

2016/3/3: The brigade ambition

The brigade ambition of the Austrian Armed Forces

Status quo and capabilities

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The security police assistance operation, which has been taking place since September 2015, and which supports the forces of the Home Ministry at mastering the migration of foreigners needing help and protection, strikingly demonstrates – as far as the spectre of tasks is concerned – the present reality for the (land) brigades of the Austrian Armed Forces (AAF): The majority of the available cadre presence units of the AAF as well as a significant number of cadre intervention units were alerted, deployed for their operation purpose by the brigades, and consequently rapidly turned over to the responsible (because spatially affected) Military Commands. The Military Commands on their part established the leadership ability of their operation staffs, took over the command and control of the mandated troops, and have led them with close and aligned cooperation with their "security partners" in the respective federal province. This procedure happened mainly without any frictions and satisfactorily, but it leaves back the brigades in a certain dilemma of "inactiveness", as for this operation their spectre of tasks is mainly confined to continuous "force generation". From the point of view of the (land) brigades, all this takes place with parallel continuation of other "standard missions". At the moment, these include, among other things, the responsibility for deploying international operation contingents, the training of conscripts in the form of full, transition or function soldier contingents, as well as executing or taking part in exercise series of the armed forces in order to preserve the capabilities in the different services. From the point of view of the land brigades, however, a high level of usage rate, together with the relative certainty of doing "the right", do by no means offer the certainty of being undisputable and unquestioned as forms of organization of the AAF. In truth, the battalion brigade group represents an "interpretation" of the brigade ambition, allowing a quantitative, but definitely no qualitative reduction of the deployment of resources. Type and number of personnel for the medial tactical management level will not change as compared with the present situation. To put it in a simple way, at present each of the four land brigades has the qualitative potential of a battalion brigade group, but it is not requested at the moment, neither in quantitative nor in qualitative respect, and it cannot be requested, neither. An increase of the capabilities and competences of the land brigades for independent coordination of resources would underline the strengths of the brigade, which are "general mission preparation" and "preservation of capabilities". The battalions will only be able to preserve the necessary capabilities for joint warfare under the "intellectual patronage" of the brigades and their resources. The medial tactical management level disposes of the necessary capacity for creative planning and further development of mission control in modern scenarios, and it is sufficiently close to the battalions in order not to lose their grip on practical reality, i.e. tactical and combat technical reality. Thus, in the light of the knowledge presented, the future of the management level of the brigades of the AAF appears to be undoubted.

