



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

civilian personnel, the goal is generally to emulate the same organizational structure, but without the rigour of "unity of command". The result on the ground, however, is a high degree of coordination and "unity of effort" among operational units — what the US Army calls "an atmosphere of cooperation rather than 'command' authority"¹² These two elements — unity of purpose and unity of effort — are key objectives towards which any rapid-reaction capability must work.

France

France formally created the Force d'Action Rapide (FAR) as its modern rapid-reaction capability in 1983. It currently consists of four divisions with complementary capabilities: two light-armoured divisions, an airmobile division and a parachute division. Together, the total of more than 55,000 troops, 240 helicopters and 275 armoured vehicles constitute a force capable of quick mobilization in a variety of configurations for deployment on very short notice to distant theatres.

The headquarters of the FAR is established at the operational level as a major army command, reporting directly to the Chief of Staff of the French Armed Forces and receiving its strategic direction from his joint headquarters in Paris. The Commander of the FAR relies on the strategic headquarters for planning guidance and the provision of early-warning intelligence. He frequently attends Cabinet meetings together with the Chief of Staff to ensure that he is fully conversant with key political and strategic issues currently before the French Government. The FAR is responsible for the development of detailed contingency plans for a wide variety of possible operations, and makes recommendations to the strategic headquarters on the composition, mission and rules of engagement of possible forces. The tactical units responsible for implementing contingency plans are assigned to the FAR by the French Chief of Staff. Once assigned to the FAR, these tactical units fall under the FAR's responsibility for mission-specific training.

Given a reasonable amount of lead time, based on early-warning intelligence, the FAR is able to deploy lead elements of the Force within hours anywhere in the world, with follow-on elements deploying within days. The Force can be deployed with about 80 transport aircraft, although foreign tankers may have to be leased to obtain sufficient air refuelling assets for distant operations. During the 1994 Rwanda deployment, it augmented its military lift capacity by contracting aircraft from the private sector.

The size and composition of the FAR in any given operation depends on the political objectives of the French Government and the strategic goals defined by the French Chief of Staff. Based on these objectives and goals, the French are able to assemble a "customized" force to conduct an operation. In the case of "Opération Turquoise" in Rwanda in 1994, France was able to deploy a force of between 2000 and 4000 personnel within 24 hours after receipt of authorization at the political level. The key elements in the technical success of this operation were early warning and alert procedures, clearly-defined and limited objectives, pre-established command and control structures and adequate logistic self-sufficiency for the deployed force.