Emerging German National Command and Operational Control Structures

Thomas-Durell Young
The Strategic Studies Institute published a Special Report in March entitled Bundeswehr Plans for a National Command and Control Structure. Subsequent to the publication of this report, Federal Defense Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg resigned and the new Federal Minister of Defense, Volker Ruehe, has rejected plans for the creation of an Armed Forces Command Headquarters. Rather, what is now being considered is to strengthen the three individual service headquarters, and should national military operations take place, task force structures are to be organized. The reason for this turn in events is apparently due to financial, personnel, and political limitations. The author presents background on the rationale for a national command and operational control structure which ameliorates the responsibilities of the Chief of Staff of the Federal Armed Forces, and then considers the implications of its rejection by Federal Minister Ruehe.

The report highlights the importance of national command and operational control structures in ensuring effective and efficient military operations. It is a comprehensive analysis that provides insights into the strategic planning and decision-making processes within the Federal Armed Forces. The rejection of the Armed Forces Command Headquarters is a significant development that has implications for the future structure and coordination of the German military forces.
EMERGING GERMAN NATIONAL COMMAND AND OPERATIONAL CONTROL STRUCTURES

Thomas-Durell Young

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NOTICES

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DISCLAIMER

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COMMENTS

Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA 17013-5050. Comments also may be conveyed directly to the author by calling commercial (717) 245-3911 or DSN 242-3911.
FOREWORD

In spring of this year, the Strategic Studies Institute published a Special Report entitled, Bundeswehr Plans for a National Command and Control Structure. The perishability of the information and the fast pace of events in the Federal Republic of Germany resulted in the publication of that brief report so that the defense and analytical community could be aware of these potentially important plans for the Bundeswehr. Subsequent to the publication of the report, the new Federal Defense Minister, Volker Ruehe, rejected the plans for the creation of a national command and operational control structure for the Bundeswehr, as outlined in that special report. Feeling a sense of responsibility to ensure that its readership stays aware of current developments, the Strategic Studies Institute continued to monitor this situation with the objective of printing a follow-on report describing German planning objectives.

It is now possible to describe current plans for a German national command and operational control structure. The author of this report, Dr. Thomas-Durell Young, presents background on the rationale for a national command and operational control structure which ameliorates the responsibilities of the Chief of Staff of the Federal Armed Forces, and then considers the implications of its rejection by Federal Minister Ruehe. While information is still scant, he describes and analyzes the emerging command and operational control organization of the Bundeswehr. This structure is to rely on existing headquarters, augmented by task force cadres, which will be activated as required.

This report constitutes another contribution to meeting SSI's annual research objectives as established in, The Army's Strategic Role in a New World Order: A Prioritized Research Program, 1992.

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<td>Fuehrungsstab der Streitkraefte--Fue S</td>
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<td>Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr</td>
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<td>Grundgesetz</td>
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<td>Heeresfuehrungskommando</td>
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In an earlier SSI Special Report (Bundeswehr Plans for a National Command and Control Structure, March 24, 1992), the Bundesministerium der Verteidigung--BMVg's (Federal Ministry of Defense) emerging concepts of a future German national command structure were presented and analyzed. Subsequent to the publication of said report, Federal Minister of Defense Gerhard Stoltenberg resigned from his post on March 31, 1992, and was replaced by Volker Ruehe. One of the major results of this change in political leadership over the Bundeswehr (Federal Armed Forces) has been a major alteration in the emerging national command and operational control structure of that organization. Federal Minister of Defense Ruehe's rejection of the BMVg's proposal, and the subsequent confusion surrounding future national command structures, warrant brief analysis and assessment. Additional details on the events surrounding this controversy and its implications for the state of civil-military affairs in the Federal Republic can be found in a forthcoming study by this institute.

The BMVg's Proposal for Reform.

Since its creation in 1955, the Bundeswehr has lacked a structure to control centrally the three independent services. The Central, or what is sometimes referred to as the Joint, Staff of the BMVg (Fuehrungsstab der Streitkraefte--Fue S) is
simply not structured to exercise operational control over Bundeswehr units.\(^3\) In approaching the reform of the Bundeswehr’s operational command structure, the BMVg was confronted with a number of constitutional and administrative restrictions. Under constitutional provisions and administrative directives of the Federal Republic, the creation of a national joint command and control structure can only be accomplished, as is the case in any democracy, within specific legal confines. Articles 65(a) and 115(b) of the Grundgesetz ("Basic Law" or constitution of the Federal Republic) stipulate that command over the Bundeswehr is exercised by the Federal Minister of Defense during peacetime, to be transferred to the Federal Chancellor upon the promulgation of a state of defense. These articles enshrine the concept of civilian political control over the military.

