannot be completely ruled out. To put Sweden on "war footing" in this situation would be going too far.

If Russia were nevertheless to consider an attack, which we cannot know for certain, it would have to be implemented before NATO could bring reinforcements to the Baltics. This means that NATO must guard against the transport of reinforcements being attacked. Russian air defence systems grouped

mainly in the Kaliningrad region but also along the Russian Baltic frontier would then pose a serious threat to any NATO air operations in the Baltics. By taking advantage of Swedish airspace it would be possible significantly to reduce the time that NATO aircraft need to fly through areas where there is an air defence threat.

A similar situation applies to maritime transport in the southern Baltic. As long as Kaliningrad can be used for the deployment of Russian anti-ship missiles, maritime transport to the Baltic ports in a serious situation will probably only be possible from ports on the Swedish east coast. Gotland could play a crucial role. The side which can group anti-aircraft and maritime targeting systems on the island is likely to be able to block all air and sea transport to and from the Baltic region, with the exception of those that come from Finland. Systems grouped in Gotland could also significantly hinder, even prevent, anti-submarine warfare by air and surface vessels, airborne radar reconnaissance and command and air refueling near the theatre of operations.

For the Swedish side, whether we participate in the operation or not, there could be a threat to the island.

For the Swedish side, whether we participate in the operation

or not, there could therefore be a threat to the island. Here there is a clear trade-off problem for rapidly deployed resources: participation in the solidarity operation or creating a defence of Gotland (or letting NATO do so). The possible military threats that might arise against the Swedish mainland are mainly sabotage activities in various forms, and missile and air strikes in the event of open battles.

Although the war risk is deemed to be small, certain preparations should be made to ensure that Sweden and Swedish units do not fall into an irreparable catch-up situation, if battles do in fact break out. How Sweden could possibly participate in a solidarity action by the outlined type cannot be answered without ambiguity. A number of factors must be considered. Perhaps the most important factor is that we do not know Russia's intentions. Is it just a show of force, or are they preparing for an attack? Are we intending that the Swedish contribution should materially strengthen any Baltic state's ability to defend itself, and thus possibly help to get Russia to refrain from an attack, or do we just want to show solidarity (sharing the risk) and let someone else handle the warfare capability? What are the technical and educational opportunities we have to act together with other (NATO) states? What freedom do we have to choose our own tactical and operational solutions for our actions? What

resources must remain in Sweden to meet any threat here?

In the case of Swedish ground forces, "Structure 2014" does not include any organisational unit which in its permanent division contains all the components that would be needed in the current situation, such as mechanised infantry, tanks, air defence, artillery, and appropriate intelligence resources. Systems are available, however, if the Armed Forces is seen as a whole. It would be possible to put together an appropriate force. The organisational and training preparation, particularly the joint exercises of the various components, would take some time. It could perhaps be shortened, from maybe a month to a matter of days, if "Structure 2014" from the outset were to contain a number of tightly organised battalion battle groups for which no extra time had to be allocated to joint exercises.

The time required for preparation can vary within very wide limits, from days to perhaps a month. If it is desired to take the risk of sending a less well exercised unit (depending on how "Structure 2014" is configured in practice) and improvise from the interaction needed with the "parent unit", the German brigade, this could take perhaps about a week or so.

Such a solution is only possible in a situation when one is convinced that the unit cannot be required to discharge combat tasks on arrival.

Otherwise, it will take considerably longer, unless the necessary collaboration and joint exercises, both national and international, have already been implemented in the context of peacetime exercises.

The Swedish naval units that would have to be able to be present in the outlined operation are probably a few corvettes and minesweepers, forming part of the German-led escort force. In control terms, this would not lead to any major problems since similar activities are already practiced today in the multinational context, including with Swedish participation. From a Swedish perspective, the solution with a multi-national group, which probably included German frigates, would have a decisive advantage in that the foreign vessels could provide the advanced anti-aircraft protection which the Swedish ships lack. Sweden could possibly consider offering amphibious units, for example harbour defence units, if such a capacity was requested.

