

December 2006

Press releases 2002–2006

This document contains the collected Ministry of Defence press releases from the period 1 January 2002–6 October 2006. These press releases have previously been published on www.regeringen.se and were removed from the website on 6 October 2006 when a new Government took office.

The contact information in the press releases has largely been deleted since press secretaries and other staff have been replaced.

Links contained in the press releases have been deleted.

The press releases in the document have been sorted by date, starting with the most recent.

In total, there are 37 press releases from this period.

How to search the document

You can search the press releases in the document using the Adobe Reader search function. The search function is generally marked with a binoculars icon on the tool bar. You can search using any word of your choice, but to simplify your search the press releases contain the following key words:

- Minister
- Ministry
- Subject

In 2002–2006 the following ministers, ministries and subjects were referred to on www.regeringen.se:

Ministers

Göran Persson, Ann-Christin Nykvist, Barbro Holmberg, Berit Andnor, Bosse Ringholm, Carin Jämtin, Hans Karlsson, Ibrahim Baylan, Jan Eliasson, Jens Orback, Leif Pagrotsky, Lena Hallengren, Lena Sommestad, Leni Björklund, Mona Sahlin, Morgan Johansson, Pär Nuder, Sven-Erik Österberg, Thomas Bodström, Thomas Östros, Ulrica Messing, Ylva Johansson, Laila Freivalds, Gunnar Lund, Lars-Erik Lövdén, Lars Engqvist, Marita Ulvskog, Anna Lindh, Margareta Winberg and Jan O Karlsson.

Ministries

The Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Environment and The Permanent Representation of Sweden to the European Union.

Subjects

Agriculture, forestry, fisheries
 Asylum, migration, integration, minorities
 Central, regional and local government
 Communications, IT
 Culture, the media, leisure activities
 Defence, emergency management and safety
 Democracy and human rights
 Education and research
 Employment and gender equality
 Environment, energy and housing
 EU
 Foreign policy and international cooperation
 Health care, health, social issues/insurance
 Industry, trade, regional development
 Legislation and justice
 National economy and budget
 Sustainable development

PRESS RELEASE

2006-07-07

Ministry of Defence

Sweden joins air transport programme

The Government has decided that Sweden will join the multinational Strategic Airlift Interim Solution (SALIS) programme in order to increase its capability to participate in peace-support operations.

"Membership of SALIS means that Sweden will increase its opportunities to participate in peace-support operations over long distances. It is an important step in being able to address the current lack of strategic air transport capability. This is a shortcoming we share with other European countries and it is positive that we can cooperate in finding solutions," says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

SALIS is a multinational arrangement between sixteen countries. The arrangement aims at providing the member states with access to strategic air transport capability in connection with peace-support and humanitarian operations. The term strategic transport refers to transport of heavy loads over long distances. The aircraft that SALIS member countries will have access to are An-124-100s, which can carry loads of up to 120 tonnes. In all, the programme deals with possible access to six aircraft. Two of these will be chartered by SALIS on a full-time basis, which provides rapid access to considerable transport capacity. An additional four aircraft will be available upon request. The current arrangement will be in effect for a three-year period.

Membership of SALIS means that Sweden will be able to pre-book flying time at a predetermined cost. Under the agreement, Sweden has reserved some 40 flying hours per year, but more time can be booked upon request.

The Government took a decision to sign the SALIS Partnership Cooperation Agreement at a cabinet meeting on 29 June.

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Key word: 67073 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2006-07-07

Ministry of Defence

Swedish military units listed with UN and Partnership for Peace

The Government has decided to update the listing of units for peace support

operations in the UN Force Catalogue and to adopt partnership objectives within the framework of the Partnership for Peace.

The UN maintains a force catalogue called the UN Stand-by Arrangement System (UNSAS). It contains military, police and civilian components, primarily from UN Member States. Swedish resources are already listed in this catalogue, and the Government's decision means that previous listings will be updated.

Since 1995, Sweden has also been participating in the Peace Planning and Review Process (PARP), which is carried out within the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Participation in the PARP aims at developing Swedish military units and capabilities that, together with troops from other countries, can be called on in international peace support and humanitarian operations.

Simply put, the Government's decision concerns which units and what military capabilities Sweden lists with the UN and the PfP force catalogues. The decision of whether Sweden will ultimately make military units available for an operation is always taken by the Swedish Government or the Riksdag.

All listed units and capabilities are included in existing budgets and correspond to the units the Government listed in the EU Force Catalogue on 23 March 2006.

The Government took a decision on the listings at the Cabinet meeting on 29 June.

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PRESS RELEASE

2006-07-03

Prime Minister's Office
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs
Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU
Ministry of Defence
Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Sustainable Development
Office for Administrative Affairs
Ministry of Education, Research and Culture
Ministry of Justice

**Improved usability and accessibility on
www.sweden.gov.se**

In July 2006, some changes will be made to the design of the

www.regeringen.se and www.sweden.gov.se websites. The new design is the result of a systematic effort to improve usability and accessibility. The changes are based on such things as user tests and validation of HTML and style sheets.

In connection with the launch in July, the text version of the website will be discontinued. Instead, the level of customisation on the entire website will be increased in accordance with WAI guidelines. Visitors to the website will be able to select their own preferences, such as choice of font or background colour.

Content on the websites is validated XHTML 1.0 Strict, and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) 2.0. The website has a fluid design, which means that all proportions are relative to the text size used.

The changes being made will not affect the URL addresses; links to material on the websites will still work after the launch.

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PRESS RELEASE

2006-05-26

Ministry of Defence
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Sweden continues to support peace in Aceh

The Government has decided to extend the assignment for six Swedish Sida observers who are part of the civilian EU Aceh Monitoring Mission, which monitors the peace agreement in Aceh Province in Indonesia. The Government also decided to extend the assignment of ten or so logistics personnel from the Swedish Rescue Services Agency responsible for logistics and communications support for the mission.

On 15 August 2005, a peace agreement was signed between the government of Indonesia and leaders of the Movement for a Free Aceh (GAM). At the request of the Indonesian Government and GAM, the EU, together with five ASEAN countries, undertook to monitor the agreement. The original mandate for the mission has previously been extended to 15 June, but since it is not expected that local elections in Aceh can be held until August, the mission has been extended until 15 September.

Sweden's contribution to the mission, which is channelled via Sida and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, has a total value of SEK 57 million. Sweden has also recently provided a judge within the framework of the mission who is to determine whether a number of imprisoned GAM members are to be granted amnesty.

Contact with Swedish Rescue Services Agency personnel in Aceh is handled by the Agency's Head of Press Services, Mats Oscarsson, tel: +46 70 321 88 73 or +46 54 13 51 03.

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PRESS RELEASE

2006-05-15

Ministry of Defence

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Swedish peace force to Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Government has presented a Bill to the Riksdag requesting the Riksdag's consent to take part in an EU-led military force in support of UN peace-keeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The EU-led mission will take place within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy.

"After many years of war, the Congolese people are finally getting the chance to vote in democratic elections. It is absolutely essential the elections are conducted in a proper manner. For this reason, the Government proposes that Sweden contribute to the EU force that will support UN peace-keeping operations in Congo during this important election period," says Minister for Foreign Affairs Jan Eliasson.

