

As a Reminder...

The Multinational Division South-East (MND-SE) in Bosnia

Following the November 21st 1995 Dayton Agreements, supported by the United Nations through UN Security Council Resolution 1031 dated December 15th 1995, the UN forces (UNPROFOR) withdraw from the Bosnia-Herzegovina territory to be replaced by NATO forces, namely the **Implementation Force** (IFOR) in the frame of operation **Joint Endeavour**, that would be succeeded by the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) beginning on December 20th 1996, in the frame of **Operation Joint Guard**. France takes part in all these operations. (The French contingent in IFOR is named Salamander and amounts to 7,500 soldiers).

IFOR's primary objective is to enforce the cessation of hostilities between the belligerents: monitor the marking of the lines of cease fire and of separation, control the withdrawal of the warring factions forces on each side of the line of separation, control the return of some pieces of territory, look after the regrouping of heavy weapons and military units in the prescribed locations, demobilize the other units.

IFOR's Land Component, under the orders of the ARRC Commander, includes three large multinational divisions: one under US command (Northern sector, Tuzla), another under British command (South-Western sector, Banja Luka) and the third under French command (Southern sector, Sarajevo-Mostar). The MNDSE is composed, in addition to the 2,500 French soldiers, of one Spanish brigade, one Italian brigade, the Moroccan, Egyptian, Ukrainian battalions... Taking advantage of a partial redeployment of the French forces being part of the UNPROFOR already in theater,

the MNDSE could rapidly be organized. To be noticed, the French participation in the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) constituted the ALPHA brigade in Mostar.

SFOR's men strength (35,000) is then reduced by a half compared to the IFOR's. The civilian aspect takes the lead over the military one. SFOR main missions are as follow: deter any attempt to resume fighting, protect the force and ensure its freedom of movement, control and enforce the military segments of the Dayton peace Agreements, provide a secure environment to the international and national civilian organizations, be prepared to intervene on the theater in case of incident. As an example, the MNDSE supported the organization of the elections in September 1996 and September 1998.

In 1995, France provides for more than 6,900 soldiers. By the end of 2002, the multinational divisions are being reorganized into multinational brigades. SFOR goes on with its re-deployment and its men strength is being reduced to 8,000 men. The brigades are replaced by Task Forces of about 500 soldiers. SFOR disappears on December 2nd 2004, being replaced by the European Union operation ALTHEA.

The Account of Lieutenant General (Ret) Robert RIDEAU,

**Former Commanding Officer
of the Multinational Division South East (MNDSE)
in Bosnia from December 1995 to May 1996**

Graduated from the French Military Academy, Saint-Cyr, and an Infantry officer, he commanded the 13th Demi-brigade de Légion étrangère (Foreign Legion half-brigade). As the commanding General, 6th Light Armored Division from 1995, he assumed command of the Multinational Division South-East (MND - SE) within the IFOR between November 1995 and May 1996.

He has been retired since August 2000.



ECPAD

Sir, can you tell us in which context did you receive your mission?

I have been in command of the Multinational Division South East (MNDSE) or Salamander Division in Bosnia Herzegovina from December 19th 1995, date of the transfer of authority between UNPROFOR and IFOR (Implementation Force), to May 14th 1996.

Two honour marching squads were waiting for me at my arrival: one with green berets (French Foreign Legion 2th Paratroop Battalion) and the other one with blue berets (6th French Marine Infantry Battalion), we were effectively in the transition phase.

IFOR itself was operating under a UNO mandate - resolution 1031 from the UN security council dated 16 December 1995 - over the whole Bosnia Herzegovina. IFOR initial mandate was due to last one year.

The 6 (FR) Light Armored Division that I commanded then was the second echelon (heavy) of the Rapid Reaction Brigade (RRB) commanded by Brigadier General Soubirou. So I was well aware of the negotiations initiated following the NATO air strikes against Sarajevo late in August and concluded by the signature of the Dayton agreements on November 21st.

The ACE Rapid Reaction Corps was selected to exert IFOR Land command. In the field the disposition encompassed three multinational divisions commanded to the North by an American general, to the South West by a British general and finally the MNDSE commanded by a French general.