Swedish submarines could play an important role, either for advanced reconnaissance against potential Russian submarines in the theatre of operations or for intelligence gathering outside the Russian naval bases. The role of Swedish fighter forces in the outlined scenario is somewhat uncertain. The plan indicates that NATO aircraft (US) would primarily be intended to provide the necessary air support. With regard to support for land

combat, this is also quite logical, since the practices and organisational conditions for it are well developed within NATO.

Sweden also lacks adequate weaponry in its aircraft for such tasks. It is also likely that the US will not want other countries involved in highly complex air operations such as could be necessary in the Baltics. There will probably be pressure for the airspace over Sweden, the Baltic Sea and the Baltic States to be divided, with the US commanding solely and completely in its part.

If Sweden were to agree to foreign military forces being based as outlined in the NATO operation plan, both they and also Swedish facilities could be exposed to various types of open or covert attacks if the crisis were to escalate. Covert attacks could also occur without open hostilities having broken out. There would be a call on our ability to contribute to the protection of the bases that are used by NATO but also on our ability to protect our military installations and some civil infrastructure.

Depending on the gravity of the situation, obviously major civil airports such as Sturup or Landvetter could be considered for the basing of the American aircraft (or our own), but it would probably be going too far in a situation like this where no conflict in the Baltics has broken out, and is probably not going to.

It is likely that the US will demand that the bases we use are protected

against both the threat of sabotage and threats from the air. Armed Forces' limited air defence resources probably mean that the US would have to bring their own air defence units to protect the bases.

Basing of NATO naval forces involves similar problems. Depending on the foreign vessels involved, and how they are distributed, the anti-aircraft issue could possibly be to a large extent solved by their ship-based air defence. The need for ground units to meet the threat of sabotage, however, might well be an issue for the Armed Forces. Finding suitable harbours that could be used as a base for vessels is not a problem. The port capacity on the Swedish east coast is great, and the Stockholm archipelago very suitable for the basing of naval forces.

Although the Swedish military involvement is limited in the outlined solidarity action, the fact cannot be overlooked that Swedish military installations may be vulnerable to threats such as sabotage. We are after all part of the infrastructure that NATO is using.

Although the Swedish military involvement is limited in the outlined solidarity action, the fact cannot be overlooked that Swedish military installations could be vulnerable to threats such as sabotage. We are after all part of

the infrastructure that NATO is using. Should conflict break out in the Baltics, we would effectively be regarded as belligerents.

That the Swedish forces included in various NATO units would be under NATO command (in all respects in terms of tactical operations) is beyond question.

Irrespective of whether Swedish submarines would participate in the operation, this would require special management solutions. The NATO escort force must at all times be aware of where the submarines are located. The risk of incidents is obvious in the event they were to be mistaken for Russian submarines. The problem is not new. It was present during the Cold War and resolved by the German submarine command being informed of our submarine operations in the southern Baltic.

Regardless of what solution is chosen, there must be no improvising. There must be detailed technical and procedural preparations for the operation, and they must also have undergone training. It should be noted that the problem would not disappear if there were no foreign air force units based in Sweden. There would still be a great need for coordination of flight operations over the Baltic Sea and any overflights by NATO aircraft, for instance from bases in Norway.

Gotland is a particular problem in this context. Sweden's ability to credibly defend the island is limited,

unless large parts of the Armed Forces' most qualified resources are allocated exclusively to that task. For NATO, the island is of vital interest in ensuring operational freedom in the Baltic Sea. From the Russian perspective, Gotland is vital, because early possession of the island would give them very good "flank protection" in the event that they wished to conduct a military operation in the Baltic States. Any Swedish resources available on the island, in the event of an attack, would depend on the support of NATO's air and naval forces, possibly including ground forces.

The question that arises is who is best placed to lead the defence of Gotland, the Swedish Operations Centre or the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, which is probably the management function which would be responsible for coordinating much of NATO's activities in connection with the Baltic States.

