

Transformation. Just Another Buzzword Or Real Step Into The Future Of The German Army

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Transformation. Just another buzzword or real step into the
future of the German Army.

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To

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Ethnic and other new ideological aspects have complemented or even replaced the traditional sources of conflicts. Especially the terrorist attacks in September 2001 confronted the world with the new reality of fundamentalism, fanaticism and the globalization of terror. Most western armies realized that a change of their traditional structure was now necessary to be able to face the new challenges. Serving as an indicator the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq brutally faced military leaders with their structural shortfalls and made radical change more necessary than ever. The transformation of the German Army into its structure "Neues Heer", however, lacks some key capabilities and does not meet the necessities of the current battlefields.

The Mountain Brigade could provide capabilities to the Intervention Forces Division that are needed for the most likely high-intensity conflict the German Army is facing these days. Consequently this brigade should be transferred to the Intervention Forces Division to make these capabilities available if needed. By integrating it into Intervention Forces, the well trained personnel and special equipment of this brigade would not be wasted.

A new magic word: Transformation!

Like most military formations, the German Army moved through different structures in irregular intervals in the past decades. But unlike the new transformation all of these structures pointed out an endstate which had to be reached at a certain time. Most of these structural changes were based on currently existing structures and they rather aimed to improve these structures than to create new ones.¹ The term of "Transformation" describes a much more complex process of changes than it is described in the traditional context of

¹ http://www.geopowers.com/Machte/Deutschland/doc_ger/KdB.pdf

structural changes. It does not only mean changes in structure and equipment, but tries to prepare the armed forces for upcoming challenges by also effecting the doctrinal as well as the organizational and systematical aspects. It is simply the best attempt to face the new threats by influencing all aspects of the armed forces.² The ongoing globalization and exponential growing technological advance transformation can not be a static process with a fixed starting point and a defined finish-line. It much more describes the permanent process to find solutions to new problems and challenges. To be successful, transformation has to consider different dimensions:

- Transformation analyzes the current security environment and has to counter identified threats (security dimension)
- Transformation takes the dynamic changes in society and economy into consideration and has to take advantage of that for the armed forces (social dimension)
- Transformation supports the integration of technical development (technological dimension)
- Transformation creates the adjustment process by using new methods and developing new concepts (innovational dimension)
- Transformation, caused by its nature as a ongoing process, needs the readiness and will to transform (mental dimension)³

Being a continuing process and having no real finish-line however does not mean that transformation is not a directed action. But what defines the transformation guidelines for the German Army? These were given in the task for the German Armed

² Tobergte, C.: Die Transformationsdebatte im Kontext vergangener Kampfeinsätze. In: Forum Strategie & Sicherheit Nr. 6, Berlin 2005.

Forces which are based on the Defense Policy Guidelines published by the German Minister of Defense in 2003. Caused by the shortfalls in the German defense budget it became clear, that everything that does not support these guidelines has low priority.⁴

Defense Policy Guidelines

The major point mentioned in the Defense Policy Guidelines of the Minister of Defense in 2003 is, that Germany is not facing a foreseeable threat by conventional forces anymore. This new situation occurred after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact as well as the expansion of the European Union to the east. Consequently the long used task of the armed forces of national defense could be replaced by the term of defending Germany and its citizens, which represents much more the current environment of growing globalization in every aspect of life including the threats armed forces have to react to. The Defense Policy Guidelines, on the other hand, consider the rapidly changing situations and problems the German Armed Forces are facing today. Despite the lack of a conventional threat, one could easily occur in the future. As a result, the German Armed Forces must still be able face a conventional forces if necessary. Currently, defending Germany and its citizens focuses more on terrorism and asymmetrical threats. Germany's armed forces must also include capabilities to conduct Rescue and Evacuation Operations as well as operations in support of Germany's allies and supplementary assistance. It is these tasks, based on the Defense Policy Guidelines, which set the frame for the transformation of the German Armed Forces. Being the basic reference, structural and doctrinal changes of the German Armed Forces in present and

⁴ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung: Grundzüge der Konzeption der Bundeswehr. Berlin 2004. P. 13.

future have to and will be critical analyzed in front of this background.⁵

New capabilities

The overall keystone around which the changes inside the German Armed Forces are constructed is "jointness". All new structures, equipment, and doctrines have to meet this standard.⁶ Jointness, however, being not unknown in military communities around the world, not only finds its way into doctrines, but is also reflected in the structure "Neues Heer". The first steps towards this joint character were already started with the last structural changes into "Heer der Zukunft". It created two new branches: The Joint Medical and Joint Support Service.