"Our participation in the EU peace force is part of Sweden's increased ambitions for peace-support operations. The mission shows that the EU has the ability to function as a global actor for peace and security under a UN mandate. It is important that the EU is prepared to contribute when the UN asks for help," says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

Sweden's contribution is expected to amount to some 70 people and will comprise a special forces unit including staff officers and air transport resources.

The EU force will include soldiers from Germany, France, Belgium, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and Greece. A total of 1 500 soldiers will take part. The mission will take place under a mandate from the UN Security Council and will be for a limited period of time in conjunction with the Congolese elections, which are scheduled to be held on 30 June 2006.

Under a UN mandate in the summer of 2003, a special forces unit from Sweden took part in the EU's Operation Artemis in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During 2003

and 2004, an airfield unit from Sweden took part in the UN MONUC mission in the town of Kindu. Sweden is currently supporting the EU Police Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a communications expert from the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.

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PRESS RELEASE

2006-04-03

Ministry of Defence

Swedish listings in EU Force Catalogue

Swedish military units are listed in three force catalogues: the UN, the EU and the Partnership for Peace catalogues. The aim is that once in place in a crisis area, the units are to be able to fulfil all the Petersberg Tasks: humanitarian, peace-keeping and peace-enforcement operations.

Sweden retains the absolute right for taking a decision in each individual case where consideration is given to participation by any of the units.

The first time Swedish military units were listed in the EU Force Catalogue was in 2000, and new decisions were taken in 2001 and 2003.

In order to increase the Union's capacity to carry out more demanding crisis management operations, the European Council adopted new goals in June 2004. The Government has now taken a decision to list Swedish military units in the EU Force Catalogue under Headline Goal 2010 and the Requirements Catalogue 05, which were adopted by the Council in November 2005.

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PRESS RELEASE

2006-03-30

Ministry of Defence

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Swedish support to African Union mission in Darfur

The Government today instructed the Swedish Rescue Services Agency to strengthen its health and medical care efforts in Darfur, Sudan. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency's task is part of EU support measures to the African Union (AU) and, through such means as training and advisory services, will enhance the AU's capacity to provide medical care for its staff.

"By strengthening the African Union's capacity, Sweden will provide additional support to efforts to create peace in Darfur," says Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Carin Jämtin.

"The Swedish Rescue Services Agency has valuable knowledge about the medical care situation in Darfur which will now be of benefit to the African Union," says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

Under the UN mandate, the African Union has been monitoring the ceasefire between the Sudanese government and rebel groups in Darfur since May 2004. Through EU support measures, Sweden currently provides staff officers, military observers, police and funding to the AU.

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Key word: 61286 Sustainable development EU Defence, emergency management and safety Foreign policy and international cooperation Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2006-03-24

Ministry of Defence

Smaller defence administration - more operational activities

On Wednesday the 22nd of March the Government submitted to the Riksdag the Communication 2005/06:131 "Appropriate governance and administration

of the Swedish defence".

The aim of the Communication is to inform the Riksdag of the Government's intentions regarding further changes to the governance and administration of the Swedish defence.

"As the transformation from defence against invasion to operational defence progresses, the defence administration must also be reduced. So far, the functions for support and administration have been relatively unaffected, while at the same time the operational organisation has been significantly reduced. Therefore there must be a redistribution of resources - from support and administration to operational activities. To put it simply, more bang for the buck," says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

"I have respect for those who work in the Swedish Armed Forces, the Defence Materiel Administration, the Swedish National Defence College, the National Service Administration and the Defence Research Agency and I understand that they may be worried that their jobs will be affected. It is, however, a necessary change that is being made. It means that a decision taken by the Riksdag is being implemented. The agencies will now be assigned the task of examining how the changes are to be carried out and what consequences this entails. The Government will present effective measures in connection with the Budget Bill," Ms Björklund concludes.

Main points of the Communication

The central command of the Swedish Armed Forces is to be cut back by some SEK 250m. The aim is for the reduction to be fully implemented by 2008.

Research activities are to be reduced by some SEK 500m from 2008. A special advisory body is to be attached to the Swedish Armed Forces with a view to improving their ability to steer research.

A review is to be conducted of the structure and organisation of the combined intelligence activities and security services and of the prospects of developing the aim and direction, governance and financing of the intelligence and security services, in terms of both organisation and content. The aim of the review is to produce proposals for reducing costs within the intelligence and security services.

The administration of land, buildings and premises is to be rationalised and refined so as to promote more efficient joint processes and create conditions for savings of some SEK 100m with full effect from 2008.

A step-by-step procedure for recruitment is to be introduced within the framework of the present system of national total defence service. The procedure is to be designed so as to actively encourage more women to take an admission examination. As a first step, a selection is to be made from the male part of the age group. As a second step, those who are considered likely to meet the requirements for a long course of basic training are to be called for recruitment inspection, which may in turn consist of several steps. The introduction of a step-by-step procedure for recruitment and more rational methods will make it possible to transfer approximately SEK 100m in appropriations from the National Service Administration to the Swedish Armed Forces from 2008.

The future volumes for training senior officers should be set at a lower level than previously and costs to the Swedish Armed Forces should be reduced by some SEK 70m from 2008.

Changes are to be made in the equipment and technical supply process. There is to be further development of the defence equipment process so as to bring it into line with the operational defence and its needs. A change in the division of responsibilities between the state and industry is to be implemented. The tasks, roles and responsibility of the government agencies in the defence equipment process are to be clarified and integrated leadership is to apply for the defence equipment process. The Defence Materiel Administration's costs should fall by some SEK 900m. Some SEK 700m of these expenditure cuts should be implemented by 2008.

The Government intends to clarify the purposes of defence appropriations so as to make it easier for

the Riksdag to exercise its financial authority. In order to present a better overall picture of the expenditure area, the Government intends to provide the Riksdag with a consolidated presentation of the results of operations of expenditure area 6 Defence and contingency measures in connection with the security policy reviews. The Government considers that the model for commissioned services financed by charges should be retained, but measures are needed to further improve the way the model functions. The Council for Transparency of the Swedish Armed Forces, which has not filled the intended role as an instrument for transparency, citizen influence and democratic control, is to be abolished.

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Key word: 60994 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2006-03-24

Ministry of Defence

Government Bill on renovation and modification of artillery system

Today the Government submitted to the Riksdag Government Bill 2005/06:132, "Renovation and modification of the Haubits 77B artillery system".

To enable the Swedish Armed Forces to retain a future artillery capability that has good potential for both national and international use, the Government proposes that the Haubits (Howitzer) 77B artillery system should undergo renovation and modification. The Government's proposal starts out from the recognition that the present artillery system has shortcomings in several respects, including protection of personnel. According to estimates, delivery of the artillery system will begin in 2009 and will allow an initial capability to be available in 2011.

The Riksdag has prescribed an operational organisation with two artillery battalions. The Swedish Armed Forces have made the assessment that this corresponds to 24 gun units. The cost estimates that the project is based on assume that Sweden will cooperate with a partner to share the costs with. If no partner joins in, the Government may reconsider implementation of the project.

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Key word: 60974 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2006-03-24

Ministry of Defence

Cooperation in crisis - for a more secure society

Today the Government submitted to the Riksdag a Bill (2005/06:133) entitled "Cooperation in crisis - for a more secure society".