The crucial problem is that we cannot know Russia's ultimate intentions. Participation in a solidarity operation for a serious crisis must be to some extent planned on the basis of the premise that, if the desired stabilisation effect is not achieved, we could become embroiled in hostilities, even if the probability of such a negative development is small.

Sweden should have the ability to send a battalion battle group to the Baltics in the outlined scenario.

The main weakness of the approach lies in the limited ability of the unit due to lack of joint exercises. This could apply to the Swedish battalion (depending on the final design of "Structure 2014"), but will be especially significant with respect to effectively interacting with other parts of the Multinational Brigade.

All in all, a situation such as this requires much of the Armed Forces' resources, including the national security forces (Home Guard).

All in all, a situation such as this requires a large part of the Armed Forces' resources, including the national security forces (Home Guard). Adequate resources are, however, pretty much available, with the exception of qualified anti-aircraft units, where the shortage appears to be serious. The structure also has significant weaknesses regarding the defence of Gotland, an area that could be of vital importance even in crises that do not directly affect Sweden.

Scenario 3: Russian invasion

This means a "Georgian scenario" in which NATO, for various reasons, is having to act after the event, i.e. intervene militarily only at the time that Russia is already entering the Baltic States. The NATO plans developed to stabilize a threatening situation in the Baltic States are thus largely obsolete.

However, it would still be possible to intervene immediately with air power, and perhaps try to hold a bridgehead in the Baltic States as starting points for future operations to liberate the occupied areas.

One reason that NATO would have to act after the event could be that Russia had managed to keep secret its intentions by not having conducted any more extensive and therefore noticeable preparation, or by other measures have succeeded in misleading NATO (and the rest of the world). Another possibility is that NATO (and others) could for various reasons have had trouble deciding on military action to show their support for the Baltic States.

The Russian deployment could vary within wide limits depending on how they assess, for example, NATO's ability and willingness to act. However, it is unlikely that there would be no indications at all, political or military, prior to the Russian invasion, so it should be assumed that most countries in the vicinity would have undertaken at least some readiness raising. For the Swedish part it is therefore assumed that the operational organisation is essentially available within a few days (the time it takes to conscripted the conscripted units), and that units with permanent personnel could be distributed immediately. Parts of the air forces maintain incident

preparedness around the clock. An increased exchange of liaison officers with NATO could also have occurred.

A crucial factor to the success of NATO in repelling the attack and saving the Baltic States' independence is that Russia does not have time to create a fait accompli. If the whole of the Baltic territory is occupied, there is a risk that

*Gotland is a vital
military asset for both
parties in this situation.*

nuclear threats could then be used to deter attacks against the "legitimate Russian security zone". NATO must therefore secure bridgeheads in the Baltic area, both to have opportunities for a counter-offensive and to make clear that it has not given up the Baltics.

In connection with the Russian invasion, NATO would immediately begin air operations against the Russian forces that have moved into the Baltic and the Russian air defence systems in the Baltic region.

NATO (USA) would inform Sweden that it immediately (within hours) intended to use Swedish airspace for its operations in the Baltics. At the same time requests

are made to base air forces and air defence systems at bases in Sweden. Furthermore, there is a desire to reinforce the defence of Gotland with NATO assets, primarily long-range air defence, depending on what Swedish units are present on the island and possibly other types of units. Sweden is also asked about its ability to immediately transfer units, especially heavier mechanised units, to the Baltic States to help create the desired bridgehead.

Since the Russian aggression has taken place before NATO reinforcements reached the Baltics, it is very likely that the Baltic States will be occupied in their entirety within a fairly short time (a week?) if

NATO fails to implement a very powerful air campaign and also to deploy reinforcements in the very near future (days). Reasonably safe air transport to the Baltic States in the short-term could only be carried out by Swedish and Finnish airspace. Any maritime transport needs are also likely to be based on Swedish and Finnish harbours so as not to be exposed to unreasonable risks.

