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Ready for what? Enlistment versus Readiness

Abstract

The fundamental purpose of Armed Forces is to fight and win a Nation's conflicts. Therefore, it is critical that Ministers of Defence (MoD) continually assesses warfighting readiness and capabilities. Readiness is the ability of Armed Forces to conduct and successfully accomplish assigned missions as specified in the National Military Strategy (NMS) with sufficient and sustainable capabilities resulting from personnel, equipment, training, and supporting infrastructures.

The readiness system provides an overall assessment of the Ministry of Defence's (MoD) ability to execute the NMS and captures the overarching readiness for each level of warfighting. History holds numerous examples of the cost nations have paid when their Armed Forces were not prepared to respond.

Next, the concept of International Readiness is shown, its extrapolation to the Spanish environment and some examples of Readiness systems implemented in other countries are analyzed. This article concludes with the future challenges that are presented to these Readiness evaluation systems in the coming years.

Keywords

Readiness, Availability, Assessment, Capability Groupings, Defence Planning Process, Training.

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Introduction to the concept of “readiness”¹

The Armed Forces (FAS) are not only useful because of the uniqueness of their means, but especially because of their availability, their acquired capabilities maintained by permanent Instruction and training programmes, and above all because of the command-and-control systems that have been tested and pre-established since peacetime. In complex environments, and especially when security levels are degraded, a capable (and highly enlisted) SAF gives the state a decisive tool which, even without actually being used, provides deterrence power.

There are many different definitions of “readiness”. One of those accepted by the International Community is the one provided by the US Department of Defence²: “the capability of a nation’s Armed Forces to successfully carry out and accomplish the missions assigned by the National Military Strategy (NMS) with sufficient and sustainable capabilities over time, resulting from the assessment of the state of personnel, materiel, instruction and training (I/T) and supporting infrastructure”.

History shows us numerous examples of the cost that many nations have paid when their armed forces were unprepared to respond to their assigned missions, and in particular to an unexpected attack. The 2,417 pages that make up the report drawn up by General Juan Picasso after investigating the events that took place in Annual³, detailed the poor preparation of the units, the lack of basic materials, the poor state of the armaments, the shortage of ammunition, and the lack of foresight and leadership, starting with the person in charge, General Berenguer.

This lack of preparedness levelled at the Spanish Armed Forces in the early 1920s could clearly have been avoided with a system that would have assessed the state of the units to deal with the Rifian insurgency.

Back to the 21st century, we can say that this “readiness” concept applies to combat units, combat support structures, headquarters and even non-deployed auxiliary personnel. Many countries, with the United States (US) at the forefront, have established readiness assessment systems to measure the degree to which assigned missions have been accomplished with the capabilities that have been generated within the units.

¹ In this text, the equivalence of the Anglo-Saxon term “Readiness” to the Spanish term “Alistamiento” is made, although the author at some points uses the term “Preparation”, so as not to repeat words in the same sentence, aware that the equivalence between Readiness/Alistamiento is not exact. It should be taken as the author’s licence not to engage in poor drafting.

² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Guide 3401D to the Chairman’s Readiness System.

³ On 18 April 1922, the dossier was delivered to the Lower House of Parliament with a final report written by himself, which would eventually become known as the “Picasso Report”.

The US System⁴ establishes three different levels of readiness: strategic, operational and tactical. Three processes are implemented at these levels: evaluation, reporting (covering periodicity and formats), and management of the information extracted from the processes.

At each level, the result of the assessment of the state of readiness related to the degree of accomplishment of the missions assigned to the SAF is provided.

There are different trends in terms of readiness system. Some countries, such as the USA, have specialised offices to carry out the associated processes. In other countries, such as most NATO countries, the tendency is for there to be no ad hoc bodies, and instead the assessment and reporting of readiness is more a task for unit staffs.

Most NATO countries follow a capabilities-based defence planning process. These capabilities in NATO are agreed and standardised (NATO Capability Groupings). Dedicating allocated budgets to achieving the right capabilities is an essential part of knowing how to invest in defence.

Readiness reports support the defence planning process to provide and maintain the necessary capabilities within the available economic resources. They assess resource shortfalls against the capabilities required of a force to fulfil assigned missions. They are also a tool to support the review of the various Department of Defence (DoD) master plans (i.e., Personnel, Material, I/A and Infrastructure).

The international security context has shaped the readiness objectives of the SAFs of the major powers and NATO members. While after the fall of the Berlin Wall, force readiness was geared towards being prepared for Expeditionary Force projection, after the fall of the Twin Towers in 2001, the priority became readiness to deal with insurgency and international terrorism. The resurgence of the nuclear threat posed by North Korea, and the Kremlin's new foreign policy following the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and especially since 24 February 2022, the date on which it began its invasion of Ukraine, have led to a new shift in the objectives to be achieved by readiness systems, which are once again oriented towards large-scale combat operations.

Spain and other neighbouring countries have developed their own readiness systems to orient their defence budgets towards generating the necessary capabilities for the military instrument (within the executive branch⁵) and thus contribute to the national security strategy. How the Spanish Ministry of Defence has faced this challenge in the defence planning environment, and how other countries have done so, will be discussed in the first sections of this article.

Last, new trends in the world will be addressed to incorporate into readiness systems the new missions being assigned to the SAF, beyond the traditional ones related

⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Guide 3401D to the Chairman's Readiness System (25 NOV 2013).

⁵ PDC-01(A). *Doctrine for the employment of the Armed Forces*. (2018).

to armed conflicts: crisis situations, competition for global/regional hegemony and the capacity to adapt to change.