"Improving Sweden's crisis management capability is a long process. We are learning all the time. Local and regional crisis management capability in Sweden is good, which was shown by the handling of the Gudrun storm. But it is possible to improve crisis management capability at all levels. All agencies must be prepared and able to manage a crisis occurring within their area of responsibility," says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

"It is particularly important to improve the ability of society to manage crises that simultaneously affect a number of different areas. One of the measures the Government is proposing is therefore to set up a crisis leadership agency," comments Leni Björklund.

"The creation of an agency to lead crisis management is an important step but is not a solution to all crisis management issues. Sweden's ability to handle crises depends on many steps in a process and on a holistic view, from preventive measures to the crisis management itself. All areas of society are affected, which is why everyone must contribute and work jointly so that together we can increase security in society."

"As citizens we have a duty to learn more. We must be better at providing and passing on information about how individuals can play a part in crisis management, both as victims of a crisis and as voluntary participants in the work of crisis management," says Leni Björklund.

The Government proposes that a crisis leadership agency be appointed for national cross-sectoral crises, i.e. which affect large areas of society simultaneously. Relevant parts of the Rescue Services Agency and the Swedish Emergency Management Agency will be merged.

After the Government decision the crisis leadership agency will be able to set priorities for and coordinate the work of other agencies. Other agencies will retain responsibility for their activities during crises.

The crisis leadership agency must have its own early warning system, a department that can provide situation reports and give warning of impending crises. Designated agencies and county administrative boards must increase their preparedness, and always have staff available. The Government Offices has its own early warning system - the preparedness and analysis department - which is to cooperate with the crisis leadership agency and support the Government.

The Government proposes that a requirement be introduced to the effect that important basic

functions in society must function even in a crisis. The regulations must focus more on the fact that services must function and less on how they are to function. The Government proposes special improvements in preparedness for the supply of drinking water and for information assurance.

The Government is to review how national resources that are important for crisis management can be better coordinated. This concerns national maritime resources, publicly financed helicopter resources, intelligence activities and resources for dealing with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances (CBRN). The new radio communication system Rakel used by the "Blue light agencies" is to be extended to more users, with more actors working for order, safety and health. More organisations apart from voluntary organisations must be given support as national crisis preparedness resources.

In order to improve the national knowledge base as regards preventing and managing crises a national programme for security research will be set up. The Government Offices will continue exercises in accordance with the new exercise pattern, with at least one major exercise per year. Courses on national security and the possibilities of individuals to act in crises are to be tested in upper secondary schools. A new law on municipal and county council crisis preparedness is proposed. It includes stipulations on municipal risk and vulnerability analyses and on training and exercise of employees and elected representatives. Municipalities and county councils must report to the national crisis leadership agency during and after a crisis.

"The main features of the Government Bill are in line with the proposals made by the cross-party parliamentary Defence Commission in January. It is a great asset that the Riksdag parties are by and large agreed on the path Sweden should take to strengthen our capabilities of cooperation in crises for a more secure society," concludes Leni Björklund.

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PRESS RELEASE

2005-12-20
Ministry of Defence

The Swedish Government gives the "go ahead" on the Neuron project

Today the Government has decided to go ahead with the UCAV project, commonly known as the Neuron. The decision firstly enables the Swedish Armed Forces to place an order with the Defence Materiel Administration concerning the development of a technology demonstrator for an UCAV.

Secondly it enables the Defence Materiel Administration to sign an agreement with France on the co-operation concerning the UCAV. The aim of the agreement and the co-operation as such is twofold - firstly to enhance and deepen the knowledge of UCAVs - especially its value for the development of both military and civilian aeronautical competencies - secondly to strengthen the Swedish ability for sustaining and developing the JAS 39 Gripen.

Today's decision does not imply any commitment what so ever regarding a continuation of the UCAV project, and in accordance with the overall aim, there are no plans for any serial production either. The Neuron is a distinct technology demonstrator and the project definition does not include any activities related to preparations for or production as such.

- Both the Swedish Parliament and the Swedish Defence Commission have for a long time declared that Sweden should pursue its international co-operation concerning development projects in the area of defence matériel. According to the Minister of Defence, Leni Björklund, the Government is now able to give the "go ahead" for the Swedish participation in the Neuron project. A project involving, apart from Sweden, five more countries.

According to Leni Björklund, today's decision is part of a long-term and responsible policy for defence - a policy that is made possible due to the co-operation with other political parties willing to compromise in order to create broad solutions.

- The decision enables Sweden to keep and develop the much needed aeronautical competencies crucial to the sustaining of the operational capabilities of the Swedish Air Force. The decision naturally have positive effects on the Swedish Space and Aeronautics Research and Industry. The Minister of Defence concludes that the Neuron project will benefit both civilian and military development projects.

The cost for the Swedish part of the Neuron project over a ten year period will be MEUR 75 or approximately MSEK 680. The Saab group will finance the major part of the project with MSEK 600 while the remaining MSEK 80 is financed by the Swedish Government. As a consequence the cost for the sustaining of the JAS 39 Gripen will be reduced with MSEK 30 per year.

The fact that the Saab group is financing a major part of the project renders approximately MSEK 600 within the budgetary framework for the JAS 39 Gripen available for the long-term development of the JAS 39 Gripen between 2005 - 2012. The details of which will be further developed by the Defence Materiel Administration and the Saab group during the first half of the year 2006.

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Key word: 55492 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2005-08-08

Ministry of Defence
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Sweden to contribute to EU mission in Aceh

The Government decided today to contribute support to the EU mission in Aceh Province in Indonesia. Sweden will be the only country providing logistical assistance to EU personnel in the area.

On 15 August, the Government of Indonesia and the leadership of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) are expected to sign a peace agreement in Helsinki. The peace treaty is a historic agreement and a solution to many years of conflict in Aceh Province. The Indonesian Government and GAM have asked the EU to monitor the agreement. The EU observer mission will be a civilian operation whose assignment will be to monitor implementation of the peace agreement.

The Government decided today to contribute logistical support to the EU mission and to allocate up to SEK 40 million for the purpose via Sida's budget. The operation will be carried out by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency, which will initially provide about eight staff members. Their task will include ensuring that the EU observers have access to office facilities, transport, telecommunications and IT. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency is prepared to travel to Aceh on Wednesday this week. The Swedish support will enable EU personnel to take up their positions swiftly so as to be able to monitor the agreement, which is to enter into force on 15 August.

"The peace agreement is a unique opportunity for lasting peace in Aceh Province and the EU observers will fulfil an important function in monitoring it," says Minister for International Development Cooperation Carin Jämtin.

"Earlier this summer the Government allocated SEK 150 million to reconstruction after the tsunami disaster in Indonesia. Sweden's contribution to the EU mission is an additional part of the long-term support for peace and development that we are giving to the region," Ms Jämtin continues.

"The Swedish Rescue Services Agency has a very good international reputation for its international disaster and aid operations and is in demand as a partner in cooperative activities. In response to the tsunami disaster, for example, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency is on the ground in Indonesia and Sri Lanka to support UN aid efforts," says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

"The Swedish Rescue Services Agency will now have the task of supporting EU efforts to monitor the peace agreement in Indonesia. The fact that this task has been assigned to the Swedish Rescue Services Agency is further evidence of Sweden's expertise in the field of logistics," adds Ms Björklund.