The expected end state was to enforce a long lasting cease fire between the two entities, Croatian-Bosnian Federation and Bosnia Serbian Republic. Therefore, the goal of the division, similar to the other divisions, has been first to pull the former belligerents apart and to force both of them to withdraw beyond the inter-entity borderline and then to begin "demobilizing" them.

The mission given to the MNDSE is as follows : "in accordance with a decision of the French government and in the framework of the mandate given by the UNO to NATO, to take part in restoring peace in Bosnia Herzegovina, inside an action area centered on Sarajevo and Mostar, by using force if need be. To that effect, be ready to command a multinational division under NATO operational control including two French brigades and two foreign brigades while performing the national support of our own forces.

Have you been involved in the process of composing your division, its preparation and its deployment?

I may surprise you but I can only note that this involvement was very late and resulted only from my personal insistence. The reasons for what we can consider as abnormal regarding the operational efficiency can be largely explained, but not only, by the eminently political context in which the force engagement was included.

Some chronological marks to illustrate this aspect:

- September 29th 1995: NATO begins preparing a peace multinational force
- October 12th: Decision to send a NATO force in Bosnia in the days following the signature of a peace agreement,
- November 1st: Beginning of the peace negotiations in Dayton,
- November 21st: Signature of a global peace agreement about Bosnia in Dayton;
- November 24th: I am officially selected and therefore allowed to officially deal with the Joint Planning Staff (EMIA) and to take part in the planning works some of which being largely drafted and this since mid September.

The diplomatic context only partially explains these delays. Indeed, France's participation, at a very significant level, in an operation placed under NATO aegis could not have been possible, according to me, without a diplomatic gesture

towards NATO. This explains why during numerous weeks the French representatives in the different NATO planning bodies were more active observers than accepted actors. This also explains why, despite having been pre-warned for months, my official selection was so late.

On the other hand, the inter-allied general planning was painful, the Joint planning staff at Creil constituting a screen between the ARRC and my staff.; it was also the case for the French-French logistical planning with many actors (Armed forces Joint Staff, Joint planning staff, Army Staff, Rapid Action Force, 3rd Army Corps) and without any assigned real leader. The MNDSE final composition was therefore decided rather late.

Taking into account the emergency but also because it was taking over UNPROFOR, IFOR



was set up as a coalition (or as a UNO force) i.e. by requesting troop contributing nations from NATO as well as non NATO. Then, “everybody being welcome” it has been like in a Spanish hotel and each contributing nation came with forces the volume and composition of which was according to its own appreciation. Some examples : an excess in heavy armored vehicles difficult to use as regards the geography of the country, the excess in artillery or even the excess in Medical Service units. Another drawback: the research of national objectives sometimes very different from the general goal. In this matter France is no exception and often places the local French commanding officer in a tricky position. A single example: Paris wanted that my CP be in Mostar but my center of gravity was in Sarajevo. After living for some days with two half CPs (a farcical situation) I finally decided to regroup everybody in Sarajevo waiting for the possibility to settle down definitively in Mostar in late February.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that in this context of inter-ethnic rivalries the engagement of such or such contingent selected according to religious or historical criteria can facilitate the performance of the mission (for example placing the Spanish brigade in the Catholic Croatian part of Bosnia).

Finally, the MNDSE had the following composition:

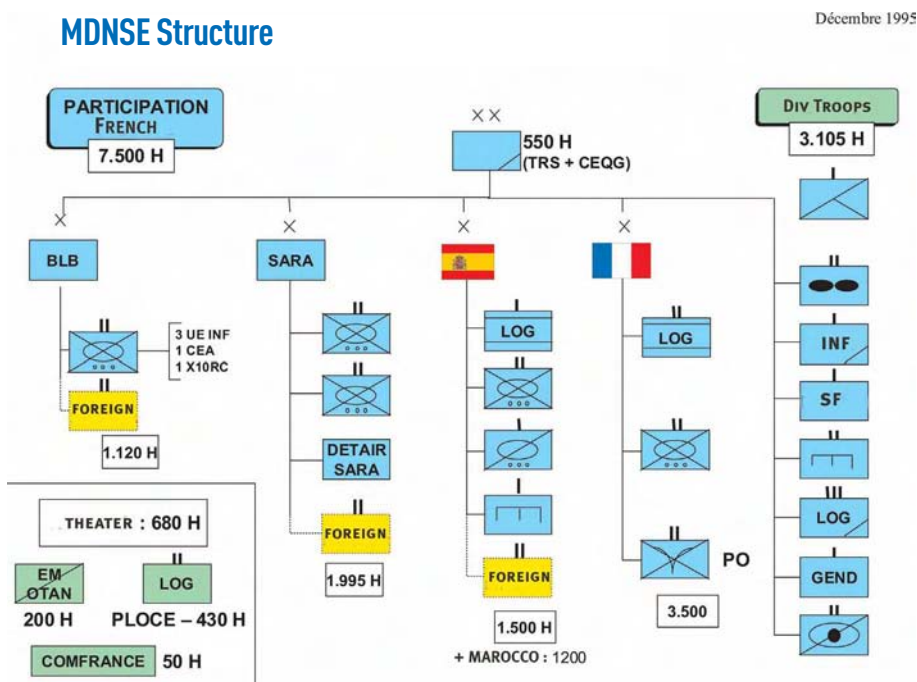
- an HQ and Division base (2,000 men),
- two French brigades in Sarajevo and Mostar (4,000 men),
- one Spanish brigade (3,000 men),
- one Italian brigade (3,500 men) including a Portuguese battalion,
- Egyptian, Jordanian and Ukrainian units (around 2,500 men),
- A Moroccan task force (1,200 men).

Sir, can you tell us some words about interoperability and by extension about your relations with your superiors and subordinates?

Salamander highlighted that interoperability, too often presented as a must to conduct a multinational operation, was indeed and really justified only in the CIS domain. It was the case for the ARRC which had its own signal battalion. The command and information system it deployed for this operation has probably been one of the most complicated in the history of the recent crises. Not less than 1 200 signalmen and technicians from the signal battalion succeeded to make compatible between them the twenty nets of the deployed forces, to link this tactical network to the existing local networks to rely on the satellite network and so permit real time command.

The situation has been similar within the division. Right at the start of the mission, it rapidly appeared that the deployed system was quickly overloaded. It had been studied for a structure with two independent brigades, it was not adapted for commanding a NATO type division with four brigades, with a strong hierarchy and a reinforced staff. Therefore I requested and obtained against a light strength increase the deployment of the RITA system. It enabled me to have at my disposal a coherent, robust, protected and interoperable communication system to ensure the links on the theater from my CP in Mostar with the ARRC, the French Military representative, the four brigades, the French battalions and other elements such as the Air detachment. Thanks to its new satellite range the RITA system also made it possible to connect the theater with the national high command. Associated to the SIC/F it permitted to significantly improve the command system within the MNDSE.