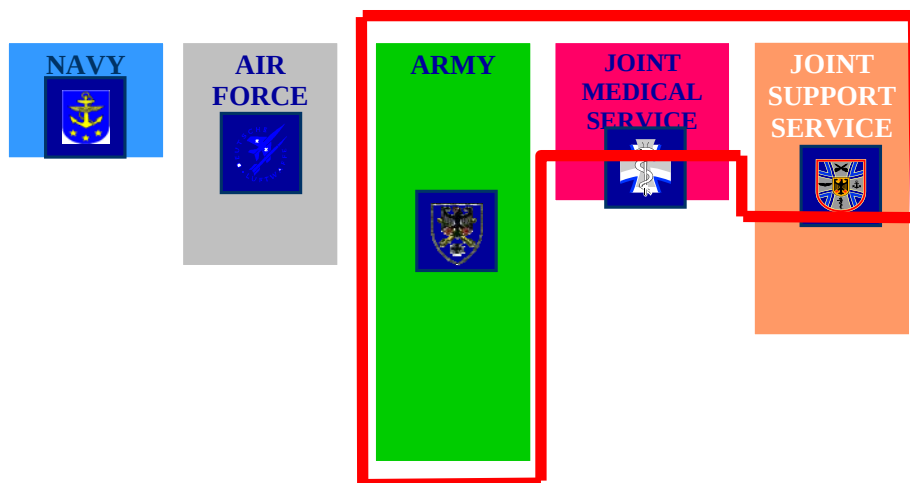


Figure 1: Services of the German Armed Forces. The red frame displays the amount of army soldiers inside the joint services.

The task of these new services is to provide joint support for the traditional ones. They consist of members of the army,

⁵ Bundesministerium der Verteidigung: Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien für den Geschäftsbereich des Bundesministers der Verteidigung. Berlin 2003. P. 27-30.

⁶ Budde, H.-O., German Army Chief of Staff: Die Weiterentwicklung des Heeres. In: Soldat und Technik 6/2004.

navy, and the air force, and combine all functional areas formally provided by each service on its own. This not only flattens the structure, but also increases the interoperability inside the armed forces.

Beside this the new transformation targets the traditional services as well, and subdivides them into three joint-force categories. These categories will dictate the structure and the level of responsiveness of the units assigned to them.⁷

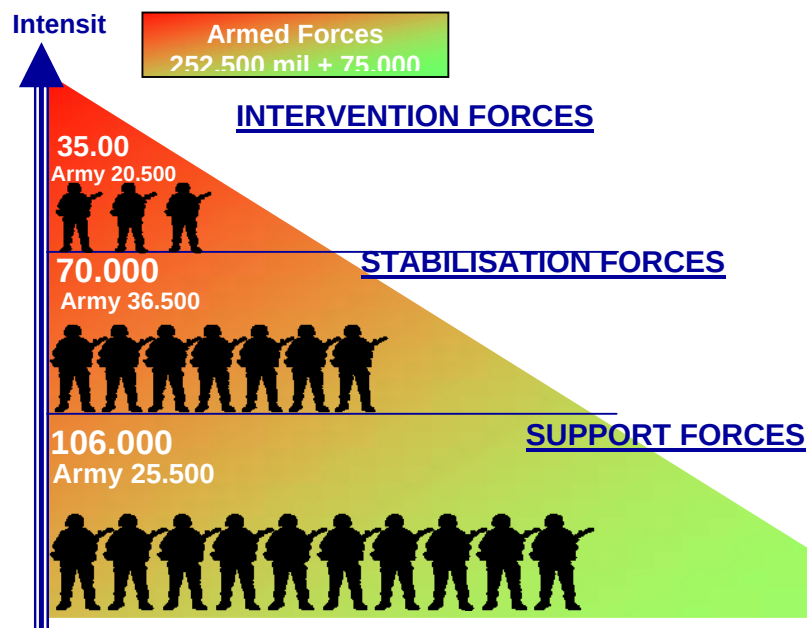


Figure 2: Strength of the Force Categories and their relation to the intensity of conflict.