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Facts about the EU mission

- * On 17 July 2005 the Indonesian Government and the leadership of GAM agreed on a peace treaty.
- * After the tsunami disaster the political will existed for renewed dialogue between the parties.
- * The parties have turned to the EU to request it to monitor the treaty, and the EU has agreed to do so.
- * The EU plans to monitor implementation of the agreement for a period of six months.
- * The EU mission will be civilian and will consist of about 200 observers.

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Key word: 48090 Defence, emergency management and safety Foreign policy and international cooperation Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2005-05-23

Ministry of Defence

A milestone in the development of the Nordic Battle Group

Today the Swedish Minister of Defence, Leni Björklund, and her colleagues from Finland, Norway and Estonia signed an agreement concerning the multinational Nordic Battle Group within the EU. The agreement confirming the role of Sweden as Framework Nation for the Nordic Battle Group was formalised at a Minister of Defence meeting in Brussels.

The Minister of Defence, Leni Björklund, especially mentions the shared political ambition among the EU member states to contribute to peace and security. The kind of co-operation that the Nordic Battle Group is an example of enables smaller countries to contribute to and participate in more advanced crisis management.

The aim of the Battle Group concept is that of rapid response to conflicts in order to stabilise a situation. As a military force it has however obvious limitations when it comes to creating sustainable conditions for democracy, peace and prosperity in post-conflict situations. In order to prevent armed conflicts the importance of development aid cannot be underestimated.

The Nordic Battle Group is part of the EU Battle Group Concept focusing on Rapid Response that the EU is developing within the framework of Headline Goal 2010. Sweden will, within the role of Framework Nation, provide the major part of the 1500 personnel for the Nordic Battle Group. The Nordic Battle Group will be offered to the EU for a first stand-by period from 1 January to 30 June 2008.

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PRESS RELEASE

2005-03-10

Ministry of Defence

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency supports UN in Indonesia and Sri Lanka

Today the Government decided on continued support during 2005 to the UN relief operations in Indonesia and Sri Lanka connected to the Tsunami disaster in South-East Asia. The support will be provided by the Swedish Rescue Services Agency on the same conditions as hitherto.

The Tsunami disaster that occurred in South-East Asia on the 26 of December 2004 is one of the worst in our time. The overwhelming destruction caused by the Tsunami will continue to affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people for years to come. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency contributed with personnel and materiel to the initial relief operations co-ordinated by the UN and continues to provide logistic support to the UN in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. The need for sustained humanitarian aid to the affected areas has become apparent in talks between the UN and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

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PRESS RELEASE

2005-01-21

Ministry of Defence

The transport of defence materiel on the M/S Estonia

The official inquiry into the transportation of defence material on the M/S Estonia (Fö 2004:06) has presented its report to the government today.

The government gave a commission to the President of the Court of Appeal Mr. Johan Hirschfeldt by a decision on the 3rd of December 2004. The commission involved investigating whether the Swedish Armed Forces or the Defence Material Administration (FMV) had transported any defence materials onboard the M/S Estonia during the month of September 1994. If any information emerges that such transports have taken place, Mr. Hirschfeldt shall also give an account of whether these materials were of explosive character.

The Inquiry's answer to these questions is that the Armed Forces on the 14th and the 20th of September 1994 transported defence materials on the M/S Estonia. The transported defence materials were not of an explosive character. The Inquiry has not found any information that indicates that the Armed Forces has transported defence materials on the M/S Estonia on any other occasion during the month of September 1994. No information has emerged that indicates that the Defence Material Administration has transported defence materials on the M/S Estonia during the month of September 1994.

The Inquiry's findings are available in Swedish only (see link in the column to the right).

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PRESS RELEASE

2005-01-19
Ministry of Defence

Invitation to a pressbriefing

Johan Hirschfeldt, President of the Court of Appeal, will on Friday 21 of January present his report on whether or not the M/S Estonia was used to transport of military equipment during September 1994.

Welcome!

TIME AND PLACE

Place: Ministry of Defence, Jakobsgatan 9
Time: Friday 21 of January at 2 pm

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Key word: 37355 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2005-01-13

Ministry of Defence

A National Council for Co-ordination and Support for those affected by the natural disaster in South-East Asia

The Swedish Government has decided to establish a National Council with special responsibilities concerning the effects of the natural disaster in South-East Asia. The main task for the Council will be to co-ordinate the help and support from different government agencies available to those affected by the disaster in South-East Asia.

The Council will also facilitate the contacts between the affected and different authorities.

An additional task for the council will be to provide the affected with relevant information concerning different forms of assistance. A large number of NGOs and volunteers have made considerable contributions to the overall relief efforts. The Council will therefore consider various ways of integrating these initiatives with the more formal support activities.

More precisely the Council shall

- undertake an inventory of existing resources and identify the need for special efforts from the government or governmental agencies.
- further the co-ordination of agency efforts and report problems or shortcomings concerning the co-ordination to the government.
- further the co-ordination of public information on rules and regulations concerning social security, education, health care and welfare etc pertinent to the situation of the affected.
- establish a special function to facilitate the communication between the affected and the different authorities.
- propose legislative changes necessitated by unforeseen consequences of the disaster.

Kerstin Wigzell appointed chairman

The former director-general of The National Board of Health and Welfare, Kerstin Wigzell, has been appointed chairman of the council. The National Police Commissioner and the director-generals of the following agencies have been appointed as members:

The National Board of Psychological Defence, The Swedish Emergency Management Agency, The National Board of Health and Welfare, The Swedish Tax Agency, Legal, Financial and

Administrative Services Agency, The Insurance Office and The Swedish National Agency for Education. Representatives for municipalities and county councils will also be able to participate in the Council. A reference group will be formed consisting of professional expertise on the special needs of children and youths. The Council will further co-operate with government agencies, insurance companies, travel agencies, NGOs and representatives of all denominations in Sweden.

The council is expected to keep the Government informed on a continuous basis, presenting a first formal report no later than the 1st of July 2005. Starting from the beginning of next week the council will gradually organise its activities.

For information and contact with the chairman Kerstin Wigzell please contact Göran Lindmark, head of information, 070-584 96 80 or Kicki Asplund, deputy head of information, 070-399 23 38.

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Key word: 36829 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-12-17
Ministry of Defence

We can now begin work on future defence

Today the Riksdag has decided on the focus of defence policy for the coming years by approving the Government Bill Our future defence the direction of defence policy 2005 2007.

- I am pleased and relieved that the Riksdag was able today to take the decision on the future of our defence. It will now be possible to continue the important transition process from an invasion defence to an operational defence, an operational defence with a clear international profile, comments Minister for Defence, Leni Björklund.

- The defence that we are now building up is a high technology, mobile operational defence, able to respond to the current threat picture. This means that it can also be used in international crisis management and deployed wherever and whenever it is needed.

The point of departure for the defence reform is the positive security situation for Sweden. We do not, at present, see any potential military threat from other states, directed at Sweden. However, while potential military threats are declining, international terrorism and serious crime are on the

increase. The money now released from defence will make it possible to strengthen the police and legal system so as to intensify the fight against terrorism and other crime.