A further definition of the relationship between the Federal Minister of Defense and his chief military advisor, the Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr (Chief of Staff of the Federal Armed Forces), occurred on March 21, 1970, in the form of what has become known as the "Blankeneser Erlass," or ministerial decree, signed by then Federal Minister of Defense, Helmut Schmidt. Under existing administrative regulations, the Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr is not directly in the chain of command between the Federal Chancellor/Federal Minister of Defense and the Inspekteur (Chief of Staff) of the individual
services, or even NATO command structures. In consequence, his position is advisory only and he has no organizational authority to exercise, or directly influence, operational control over the German armed services. The three individual service Inspekteur are also limited by this decree to exercising peacetime command and control over their respective services.4

In view of the various legal and ministerial guidelines outlined above, as well as the politically sensitive nature of restructuring the command and control structures of the Bundeswehr, the BMVg proposed the following solution (see Figure 1).5 The proposal called for a Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando (Armed Forces Command) to be established at Koblenz. Since it would not be possible to maintain a large standing joint headquarters due to personnel reductions,6 the standing complement of the Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando would comprise approximately 80 to 100 individuals and it would largely limit itself to planning national joint operations.7 From the perspective of the BMVg, this proposed joint headquarters would be capable of supporting a wide range of military operations, to include crisis management.

As an interim measure, until the Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando could be created, existing Fuehrungsbereitschaften (readiness command groups) would be expanded. Fuehrungsbereitschaften exist in each of the civilian and military
BMVg Proposal for a New Command and Control Structure

Federal Chancellor/
Federal Minister
of Defense

Chief of Staff
of the Federal
Armed Forces

Armed Forces Command

Air Force Staff

Air Force
Logistics
Command

Air Force
Operations
Command

Air Force
Office

Naval Staff

Naval Logistics
Command

Naval Operations
Command

Navy Office

Army Staff

Army Logistics
Command

Army Operations
Command

Army Office

Figure 1
Abteilungen (departments), to include Fue S, and Fuehrungs-
bereitschaft BMVg. The latter comprises personnel from all
Abteilungen of the BMVg, and it has been proposed that it
should be upgraded to manage more effectively crisis
situations.

This proposed joint headquarters, it must be stressed,
would be distinct from the new Heeresfuehrungskommando (Army
Operations Command) also being established in Koblenz at the
previous home of III Korps. This headquarters, of
approximately 100 personnel, will be led by a three-star
general and will exercise command and control over the three
Army Corps for national tasks and coordinate plans with NATO
headquarters. Its span of control is envisaged to encompass
approximately 300 posts. Moreover, it was the intention of the
BMVg that this command would be given priority in its creation
(i.e., allocation of personnel) and, consequently, would be
fused to the Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando, when required, to
provide crucial command support to its joint counterpart. The
Luftwaffe (Air Force) and Bundesmarine (Federal Navy) already
have operational control capabilities, of varying degrees of
span of operational control. Where deficiencies exist (e.g.,
national air policing and air defense), improvements in command
and control capabilities are to be instituted.

Finally, according to certain German press reports, these
proposed changes in the command structure were to include
giving the Generalinspekteur greater authority over the three service chiefs and improved access to the Federal Chancellor and the Federal Security Council and thereby change elements of the Blankeneser Erlass. This initiative would have increased the influence of the office of the Generalinspekteur, by placing him, to an unspecified degree, within the chain of command between the political authorities and the service chiefs. This would have relegated the responsibilities of the three service chiefs to largely administrative and training functions.

Thus, the BMVg proposed creating a small joint headquarters that could, when required, exercise national operational control over joint Bundeswehr forces. Should circumstances require a national military response, the Federal Chancellor or the Federal Minister of Defense would designate a joint task force commander. To maintain the legal principle of civilian command over the military, the Federal Chancellor/Federal Minister of Defense would grant operational control authority of specified Bundeswehr units to the joint task force commander, for a clearly defined mission and specific period of time. By following these provisions, the BMVg felt that it could employ Bundeswehr units for national, European or U.N. operations, without changing current law and regulations.
Rejection.

In April 1992, Federal Defense Minister Ruehe rejected the BMVg’s proposal to create the Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando, and to change the responsibilities of the Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr. His rationale is not exactly clear, although a flurry of negative (and at times erroneous) press reports cannot be rejected as having had an impact on Ruehe’s decision. An important consideration, as well, is that the need to reduce the Bundeswehr to 370,000 by the end of 1994, accompanied by the inability to force personnel with redundant specialties and ranks to leave the service, have resulted in a shortage of suitable staff officers to man headquarters throughout the Bundeswehr and NATO. Attempts to rectify these difficulties though shifting personnel within the Federal Armed Forces have been opposed by the government due to not wishing to create the perception that it intends to evade the personnel limits of the Army, as restricted by the Two-Plus-Four Treaty.