MDNSE Structure

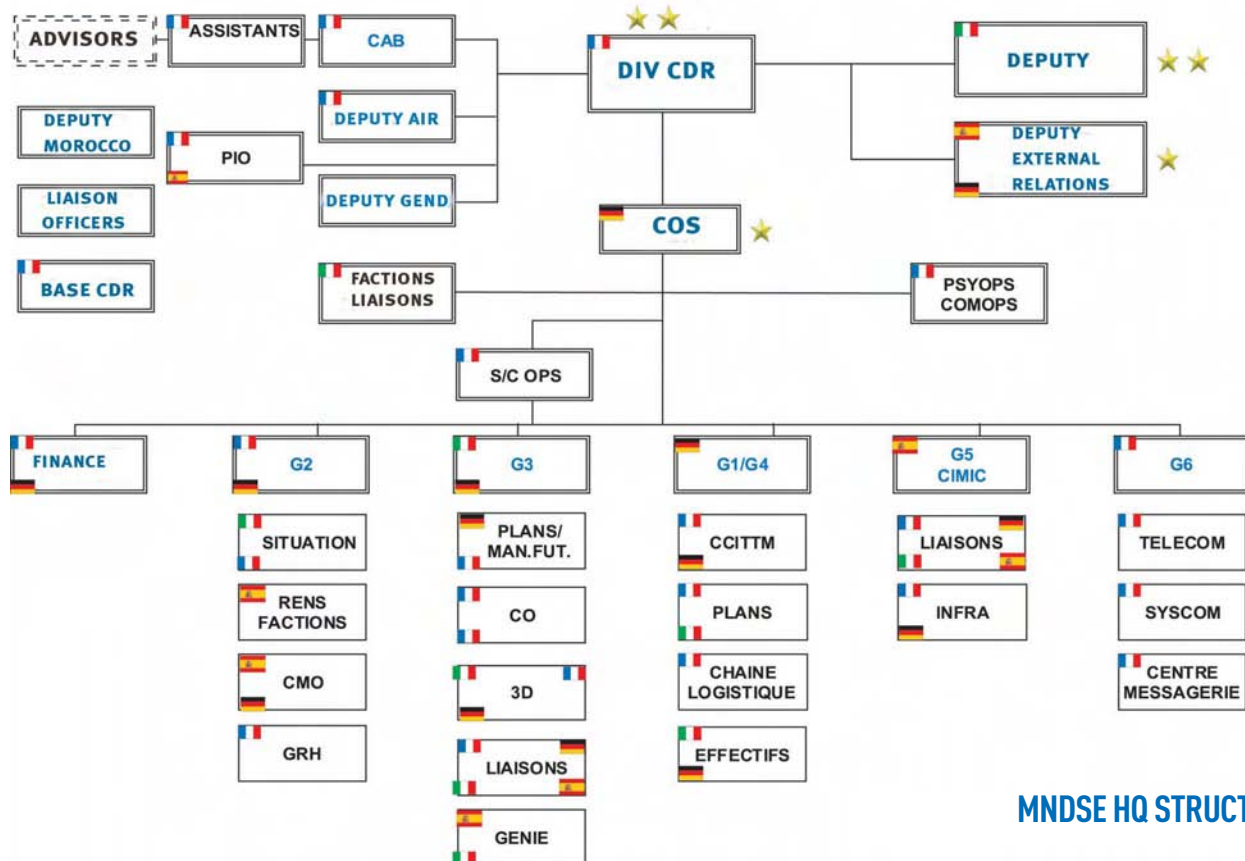


To summarize, in a multinational context the only interoperability worth looking for is that of the command means.

As regards the relations between the different hierarchic levels when we make an assessment we need to admit that they have been excellent. This has been caused by several factors: the mission was clear, all in execution, the military from the deployed force were not involved in a political aspect of the solution to the crisis, most of the contingents tacitly agreed to deny or even to oppose the unavoidable attempts to interfere by the national commands in the performance of the operations (creation of a true esprit de corps within IFOR Land command, under the ARRC command).

In a very practical way the contact between the different hierarchic echelons

ACCOUNT OF FRENCH GENERAL OFFICERS WHO COMMANDED A MULTINATIONAL FORCE OR OPERATION



MNDSE HQ STRUCTURE

was established through the daily conference calls with the ARRC and the division. This working method very fashionable among the Anglo-Saxons permits to command very efficiently by voice, to create links and to avoid the endless meetings which, in the field, cause hours of car riding or helicopter flying.

To sum up: esprit de corps, minds focussed towards the sole execution of a mission with a military aspect, denial of the national interferences.

Do you consider that the support whether national or NATO enabled you to permanently keep your operational capability?

Most of the French units constituting the division were already engaged on the theater in the framework of the UNO and therefore attached to an existing logistic system; it was decided to keep it as such i.e. “national” with some modifications concerning mainly its geographical position. The ARRC and IFOR had therefore only a minor role to play, limited only to the transits in the COMZFORWARD. The “national” support concept facilitated the mission of the logisticians. The advantages of that method deserve to be stressed: simplicity, flexibility, efficiency and certainty not to have to manage a complex system that would have had few chances to satisfy all the parties.

On the contrary the Medical service could have been an exception to the chosen principle. In a commendable

concern to ensure a maximum support in this particularly sensitive domain no contributing nation was sparing on the volume and the quality of the deployed means. Thus an obvious redundancy and an evident underemployment of the French as well as foreign medical units. Putting the means in common would have permitted important economies of scale without decreasing the value of the medical support.