The Government has appointed an inquiry to clarify how the defence forces can help deal with terrorist threats and large-scale terrorism. This inquiry will present its proposals on 31 August 2005.

The new main task of the Swedish Armed Forces is to create the capacity to engage in armed conflicts. This must be achieved from two time perspectives: present needs and those of the next ten years. The dimensions of our current preparedness are primarily international operations and the need to secure our territorial integrity. In the long-term perspective, it will be important to maintain and develop basic defence skills so as to be able to protect this country, should the security situation deteriorate.

In the current security situation there is no need to train as many soldiers and this is why we are now reducing the number of training platforms. Downscaling of units, equipment and personnel is necessary to make modernisation and development possible. Around ten towns will therefore be affected by closures and moves. An estimated 3 000 officers and 2 500 civilian employees will be made redundant.

Readjustment work will be started for the regions concerned. This process will be undertaken at national, regional and local levels to increase the competitiveness of these towns and regions. The Government will take a particular responsibility for the towns in which the labour market is most dependent on the Armed Forces and where the task of adjustment will therefore be especially important.

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PRESS RELEASE

2004-11-22
Ministry of Defence

All set for Swedish led EU Battle Group

At the Council of Defence Ministers in Brussels today, Sweden and Finland declared the intention, together with Norway, to establish an EU Battle group. Sweden will assume responsibility as Framework Nation.

- The Nordic countries have a long-standing tradition of working together in crisis management operations, says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund. We are building on this established relationship, benefiting from existing consultation arrangements and our extensive military cooperation.

- In this context it is necessary to emphasize the importance of developing methods and procedures

that can bring civilian and military processes closer together at all levels. By doing so I believe that the European Union will ensure coherent and effectively coordinated crisis management operations. In this work we should also draw on the experiences of the UN in this field.

Ministers of Defence declared at the Military Capability Commitment Conference their intention to commit up to thirteen Battle groups encompassing both the period of initial operational capability, 2005-06, and full operational capability from 2007 and onwards.

A decision on Swedish contributions will be taken by the Parliament in its Defence Resolution in December this year. The intention is to offer the Swedish Framework Nation-led Battle Group for a stand-by period during the first six months of 2008.

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Key word: 34037 EU Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-11-16

Ministry of Defence
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Swedish Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire evacuated

The remaining staff at the Swedish Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire left the country on Monday evening because of the danger of new disturbances. They travelled out on the Swedish Hercules aircraft that was sent to help with the evacuation of Swedish and foreign citizens following a Government decision. The Swedes were flown to Accra in Ghana. The Swedish Embassy in Abidjan will be closed until further notice.

The more than fifteen Swedes still in Côte d'Ivoire have previously been offered the possibility of evacuation. Most of them have expressed a wish to leave the country later in the week.

The use of the Hercules aircraft is being financed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The aircraft, which comes from the F7 wing in Sätenäs, will make a number of flights in the region over the next few days and is expected to return to Sweden at the weekend. The aircraft is part of an operation being led by France.

In the past week some 6.000 foreign citizens have been evacuated as a result of the disturbances in the country and the sharp deterioration of the security situation. At the end of last week and during

the weekend around ten Swedish citizens were evacuated using aircraft made available by other EU countries.

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Key word: 33648 Foreign policy and international cooperation

PRESS RELEASE

2004-10-28

Ministry of Defence

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency will continue to support mine clearance program in Sudan

Today the Swedish government decided that the Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA) shall continue to support the UN-office, UNOPS, in Sudan. The support is within the area of mine clearance and shall continue until December 31, 2005.

UNOPS has requested continued SRSA support to the mine clearance program in Sudan. The Swedish governments first decision allowed the SRSA to support UNOPS until January 26, 2005. The Swedish support consists of one IMSMA-advisor (Information Management System for Mine Action).

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Key word: 32558 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-10-28

Ministry of Defence

Swedish soldiers to Bosnia/Herzegovina

Today the Swedish government decided to put an armed force at the disposal of the EU crisis management operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Swedish contribution will consist of at the most 80 persons, including staff officers.

On July 12th the EU decided to take over when NATO at the end of this year finishes its military operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The UN Security Council is expected to take a decision on the necessary mandates within the coming weeks with regard to international law. This mandate will be valid no longer than 24 months. The EU-force is expected to be in place at the end of November. Althea is expected to commence the operation in the beginning of December. This operation is the third military operation that the EU conducts. The first one was Concordia in Macedonia and the second Artemis in DR Congo.

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Key word: 32557 Defence, emergency management and safety EU Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-10-28

Ministry of Defence

Sweden will conduct joint submarine exercises with the

United States of America

The Swedish armed forces will conduct joint submarine exercises with the United States of America. A Gotland-class submarine with Swedish military personnel will conduct joint exercises with the US Navy for a year. The submarine will be stationed on American naval bases on both the west- and the eastcoast.

The purpose of the Swedish participation is to increase the capability to cooperate in international peace support operations with the armed forces of other countries. The cooperation will also have positive synergy effects for the development of submarines and sensors and the continuous cooperation within the field of materiel development. The exercises will commence during the first half of 2005.

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PRESS RELEASE

2004-09-10

Ministry of Defence
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

NATO Secretary-General to visit Stockholm

On Friday 10 September, NATO's new Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is scheduled to make his first visit to Stockholm. He is to meet Prime Minister Göran Persson, Minister for Foreign Affairs Laila Freivalds and Minister for Defence Leni Björklund.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer took up his post as NATO Secretary-General at the beginning of 2004. He is also responsible for cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and the Partnership for Peace (PfP).

The focus of his visit is the Partnership and its future as well as the development of peace-promoting operations to which Sweden contributes, in Afghanistan, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The follow-up of the NATO and EAPC summits in Istanbul in June will also be

discussed.

The Secretary-General will also meet members of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and deliver a speech at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, which will be open to the public.

- - -

The Partnership is a cooperative venture between NATO and non-NATO countries, aimed at promoting the pan-European security order. It also prepares and trains forces prior to peace-promoting operations. Sweden has cooperated with NATO in the PfP since 1994 and in the EAPC since 1997.

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Key word: 29455 Defence, emergency management and safety Foreign policy and international cooperation Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-06-23

Ministry of Defence
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Laila Freivalds and Leni Björklund to NATO summit

On 28-29 June, Minister for Foreign Affairs Laila Freivalds and Minister for Defence Leni Björklund will participate in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) summit in Istanbul. The meeting will take place in conjunction with the NATO summit.

Partnership for Peace (PfP) celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. The summit in Istanbul provides an opportunity to discuss the Partnership and its future.

"Cooperation within EAPC and PfP is an important part of the pan-European security order. It is particularly important for Sweden that we can continue to develop our partnership with NATO regarding our participation in NATO-led crisis management operations," says Minister for Foreign Affairs Laila Freivalds.

The security position in Afghanistan will also be discussed at the EAPC summit. Afghanistans President Karzai has been invited to participate in that part of the meeting.

PfP is a practically-oriented cooperation programme between NATO and non-NATO countries in Europe, Central Asia and Southern Caucasus. PfP has become particularly important as an instrument for the participating countries when coordinating, preparing and training their forces for peace-keeping operations. EAPC was set up in 1997 as the political framework for PfP cooperation and represents a forum for consultation on various issues between NATO and its partner countries. Today forty-six countries participate in EAPC/PfP cooperation. Sweden has cooperated with NATO within the framework of PfP since 1994.