NATO has already begun military operations to try to stem the Russian attack. It is obvious that the possibility of using Swedish territory, primarily for air and sea operations, would significantly facilitate the NATO intervention, probably in a decisive way. Gotland is

a vital military asset for both parties in this situation. For the Russian side, possession of the island would represent flank protection that would prevent most forms of transport to the Baltic States. For NATO, it is vital that this does not happen. One reason why Russia has not yet possessed Gotland may be the hope that Sweden will remain outside the conflict, which would significantly facilitate the Russian operation, or that Sweden has already at this stage grouped strong forces on the island.

It should be noted that the Russian air force has a fairly high degree of operational freedom in the Baltic Sea. Protected by its own air defence, and with virtually non-existent air defenses over large parts of the Baltic States, they can fly over the Baltic States with only moderate risk. The requirements for NATO (and Swedish) air defence capability in the Baltic Sea will be extraordinarily high.

It is obvious that access to Swedish territory could be crucial for both parties. The Swedish command will then face a number of dilemmas and problems. Gotland has to be defended, or else someone else is likely to occupy the island. If NATO is forced to do so, this would be done with the resources needed in the Baltics, which reduces the prospects that the bridgehead will survive. NATO is in need of major units in the Baltics, which only Sweden can contribute at an early stage.

The question is: How in practice

to handle very large NATO air operations over Sweden and the Baltic Sea, while the air defence must be able to operate with full force, including for the protection of Gotland? How are the marine operations in the Baltic Sea to be coordinated at very short notice with units from several navies (Sweden, Germany, Finland, Poland) plus the Baltic and the Russian forces acting simultaneously, initially in probably quite confused forms? How much do we dare to send to the Baltic States; units could of course be needed in Sweden if NATO (and we) were to fail?

The question is: How in practice to handle very large NATO air operations over Sweden and the Baltic Sea, while the air defence must be able to operate with full force, including for the protection of Gotland?

Given the crucial importance of Gotland in the outlined situation, and therefore also the strong incentives for all parties to occupy the island, 2-3 mechanised battalions are required from Sweden, one artillery battalion and a battalion long-range air defence (which Sweden lacks) or two battalions with shorter range (all in the existing Swedish air defence) to create a sufficiently high threshold to deter a potential aggressor.

The plan outlined by NATO

envisages the Swedish mission in the Baltic States in two areas: Dagö/Ösel and Kurland. Rapidly filling Dagö and Ösel with Swedish and Finnish amphibious units is quite possible, especially as the units have their own means of transport and are able to interact with each other. Here, as in the case of Gotland, it could be a race against time, since the islands' importance will hardly have escaped the Russian planners. The risk is of immediately entering into combat.

For the Swedish Navy this would pose an extraordinary challenge. Transport in two directions to the Baltic States has to be protected. If not enough Swedish units are already on the island of Gotland transportation there also needs to be protected. Base Areas in Sweden must be protected from both air strikes and various underwater threats - submarines, mines, sabotage activities.

The Air Force's ability to support land combat troops and air defence will be crucial in all stages of the operation. The Swedish Air Force can play a crucial role initially, because it is best placed to quickly begin air operations over the Baltic Sea, and thus to counter Russian aircraft early on. The tasks will however be numerous: protection of maritime transport to Dagö/Ösel, Gotland air defence, protecting transport to Gotland, protecting transport to the Baltic States and also the air defence of Sweden in general.

For the task of supporting any

land combat on the Estonian islands, Gotland or the bridgehead in Kurland there is no suitable armament, except for the combat of individual solid objects. This task must first be resolved by the American aircraft carrier-based aircraft, and in the long run by aircraft based in Sweden and Finland.

The capability of self-flying radar reconnaissance for early detection of Russian aircraft will be critical.

It is unlikely that the Swedish air resources are sufficient for these tasks, especially with regard to ground combat and air defence tasks related to and beyond Gotland. This requires close collaboration and accountability between the Swedish, American and Finnish air forces.