One word about intelligence. Everything went well with the ARRC on the tactical point of view and with the gendarmes for the investigations. The relations with the French Directorate, Military Intelligence (DRM) were more touchy because its representatives in the field tended to report to Paris rather than to their employing authority.

Are the French officers educated to work in international staffs ?

At that time, few officers had the experience of serving in NATO staffs but a lot of them had made an experience with multinational staffs during operations under the aegis of the UNO or the Gulf war. If it is true that the NATO procedures were not always perfectly mastered it has been only a matter of weeks to cope with that. In crisis situation and under the pressure of events learning is fast. The main obstacle to a perfect insertion (integration?) was a poor knowledge of the English language (since that time this gap

has been filled). On the contrary it appeared possible to impose French as a second official language by the judicious selection of French speaking foreign officers for the integrated posts in the staffs placed under the authority of France and by the attachment of bilingual liaison teams to the brigade staffs. This policy conducted with the utmost flexibility notably thanks to the conference calls proved very efficient and gave a very specific style to the MNDSE though well accepted by the ARRC and the strictly English speaking adjacent divisions. So it seems judicious to increase our efforts to open still more widely our advanced military education to the officers of the European nations to increase the potential resource of those who might tomorrow be inserted in our staffs.

Is the commander of a multinational force a military commander, a politico-military representative or both at the same time?

I assert without any hesitation that the commanding officer of a multinational force is a military commander and only a military commander even if I disappoint all those who think that, since they meet in their functions a lot of diplomatic and political representatives, it is enough to give them a politico-military dimension. Indeed the multinational engagements are always or almost always placed under the aegis of an international organisation which is the sole holder of the political power (UNO, NATO, EU). It gives a mandate on the theater to a special representative (always a civilian) to watch the proper execution of the resolution resulting in the deployment of the force. More to that we need to keep in mind that the military component of the mission, for as important and visible it be, is only one among many others (reconstruction, elections, human rights, refugees, etc.). The military leader must of course have a political view of his mission but he must keep his place when he is associated to the political decision making. Every time it has been different the consequences have always been to the detriment of the military leader.

Beyond the previous topics what are the main lessons you learned from your mission?

In my end of mission report I was wishing France to set up a projection HQ similar to the ARRC that had impressed us all. I think I wrote then that the ARRC had a true HQ culture: perfect mastering of the procedures, concern for team work, political view of the problems, permanent anticipation of the situation, adaptation and evolution of the structures depending on the needs. So I can only be delighted with the decision to provide our Army with a rapid reaction HQ, the CRR-FR on the ARRC model.

Always in this report I stressed the necessity to innovate regarding the operation of our HQs. At division level because of the complexity of the political-military situation and the originality of the mission, we had to differentiate very clearly the plans, the conduct, the contacts with the factions. This led to create a very strong study-planning cell (6 high level senior officers coming from very different horizons) to study the problems under all their aspects and to draft concepts and guidelines. Once validated, these concepts were transformed into orders by the Ops Center alone in charge of the conduct

In this respect the creation of the Force HQs very well fills the need of a strong HQ.

What advices would you give a future multinational force commander?

- To chose (or have assigned) the hard core of his future team which must as much as possible be distinct from the one that will set up and project the force. This team will more especially be in charge of the general and operational planning and of the necessary contacts to be taken during the setting up.
- To meet (depending on the case) with the special representative of the international organization under which aegis the force will operate or with the higher level military authority.
- To obtain from the national command a general planning guideline in order to begin in due time and hour the planning at his level of responsibility.
- To obtain the clearance for a direct contact with the commanders of the foreign forces composing the multinational force in order to obtain, as much as possible a general coherence of the projected means.
- To obtain the assignment of a political advisor to enlighten the future military decisions.
- To have the rules of engagement studied by the operation legal advisor.
- To ban any cross attachments between different units and nationalities. Their support as well as their command are then uselessly complicated and the whole efficiency is decreased. A multinational force must not be assimilated to a pleasant "jamboree".