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Key word: 26535 Foreign policy and international cooperation Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-06-01

Ministry of Defence
Swedish Defence Commission

Report from the Swedish Defence Commission "Defence for a new time"

In the report Defence for a new time (Ds 2004:30) presented to the Minister for Defence Leni Björklund today, the Defence Commission analyses important issues related to Swedish defence policy.

The decisions taken in recent years have radically changed the tasks assigned to the Swedish defence. The proposals presented by the Defence Commission in this report, would modify the direction of the already decided defence reform. The proposals concern a range of areas, including changes in operational capacity requirements, new principles for personnel supply and equipment acquisitions, command structures and administration. In the report the Defence Commission presents political ambitions and guidelines for the coming defence bill from the government, and the final decision by the Riksdag. The Defence Commission points out areas that should be

considered for increased as well as reduced ambitions.

* * *

International security policy developments confirm the Defence Commissions previous conclusions. Swedens security has been decisively strengthened by the increasing European integration, particularly the membership of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland in Nato and the EU. However, alongside this positive trend, serious, transnational threats to our security exist. The development of the European Security and Defence Policy changes the prerequisites of Swedens security and defence policy. A particularly significant factor is the deepened cooperation within the EU, manifested through the EU security strategy and the EU crisis management capability.

* * *

The Defence Commission considers that these developments entail changes in the requirements of operational capacity of the Swedish Armed Forces. For the foreseeable future, the serious threats that can be directed against our security, are common threats. Threats to the common security can therefore also entail threats to Sweden. The ambition to prevent crises and to contribute to crisis management by participating in peace-support operations, and the requirements to be able to manage developments and meet threats that may arise as a result of a crisis or conflict in the international environment, should therefore be seen as a whole.

* * *

The Defence Commission considers that it is of great importance that Sweden participates in the development of the EUs crisis management capability, including a rapid reaction capability. The rapid reaction capability should be developed in cooperation with other countries and must be combined with a continued capacity to contribute to sustained peace-support operations. The appropriation for peace-support operations should therefore increase as of 2005.

* * *

The resources of the Swedish Armed forces are relevant in a broad threat assessment. The role of the Swedish Armed Forces in protection against terrorism, is mainly to support other government authorities. However, the rules governing this support impose some restrictions, and continued investigation is therefore needed urgently. The ambition should be to present a position on these issues in 2005.

* * *

The capability to undertake operations, above all international operations, is the single factor that will have most influence on the activities of the Swedish Armed Forces. Use in highly violent situations, and a high level of readiness requires employed and active duty personnel in units with experience of joint exercises. Such units should to a considerably greater extent, be represented in the operational organisation.

* * *

The Defence Commission considers that the military personnel primarily should serve towards the training, exercise and operations of the operational organisation. The Armed Forces should not acquire permanent downscaling costs for officers over a certain age. Therefore the Armed Forces should test a system with fixed term contracts for military personnel, including officers.

Considerably fewer officers will be needed in the future staff organisation and, in line with this, training for higher officer posts should be reduced.

* * *

In the opinion of the Defence Commission, it is unreasonable to allow officers to choose whether to participate in one of their most important duties. Therefore an employment contract that includes compulsory service in international operations, should be a condition for promotion.

The principles for admission to basic training should be based on suitability for, a willingness towards and an interest in international service. This should be combined with fixed-term contracts for certain units. Alternative forms of recruitment should be promoted, which is particularly important to create better conditions for increasing the proportion of women in the Armed Forces.

* * *

Fewer units in the operational organisation will mean fewer establishments in the training and management organisation. The remaining training and management organisation locations, must be selected so as to allow sufficiently good conditions for exercise and training. An ability to act as units, at least at battalion level, and joint forces action and ability to command, must be priorities. Larger and joint forces units should have regular exercises, when contract personnel and fully trained personnel can be called in (new forms of refresher training).

At present, complete battalions are not trained anywhere in the army and joint forces exercises, such as those between air and army units, are uncommon or non-existent. According to the Defence Commission, this has to be seen as a systemic error.

* * *

Extensive rationalisations and savings should be made in the command and the defence administration. According to Armed Forces a thirty per cent reduction in personnel is necessary at the Armed Forces Central Command. In the view of the Defence Commission, the reduction could be even higher.

The main alternative that should be considered is that the entire territorial command organisation should be disbanded, and that remaining tasks should be transferred to other sectors of the Armed Forces.

In light of the fact that the future operational organisation to be exercised, trained and supplied with personnel and military equipment will be considerably smaller, an adjustment should be made in the resources for administration. Considerable savings and rationalisations must be possible.

* * *

The acquisition and, where applicable, development of defence equipment, must be directly traceable to the needs of the operational organisation. The main alternative should be unit-based procurement and distribution of defence equipment according to the priority of the operational unit. This will reinforce the present trend of procuring equipment in small numbers. These requirements, together with the need to reduce the costs of acquisitions, must lead to focused and prioritised development, more international cooperation and a greater element of direct procurement of new or used equipment.

Life-cycle responsibility for defence equipment should to a greater extent be taken over by the defence industry, rather than remaining with the Armed Forces.

* * *

Today's threats more frequently require immediately available resources for crisis management. It is therefore essential to take a decision already in 2004 to revise current financing principles, so as to create a strengthened peacetime capacity.

In today's security policy situation, there is no need for civilian service personnel in the civilian defence sector. According to the Defence Commission, admission of civilian service personnel into basic training will not be needed in the next few years.

It is essential not to limit the issue of voluntary participation in the event of severe emergencies to personnel from the voluntary defence organisations; the use of other organisations must also be considered. It is also important to create opportunities for individual voluntary participation by actively contributing to the development of skills and ability.

* * *

The Defence Commission considers the implementation of savings and rationalisation measures possible, realistic and responsible, that the ambition should be increased in proposed areas, and that a reduction of 3 billion SEK should be made in the budget. This reduction should be implemented gradually, but a net impact should already be evident in 2006. The new level of funding should be fully implemented by the end of 2007.

Demanded savings and reduced ambitions should encompass the following:

Restructuring and reductions within the total defence authorities

A reduction on the Armed Forces Central Command

A reduction on the regional territorial activities, defence planning and Home Guard training

The proposed savings amount to 2 billion SEK. An additional net saving on 1 billion SEK encompasses the Swedish Armed Forces. Increased ambitions and costs will be balanced by savings and reduced ambitions in other areas. This must allow an enhanced ability to participate in international operations, including demands for available and useable units, prioritised for rapid reaction capability. The capability for enduring peace-support operations must be maintained. The total budget frame for the Armed Forces must also include operative expenses for units in operations, and should, at the end of 2007, entail international operations within an annual budget of 2 billion SEK.

The Defence Commission considers subject, naturally, to international developments and political ambitions that further rationalisation and savings will be possible in the continued course of the adaptation of the Swedish Armed Forces.

* * *

The Defence Commission is a forum for consultation between Government and the political parties in Parliament. The role of the Defence Commission is to follow the security policy situation in the world and analyse threats and risks to our society as well as the development of the international security and defence policy cooperation.