One problem that is likely to be relatively easy to solve in this situation is the airport issue. Because there is a war, civil airports can be used. This is a clear advantage because US fighter planes, but also support aircraft refueling and radar reconnaissance aircraft, are not particularly well suited to fly from the relatively small Swedish military air bases. The use of civilian airfields would also contribute to increased security through the aircraft being spread out better.

At the same time, this means that the number of items that must be protected with anti-aircraft and ground troop increases. Anti-aircraft protection in this scenario can only be resolved by the US forces

providing their own air defence.

In this situation, the foreign forces in Sweden will later also need to build their own extensive military logistics organisation for the supply of fuel, ammunition, etc. Where there is substitution with the equivalent Swedish supplies, this should be coordinated. It would be beneficial for all parties, but it would also place great demands on the Armed Forces in terms of cooperation, coordination and logistics expertise.

At a later stage (depending on how the operations in the Baltic region develop), it may be necessary to bring NATO ground forces to Sweden for transportation to the Baltic States from harbours on the east coast. In this stage, additional protection would be needed. Again, this means primarily air defence and protection against acts of sabotage of various kinds.

The operation in the Baltic Sea and the Baltic States is a NATO operation, in which NATO will take full command

The operation in the Baltic Sea and the Baltic States is a NATO operation, in which NATO will take full command. However, it is possible that some subsidiary operations can be delegated to the Swedish (or Finnish) operational command, such as the occupation of Dagö and Ösel, and the defence of Gotland (if we have substantial resources there). It is even probable that such a delegation

would be desirable because of the probably very confused situation likely to prevail in connection with an outbreak of war. Initially, the NATO command structure is simply not able to manage everything.

Any over-shipment of ground forces to the Baltic States is totally dependent on the German escorts and air support from NATO, so that any Swedish naval units involved will be subject to the German admiral who leads the operation. The bases for German naval forces will also require extensive coordination. Who is based there, how is ground protection organised, by whom, who is responsible for minesweeping in the fairway, who is responsible for the base area?

Probably it would be best if this happened under Swedish management mainly with regard to the need to interact with other parts of the Swedish Armed Forces and better local knowledge. However this is resolved, the Swedish and foreign officers need to be assigned to serve in each other's command structures. The deployment of Swedish submarines must also be coordinated in detail, mainly to Germany, where the risk of accidental combat is in any case imminent.

Swedish air forces involved in marine operations must be led by the NATO air command, which interacts with the naval command, otherwise the Swedish planes risk being brought down by naval anti-aircraft or supporting NATO

military aircraft.

This has every prospect of ending in chaos if flight operations are not coordinated in detail.

To this should also be added the risks of accidental fire from anti-aircraft units, initially Swedish, and after a few days, also American anti-aircraft units which are deployed in relation to the availability of US air bases, but also those on the German naval vessels in the Swedish archipelago.

Coordination on the ground will also require substantial resources because the Swedish and foreign units to be jointly responsible for the protection of the base areas that NATO troops are using. Similarly, there must be Swedish liaison officers at all foreign entities that are present

in Sweden, both to ensure contact with the Swedish military units and personnel and to help with contacts with the civil authorities, police, emergency services, county councils (health care).

The Swedish deployment organisation will be able to solve some of the tasks outlined in the plan. With regard to land combat troops, however, the lack of qualified anti-aircraft is an alarming, limit-setting factor, especially in the defence of Gotland and various base areas.

It must also be considered that almost all Swedish qualifying units would be in the Baltics or in Gotland. This could perhaps be

acceptable if it does not produce any serious threat to the mainland in the long run. This in turn depends on how successful the NATO operation in the Baltic States will be. A precondition for parts of the operational units, e.g. in the form of a "brigade battle group," representing a substantial contribution in the Baltics is that it has a balanced composition and is extremely well exercised.