Each category will be tasked differently. The Intervention Forces are tasked to conduct multinational, joint, networked operations of high intensity and short duration in all dimensions. Stabilization Forces focus on a lower intensity environment. They will conduct joint, military operations of medium and low intensity and longer duration within the spectrum of peace stabilization measures. The Support Forces

⁷ Budde, H.-O., German Army Chief of Staff: Die Weiterentwicklung des Heeres. In: Soldat und Technik 6/2004.

will provide comprehensive joint, and withstandable support for deployments as well as for the basic operations of the armed forces.⁸ Differing within their tasks, the training for combat remains the common basis for all army units.⁹

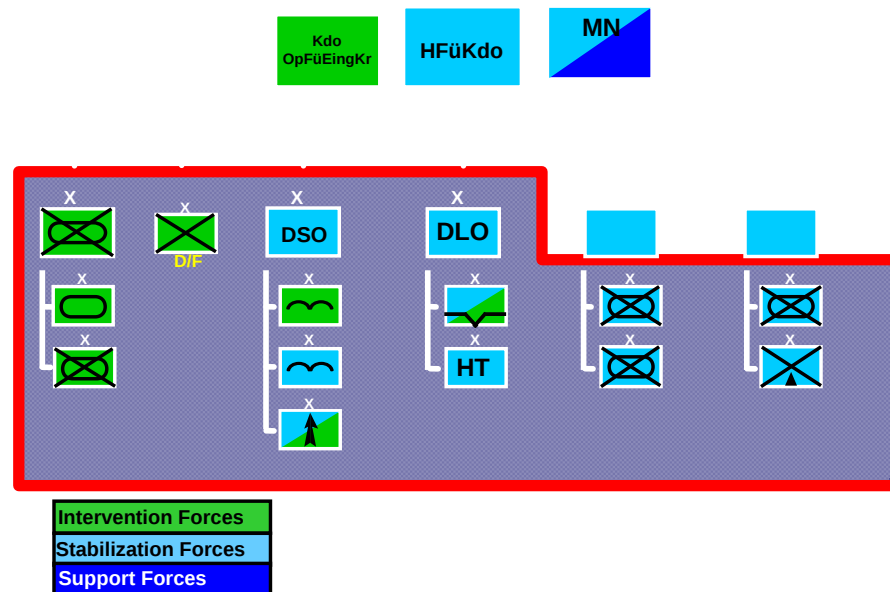


Figure 3: New structure of the German Army.

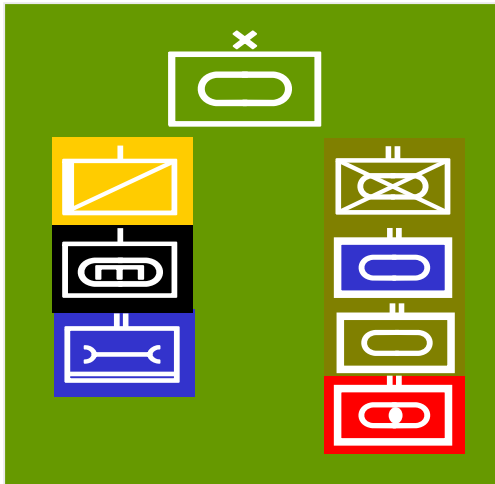
The German Army of the future will consist of a mix of Intervention and Stabilization Forces as well as a few Support Forces (the bulk of those units will be provided by the Joint Support Service). The Intervention Forces, to be able to conduct high intensity warfare, consist of traditional Armored Division with a backbone of Armor and Mechanized Infantry units. They also include one Airborne Brigade, the KSK (commandos), and parts of the Air Mechanized Brigade. The Stabilization Forces consists mainly of two division equivalents (including the Mountain Brigade), supported by one Airborne Brigade and parts of the Air Mechanized Brigade. Support for these forces is provided by the "Heerestruppenkommando". It consists of all assets that are

⁸ Voll, H. J.: Das Neue Heer Chancen und Zukunftsfähigkeit im Rahmen des Transformationsprozesses. In: Soldat und Technik 3/2005.

⁹ Budde, H.-O., German Army Chief of Staff: Die Weiterentwicklung des Heeres. In: Soldat und Technik 6/2004.

not organic to each Stabilization Brigade, like artillery, air defense, or NBC-troops.

Intervention Bde



Stabilization Bde

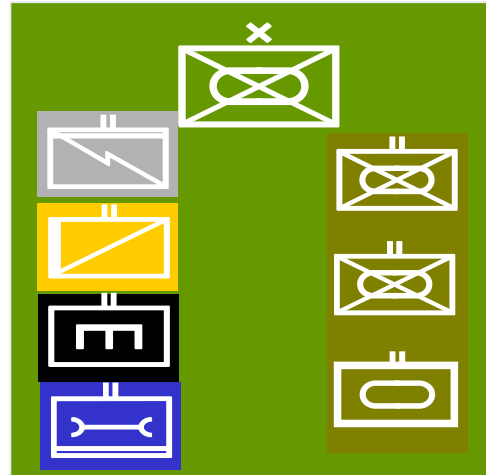


Figure 4: Structure of an intervention type Bde vs. a stabilization type Bde

The main difference between stabilization and intervention Brigades is their task organization. The intervention Bde has more combat power but less supporting capabilities, because in a high intensity conflict the Intervention Forces Division will bring its divisional assets to the fight. The stabilization Bde will stand alone and deal with stabilization operations in one theater (for example the Balkans). To be able to accomplish this mission it has increased intelligence, communications and engineer capabilities, which provide additional capabilities particularly required in stabilization operations like construction machinery components. Additionally it is being based on infantry-type units.¹⁰ This mix and additional assets from the "Herrestruppenkommando" will allow them to conduct not only stabilizing missions, but also limited medium intensity combat operations.