In consequence, the BMVg has had to adapt its command and operational control reorganization to conform to the political dictates of the Federal Minister of Defense. Instead of the original proposal, what appears to be evolving (see Figure 2) is a command and operational control structure whereby emphasis
Emerging German Command and Control Structure

Federal Chancellor/
Federal Minister of Defense

Chief of Staff of the Federal Armed Forces

Air Force Staff
- Air Force Logistics Command
- Air Force Operations Command
- Air Force Office
- Task Force Cadre HQ

Army Staff
- Army Logistics Command
- Army Operations Command
- Task Force Cadre HQ

Naval Staff
- Naval Logistics Command
- Naval Operations Command
- Navy Office
- Task Force Cadre HQ

*N includes liaison personnel from other services

Figure 2
will be placed on improving existing service command organizations, augmented by Fuehrungsbereitschaften, and employing the task force principle for responding to national crises. When activated by the Federal Chancellor/Federal Defense Minister, one of the three service operations commands would be given the task of forming an ad hoc task force, likely to be made of elements from all three services. The task force commander will report to his immediate operations commander, who will turn report to the service Inspekteur, who will be under the direct command of the Federal Chancellor/Federal Minister of Defense. "Jointness" will be effected through the presence of service liaison officers in each of the operational commands of the three services. This will require, of course, all forces and operational control structures to be more flexible than they have been in the past, in order to respond to multi-role requirements. In any case, this structure can only be assessed as being suitable for the immediate, as opposed to the emerging, command and operational control requirements of the Bundeswehr.¹⁴

Observations.

Numerous military implications emanate from the decision not to create a joint command and operational control headquarters, let alone increase the authority of the Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr:
Joint Command and Operational Control Headquarters:

- It is not necessarily imperative for the Bundeswehr to have such a structure, although its creation could have a positive effect on improving the joint command and operational control capabilities of the Bundeswehr.

- In view of the rejection of the creation of the Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando, it is likely that greater importance and expectations will be placed on the Heeresfuehrungskommando. This is only logical since the Army has traditionally been the undisputed senior service in the Bundeswehr. It would be difficult to imagine any sizeable national employment of Bundeswehr assets, without the employment of this headquarters.

- Moreover, the May 1992 decision by France and the Federal Republic to create a European Corps headquarters, to be located in Strasbourg, could have played a role in deciding not to establish the Streitkraeftefuehrungskommando, given the severe personnel limitations facing the Bundeswehr. To be sure, for out-of-area operations, the employment of such a command structure could be made politically-palatable in the Federal Republic, and indeed this could well be the rationale behind Bonn’s enthusiastic support for this formation. However, it would be naive on the part of Bonn to think that this
multinational headquarters could be employed for national operations.

**Responsibilities of the Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr:**

- The decision on the part of Federal Defense Minister Ruehe not to alter the status of the Generalinspekteur in regard to command issues is a mistake.

- Under current arrangements, and even with an improved task force capability of each of the service headquarters, the fact remains that the Generalinspekteur, as the senior military advisor, is left out of the command process. In essence, a situation exists where no one military official has overall responsibility.

- A similar situation existed in the United States which prompted the passage of the 1986 Defense Reorganization Act ("Goldwater-Nichols Act"). Under current arrangements, U.S. commanders-in-chief in the field report to National Command Authority through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

- Notwithstanding historical sensitivities in the Federal Republic over the role of the military in civil affairs, enhancing the command responsibilities of the Generalinspekteur would not affect the relationship between civil officials and military officers. Civilian authorities would continue to command, while military officers would
continue to exercise operational control, but with the advantage of better defining responsibilities.

- Unless Bonn faces the fact that it has unilaterally decided to maintain a key element of self-singularization of its defense structures, it will inhibit the effective employment of the Bundeswehr in future humanitarian and military operations. Civil control over the military can be maintained while effecting necessary improvements in the command and operational control structure of the Bundeswehr.

ENDNOTES


3. Concerning the BMVg's inability to provide adequate direction in military operations see Konteradmiral a.D. Elmar Schmaehling's article in, Der Spiegel, April 20, 1992, p. 93.

4. See, Welt am Sonntag (Hamburg), March 1, 1992.

5. Information provided by official German sources.


7. The issue of "planning" should not be underestimated. Heretofore, the Bundeswehr has not possessed national war plans, these being provided by SACEUR's General Defense Plans, executed at the AFCENT, Allied Tactical Air Force and Army Group levels. Now that eastern Germany currently falls outside of NATO operational control structures and there may be national command structures in the Bundeswehr, it is only logical that national war planning should take place. However, one would expect that
this will largely deal with the defense of eastern Germany (at least until 1995) and out-of-area campaigns, all of which would probably be effected in conjunction with Alliance efforts.


10. See, Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger, April 6, 1992; and, Der Spiegel (Hamburg), April 20, 1992, p. 93.

11. For example see, Der Spiegel (Hamburg), April 6, 1992.

12. For instance, Former Federal Defense Minister Stoltenberg attempted, without success, in early 1992 to increase the size of the Army by 3,100 at the expense of the Navy. See, Der Spiegel (Hamburg), February 10, 1992, p. 16.

13. Information provided by official German sources.