The Swedish Defence Commission is composed of:

Member of Parliament Håkan Juholt (Social Democrats), Chairman

Member of Parliament Tone Tingsgård (Social Democrats)

Member of Parliament Gunnar Hökmark (Moderate Party)

Member of Parliament Else-Marie Lindgren (Christian Democrats)

Member of Parliament Berit Jóhannesson (Left Party)

Former Member of Parliament Anders Svärd (Centre Party)

Former Member of Parliament Lennart Rohdin (Liberal Party)

Former Member of Parliament Annika Nordgren Christensen (Green Party)

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PRESS RELEASE

2004-05-27

Ministry of Defence

Sweden to send more troops to Afghanistan

The Government decided today to make a new military contribution to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF). This came after yesterday's Riksdag decision granting the Government permission to send another such force. Everyone who supports this decision knows that the mission is full of risks. But the situation for the civilian population is so serious that the rest of the world must provide support by means of military troops in order to increase security.

It is important the international community helps to improve security and makes it easier for the Transitional Authority to reach the provinces in Afghanistan, says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund. Not least to ensure that the elections to be held in Afghanistan in September 2004 are as fair as possible, Ms Björklund continues.

Together with forces from countries including the United Kingdom, Finland and Norway, Sweden's troops are intended to expand the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to northern Afghanistan. Until now the ISAF force has only been operative in Kabul and Kunduz but will now extend its operations to other parts of the country.

Sweden has been participating with units in the international security force in Kabul since the beginning of 2002. After the deployment of the new force, which is planned to take place successively beginning in June, the Swedish presence will comprise some 110 people. The new Swedish force will begin its operations when ISAF has taken over leadership of the units to which we are contributing.

Sweden has been contributing to ISAF's work in Afghanistan since the operations began. It is natural to continue to contribute so that the measures that have already been undertaken can provide secure conditions as a basis for the reconstruction of the whole country. We have a responsibility to the Afghan people, but also to the Swedish soldiers who have performed important duties and done a good job in Afghanistan over the years, says Ms Björklund.

The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) was established under UN Security Council resolution 1386 (2001). In October 2003, its geographical mandate was extended outside of Kabul under resolution 1510 (2003).

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Key word: 24236 Defence, emergency management and safety Leni Björklund

PRESS RELEASE

2004-05-13

Ministry of Defence

Further contribution to KFOR

The Government decided today on the size of the Swedish contribution to the multinational peace force KFOR in Kosovo from the middle of June.

The decision means that Sweden will contribute around 330 persons as of mid-June. The contribution will consist of an armed force, including an infantry company, intelligence functions and staff officers. The decision means a cut in the previous force, which consisted of around 520 persons.

The tasks of this mission and its geographical area of responsibility will be adapted to the size of the Swedish force in order to achieve maximum efficiency for the Swedish contribution and, in particular, to meet the need for security of the Swedish unit.

In addition to the initiative in Kosovo, a peace-support mission (SFOR) is also underway in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the leadership of which will probably be transferred to the European Union during the year. At present Sweden is participating in SFOR and wishes to continue to help ensure security and stability in the Western Balkans by participating in KFOR and in the forthcoming EU-led mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Swedish contribution to KFOR is being given at the same time as Sweden has committed itself to supporting other important crisis-management missions, including one in Afghanistan, where the Government has presented a proposal to the Riksdag that Sweden should contribute approximately 100 more persons and in Liberia, to which Sweden recently sent a mechanised company of around 230 persons.

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Sweden has been contributing to the multinational KFOR force in Kosovo since 1999. In addition to the force of 520, 139 additional troops were sent to Kosovo in the middle of April after the disturbances in order to increase security for the Swedish force and to reduce the burden of work of its staff. Even after the cuts, the force will be Sweden's largest contribution to an international mission.

KFOR is led by NATO, under a mandate from the UN Security Council in Resolution 1244 (1999).

At present, 36 countries are participating with a total of around 19 000 persons in international efforts to bring security and stability to Kosovo.

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PRESS RELEASE

2004-04-01

Ministry of Defence

Sweden strengthens its contribution to KFOR forces in Kosovo

The Government today decided to give the Swedish Armed Forces the go-ahead to reinforce the Swedish battalion in Kosovo (KS09) with a maximum of 150 people until 20 June 2004.

On 26 March 2004 the Swedish Armed Forces requested a temporary reinforcement of the Swedish battalion in Kosovo. This measure will ensure that the Swedish battalion has adequate protection and sufficient endurance capacity until the regular rotation in June 2004. Due to the developments in Kosovo since 17 March 2004, including demonstrations and subsequent riots, the Swedish Armed Forces have identified the need for a temporary reinforcement of the Swedish battalion. Reinforcements include personnel, vehicles and equipment and will be on site in Kosovo by mid-April at the latest. The cost of the temporary reinforcement must not exceed SEK 52 million. On 29 March 2004 the Swedish Armed Forces were assigned by the Government Offices to make plans and preparations for the temporary reinforcement.

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Key word: 16824

PRESS RELEASE

2004-03-18

Ministry of Defence

Swedish firefighters to Kabul international airport, Afghanistan

The Swedish government has decided that the Swedish armed forces shall contribute to the Kabul international airport with up to 10 firefighters for up to 12 months.

Iceland has asked Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland to contribute with in total 34 firefighters to Kabul international airport. During spring 2004 Iceland will assume responsibility for the airport. The Kabul international airport is subordinated the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and NATO will provide all equipment except personal protective gear.

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PRESS RELEASE

2004-03-04

Ministry of Defence

Swedish Rescue Services Agency to conduct training and bridge-building project in Afghanistan

Following a decision by the Government today, the Swedish Rescue Services Agency is to conduct a training and bridge-building project in Afghanistan.

#Reconstruction of the road network in Afghanistan is a necessary step for creating development and peace in the country. It is important to facilitate relief operations and the return of refugees and will play a crucial role for trade and economic growth,# says Minister for Defence Leni Björklund, commenting on the decision.

#It is extremely important that the international community maintains a substantial presence in Afghanistan. The work of the Swedish Rescue Services Agency is part of our continued commitment to the country,# says Minister for International Development Cooperation Carin Jämtin.

The purpose of the project is to build eight temporary bridges in Afghanistan. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency plans to direct the construction of the first four bridges and in the process train UNOPS and Afghan personnel so that they will be able to erect the remaining bridges themselves. The project has a budget of SEK 12.5 million and is financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Sweden provides extensive humanitarian and development-oriented assistance to Afghanistan. For the three-year period 2002#2004, Sweden has pledged SEK 1 billion in support to Afghanistan to contribute in different ways to the reconstruction of the country.

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Key word: 16540

PRESS RELEASE

2004-02-19
Ministry of Defence

Final decision on Liberia force

The Government decided today that Sweden would contribute an armed force in Liberia over a twelve-month period as part of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission (UNMIL). On Wednesday the Riksdag decided to consent to the Government bill requesting dispatch of a mechanised infantry company of a maximum of 240 troops who will work together with the Irish battalion that is already in place in Liberia.

The Swedish force will therefore be part of UNMIL#s reserve force, which means the Swedish contingent will participate in paving the way for the more stationary troops to be established around the country. The force will also be assigned the task of guarding and protecting UN and humanitarian organisations# activities and protecting civilians.