The "modular system" which "Structure 2014" involves represents a danger in that it assumes that there will be time to put together the appropriate combat groups, and that they will then be given additional training. Protecting NATO and our base areas in Sweden will be problematic.

Besides the lack of air defence, it is uncertain whether the national security forces will be able to handle the task.

Besides the lack of air defence, it is uncertain whether the national security forces will be able to handle the task. An especially large security problem is the naval base areas, which could be even more accentuated in a situation when the amphibious battalion is deployed at another location.

To this must be added the need to protect certain civil infrastructure. Gotland plays in this, and other emergencies, such a crucial role that the defence of the island must

be given an entirely different, and greater attention, than is the case in "Structure 2014". The possibility of rapidly creating a sufficient defence in the event of a serious crisis, or at worst war, in our region is highly open to question.

The naval system has two serious shortcomings: the inability to carry out escorts in a situation in which there is an air threat and the lack of ability to fight underwater operations in connection with

the naval base areas. In particular, this means a situation involving several areas and vessels which are widely scattered.

The Air Force's capacity for instantaneous air defence of the mainland is probably fairly good, but in terms of Gotland and possibly even further away the capacity is open to question. The capability of air support for land combat in a war situation is inadequate, especially when the artillery operation of ground forces in "Structure 2014" is as weak as it is.

The coordination that would be required in the event of the basing of foreign combat forces on Swedish territory in a situation such as this would greatly exceed the capacity of the planned four regional headquarters and current garrisons. It is also uncertain whether the Armed Forces have the number of qualified liaison officers who will have to be placed with the foreign troops in the NATO personnel and management organisation.

The outlined situation is so complicated and requires such rapid reactions that it may be doubted that Sweden would actually be able to contribute effectively.

The outlined situation is so complicated and requires such rapid reactions that it may be doubted that Sweden would actually be able to contribute effectively. While we have a large number of the physical resources that NATO wants, it is uncertain whether they could be incorporated in the operation in an efficient manner. For this to be possible, a high level of coordination in peacetime is required, for example, with personnel officers serving in each other's personnel and joint plans for the reception of units. It takes time to achieve this. It also requires extensive joint exercises at all levels, with all types of systems, and perhaps not least personal acquaintance in order to be able to work together. This is still a long way off. The best conditions are perhaps on the naval side.

If NATO for any reason does not become involved in a crisis in the immediate area, and Sweden still intense to act under any other type of configuration of forces, the demand for Swedish capability increases dramatically - far beyond what "Structure 2014" offers.

Concluding remarks

"Structure of the Armed Forces after 2014" has flaws, some of them serious, in terms of the ability to participate in crisis management in our region. The lack of air defence capability - both at sea and on land - as well as the capacity for rapid intervention with exercised units and the Gotland problem are perhaps

the most obvious. The need for joint exercises with our neighbours and with NATO, long before any crisis occurs, also seems clear.

The structure also has properties, however, that make it well suited for crisis management, primarily with respect to lower levels of crisis. The new manpower system means that we will have devices for rapid intervention for some, limited, tasks. The discretionary power to send personnel abroad will also be greater than it has been so far. The breath of the various systems that will continue to be present in the new structure will also mean a fairly wide discretion when it comes to choosing where we want to participate.

THE AUTHOR:

Karlis Neretnieks is a Major General. He has previously served as brigade chief and head of the Gotland Regiment, head of the International Defence Centre, operational director at the then Central Military Region and president of the National Defence College. He is a Fellow of the Royal Military Academy Bureau and board member of the Swedish Atlantic Committee.



Copyright © 2011 All rights reserved.

This is the fourth report of Frivärld for 2011. The earlier reports are:

"Lessons of the Baltic financial crisis, 2007 - 2010". Anders Aslund, June 2011

"Against the odds and the oligarchs," Paul Raudseps, September 2011

"The development from the Arab spring - from kleptocracy to capitalism?" Susanne Tarkowski, September 2011

This shall not be copied without the permission of The Stockholm Free World Forum.