¹⁰ Budde, H.-O., German Army Chief of Staff: Getting the Grip on the Future - The Army in the Process of Transformation. Berlin 2005.

New challenges

The current as well as the future operating environment is radically changing. Urban areas, with its media and industry facilities, complex infrastructure, and its cultural and governmental installations, will grow. While the portion of world population living in cities was at approximately 22 percent in 1950, it has grown to more than 50 percent and is estimated to reach 85 percent by 2020. The engagements of the US Armed Forces during the last twenty years seem to prove this development. In over 80 percent of these engagements, the forces were faced with urban combat and almost 30 percent consisted simply of fighting in urban terrain.

This development could not surprise. Most of the present opponents of modern, western armies cannot win a conventional engagement in the field. So they use the complex infrastructure of cities to cover and conceal their actions against reconnaissance and fires. These effects are increased by the presence of civilian populations, which especially affects the use of modern distance-weaponry. Cities also often host political and industrial facilities as well as airports and seaports, which make them desirable areas to control. The last, most popular example of such a struggle was "Operation Phantom Fury", the battle of Falludjah in November 2004.¹¹ The concentration of the current combat actions in Iraq on urban terrain cannot astonish. The rest of the country does not provide any advantages for the Iraqi fighters.

The terrain in Afghanistan, on the other hand, is characterized by rough mountains with altitudes up to 7.000 m and deep valleys. Here the terrain is the best ally of Taliban

¹¹ Lange, S.: Falludscha und die Transformation der Streitkräfte. Häuserkampf in Städten als dominante Kernfähigkeit der zukunft? In: Diskussionspapier. Forschungsgruppe Sicherheitspolitik, Berlin 2005. P. 3-4.

and al-Quaida fighters, because it roils modern technology.¹² The countryside allows fighters to conceal their position in defiles, narrow valleys, and on the reverse slopes of hills. That makes it ground fires like artillery much more difficult to be successful. It also has limiting effect on tactical air support with fixed wing aircraft. The terrain canalizes possible avenues of approach, and handicaps positive target identification.¹³

Conclusion

If compared with the operations going on at the moment or in the last few years and the capabilities necessary for this kind of operations one thing becomes obvious. The structure of the German Intervention Forces Division does not meet all these necessities.

With its armored backbone, this division is still designed to face a conventional army in open terrain. Even if tanks play a significant role in modern urban combat, they cannot compare to the lack of Mechanized Infantry in the Intervention Brigades.¹⁴ Their numbers are too low to gain total control over significant urban environments. It could be argued that this shortfall will be compromised by the Airborne Brigade and the Infantry Regiment in the Air Mechanized Brigade assigned to the Intervention Forces. But this option just fits one of the characters of current operations: urban combat. Fighting in rough, mountainous terrain can hardly be managed by these troops. To be able to fight successfully in this environment troops need more than just light infantry training.¹⁵ It

¹² Vest, J.: Mountain Warfare is not the only thing slowing down the U.S. Army. 2002.

¹³ Sray, J. E.: Mountain Warfare: The Russian Perspective. Washington, DC 1994. P. 5-7.

¹⁴ There is actually just one Mechanized Infantry Battalion planed in each brigade.

¹⁵ Vest, J.: Mountain Warfare is not the only thing slowing down the U.S. Army. 2002.

dedicates special skills and training from each soldier and the ability to operate under the challenging conditions of high altitude-warfare.¹⁶ These capabilities are in fact currently available in the German Army. They are provided by the Mountain Brigade. Unfortunately this brigade is assigned to the Stabilization Forces. With its three Mountain Infantry Battalions it is not only able to conduct operations in urban terrain, but also capable to operate in a mountainous environment. Not only are all units within the brigade trained in mountain warfare, the Mountain Brigade is the only brigade of the German Army that has an organic pack animal company. This would enable the brigade to operate under weather conditions that do not allow high technology employment like helicopter-borne insertions or supply by helicopters.

¹⁶ Sray, J. E.: Mountain Warfare: The Russian Perspective. Washington, DC 1994. P. 20.

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