Operations will not begin until the United Nations are able to guarantee that there is access to medical services of a sufficiently high-standard. The Swedish Armed Forces will issue regular reports to the Government on the development of operations and undertake evaluations of whether changes are necessary in the unit#s structure.

Total costs of the UNMIL operations may not exceed SEK 285 million for budget year 2004.

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PRESS RELEASE

2004-01-23

Ministry of Defence

Swedish troops to UN mission in Liberia

Unofficial translation

The Government has decided to propose to the Swedish Riksdag the dispatch of an armed unit to the UN mission in Liberia, UNMIL.

#The peace agreement reached during the autumn is an unique opportunity for bringing an end to the prolonged conflict in Liberia that has caused an enormous amount of suffering for the civilian population and has been an obstacle towards peaceful developments in the entire West African region. The UN mission has been given a clear and extensive mandate to support the peace process in the country. But in order for the UN to succeed in this, Member States must be prepared to offer dynamic assistance,# Laila Freivalds, Minister for Foreign Affairs, states.

The Government#s intention is to contribute a mechanised rifle company of no more than 240 persons, which is to be incorporated in the Irish battalion already in place in Liberia. The Swedish force will therefore be part of UNMIL#s reserve force, which means the Swedish contingent will participate in paving the way for the more stationary troops to be established around the country. The force will also be assigned the task of guarding and protecting UN and humanitarian organisations# activities and protecting civilians.

#Sweden can play an important role in contributing to the UN#s efforts to promote peaceful developments in the country. It also sends a clear signal regarding Sweden#s continued strong commitment for the prevention and management of conflicts in Africa,# Leni Björklund, Minister for Defence, states.

According to the UN's wishes, the Swedish unit should be in place before the end of February. When all 15 000 persons in the UN force are assembled during the spring, UNMIL will be the UN's largest current peacekeeping operation.

Since the autumn, Sweden has had four staff officers and six civilian police officers participating in UNMIL. In addition, Sweden is one of the largest individual humanitarian donors to Liberia, contributing SEK 26 million in 2003. Sweden is also helping with the efforts to mobilise resources for Liberia#s reconstruction by actively participating in the preparations for the donor conference regarding Liberia to be held on 5-6 February 2004.

Hans Dahlgren, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, is the EU Presidency's Special Representative for the Mano River region, and in this capacity has played an active role in the efforts for peace in Liberia.

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PRESS RELEASE

2003-11-24

Ministry of Defence

Nordic defence ministers plan joint contribution to Kosovo

At the meeting of Nordic defence ministers in Stockholm on 24 November 2003, it was decided that the Nordic countries belonging to the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS) should undertake the planning and assembly of a Nordic contribution to the task force that may supercede the present Multinational Brigade Centre (MNBC). Finland offered to take responsibility for leading this task force. Denmark is positive towards cooperation between the Nordic countries, but plans to continue its cooperation with French forces in the area around Mitrovica.

This decision is conditional on NATO's deciding to reorganise the structure of the forces and shift to more mobile task forces within the Kosovo forces (KFOR).

Underlying today's decision is, inter alia, the joint visit made by the Nordic ministers to Kosovo in early November in order, on the ground, to jointly assess the situation and future developments in the country. The Nordic defence ministers welcome the reorganisation of KFOR, which is moving towards a more flexible force for the whole of Kosovo.

In connection with the Nordic meeting, a meeting with Baltic defence ministers was also held to go through joint issues and discuss future cooperation. At this meeting, it was decided to hold annual Nordic-Baltic defence minister meetings in the future.

Participating in today's meeting were Sweden's Minister for Defence, Leni Björklund, Denmark's Minister for Defence, Svend Aage Jensby, Finland's Minister for Defence, Seppo Kääriäinen, Norway's State Secretary, Gunnar Heløe, and Iceland's Director of the Defence Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Kristinn Arnason. Participating from the Baltic countries were Estonia's Minister for Defence, Margus Hanson, Latvia's Deputy State Secretary for Defence Planning, Janis Karlsbergs, and Lithuania's Minister for Defence, Linas Linkevičius.

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PRESS RELEASE

2003-11-04
Ministry of Defence

Nordic countries continue to take responsibility in Kosovo

On a joint visit to Kosovo on 3-4 November, all the representatives of the Nordic countries supported a continued commitment in the region.

"It has been very rewarding to have this opportunity to be on the spot together to obtain a clear, shared picture of the situation and to discuss how we can contribute to a strong international presence in Kosovo even in the future. At the same time, we will see, in connection with the forthcoming reorganisation of KFOR, how we can use the Nordic contribution more flexibly and make use of the advantages of coordination," say the ministers in a joint statement.

For two days, delegations from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland have been obtaining an overview of the situation on the spot. At the next Nordic meeting of defence ministers in Stockholm on 24 November, discussions will continue on how future Nordic cooperation in Kosovo should be organised, in the forthcoming restructuring of KFOR.

During the visit, the delegation met, inter alia, the head of KFOR, General Kammerhoff, the UN Special Representative Harri Holkeri and Minna Järvenpää, UNMIK. Taking part in the visit were the defence ministers of Sweden, Finland and Denmark, Norway's State Secretary and Iceland's Ambassador.

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PRESS RELEASE

2003-09-09
Ministry of Defence

Sweden plans to reduce its Kosovo force

Sweden is planning an adjustment of its contribution to the peace-keeping force, KFOR, in Kosovo. The reduction in the number of troops, which will take place in parallel with similar reductions by other troop contributors, means that after the end of the year Sweden will contribute about 500 troops instead of the current 750.

#The fact that there is now considered to be less need for a military presence in Kosovo is a positive sign indicating that the peace-keeping operations have been successful,# says the Minister for Defence, Leni Björklund.

#However, there is still much to be done before Kosovo has build up a society that ensures its population a safe existence and Sweden will maintain a well-dimensioned force there,# the Minister says.

The background to the reduction of the force is that NATO, which is leading KFOR, now considers that the security situation in the area is much improved and that the peace process is moving in the right direction. The UN police forces and the local police, KPS, will now be of increasing importance in the work to build up civil structures in the area. NATO has therefore announced a general reduction of forces at the end of the year from 22 000 to 17 500.

Sweden has contributed a peace-keeping force since October 1999. The size of the force has varied

but on average has been about 800 personnel. As from November 2003 to May 2004 Sweden will lead the brigade in which the Swedish forces serve together with Finland, Norway, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ireland and Latvia.

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PRESS RELEASE

2002-01-18
Ministry of Defence

Swedish peace force to Afghanistan

On Friday the 18th of January the Swedish parliament decided to send a Swedish platoon to Afghanistan. The unit will participate in the multinational security force (International Security Assistance Force, ISAF) with mandate from the United Nations. The United Kingdom will have the overall command, the force consists of 5000 troops. The Force will assist the Afghan administration in upholding order and security.

The Swedish unit is an intelligence platoon consisting of two to three patrols with command, control and logistic mechanisms which through surveillance, patrol and reconnaissance will contribute to heightened security in the Kabul area. The platoon consists of 45 men, and is subordinated the English force. The Brits will decide when the Swedish unit will arrive in Kabul. The mandate for the Swedish platoon is six months, but they will primarily be in Afghanistan until the 30th of April.

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