Overview

As mentioned in the previous section, readiness systems execute three processes (assessment, reporting and information management) for each of the levels (strategic, operational and tactical). These processes are equally important, although the evaluation process is sometimes overemphasised, ignoring the fact that it is a cycle.

The concept of readiness is sometimes misunderstood and taken as an assessment of the Head of Unit. Other times it is taken as a guarantee of the success of the mission assigned to the evaluated unit. Neither is correct.

A good commander may have a unit with low readiness or limited combat capability due to the readiness cycle it is in. It may also be that a unit at the highest level of readiness can be defeated in combat by a bad Head of Unit.

Readiness reports complement each other at tactical, operational and strategic levels. At the strategic level, the reports compile relevant aspects of the operational level reports and should provide proposals for improvements in the operational structures. The same is true between operational level reports and their proposed changes/improvements in tactical level preparedness.

At each level, the readiness report must answer a specific question:

- Strategic level: Are the current armed forces sufficiently equipped and trained to collectively fulfil all current mission assignments and future challenges specified in the National Military Strategy?
- Operational level: Are the joint operational organisations assigned to the various Plans (activated⁶ and/or contingency) sufficiently equipped and trained to fulfil their assigned missions?
- Tactical level: Are current units sufficiently equipped and trained to achieve the capabilities for which they are designed⁷?

If, for an assigned mission, a unit has the right number of people, the necessary training, the required individual instruction, verified collective training, the necessary equipment, and ready infrastructure, then that unit is ready. It has the optimum level of readiness.

⁶ They include ongoing operations, including combat for countries engaged in conflict.

⁷ This refers to the so-called METL (Mission Essential Tasking List), which defines for each type of unit, battalion/brigade/division, the means it requires and the tasks it must be able to fulfil, which ultimately defines the Instruction and Training Plans.

If the answer is negative, then at each level the necessary actions should be proposed to mitigate the identified⁸ deficiencies.

Readiness systems are not predictive systems. That is, they cannot anticipate exactly when a force is ready to fight. Although the authorities of the Ministries of Defence use the data provided by the readiness systems for decision-making, it must be assumed that even if the data are verified (not subjective information), they are not all-encompassing. There are other factors that influence the readiness equation, such as the ever necessary 'will to win'.

It should be clear that the implementation of a readiness system is not a guarantee of success. What is important is to be aware that readiness is a key element of the equation in the Defence Strategic Planning cycle.

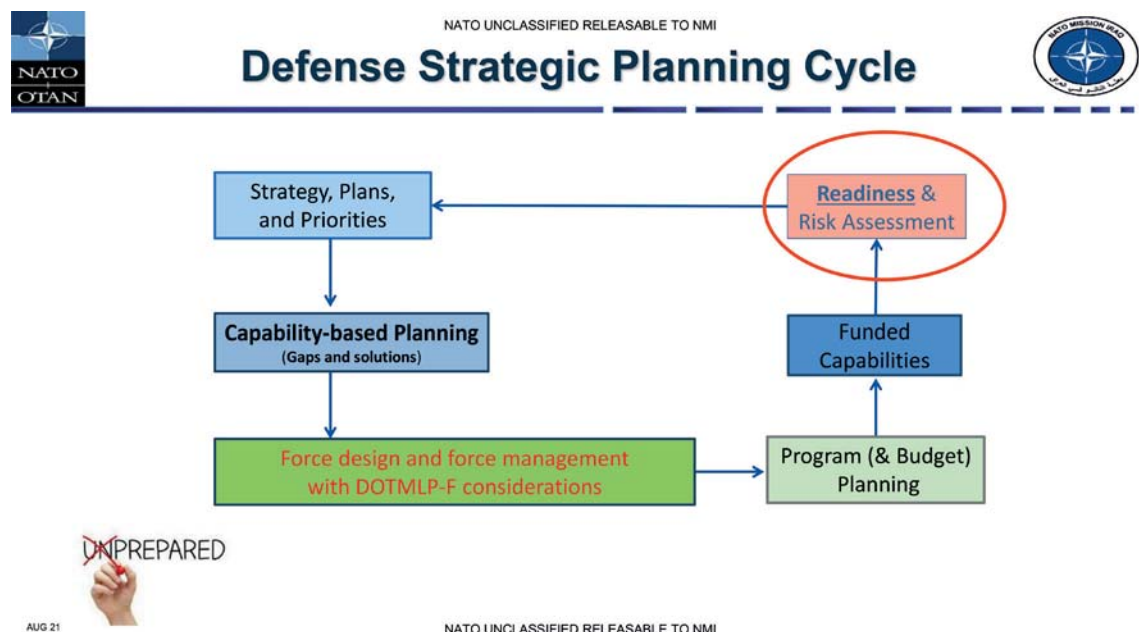


Figure 1: Strategic Defence Planning Cycle (Own elaboration)

Readiness in the Defence Planning Cycle

Following the arrows and concepts in the attached Figure 1, one can see the role of Defence Planning and the role that readiness plays in it all. The premise is to have a comprehensive regulatory skeleton for Defence Planning.

1. From a given nation's National Security Strategy, National Security Objectives will emanate. Many countries draft a document called a National Defence Strategy or Defence Policy that will describe how the relevant Ministry of Defence will work together to achieve the objectives set out in the National Security Strategy.

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⁸ These deficiencies are often identified by their English term shortfalls.

2. From this National Defence Strategy⁹ or Defence Policy will derive a key document for the readiness system, the National Military Strategy¹⁰, which will describe how the SAF will be sized and employed to achieve the objectives of the National Defence Policy¹¹.

KEY STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS ON SECURITY AND DEFENSE

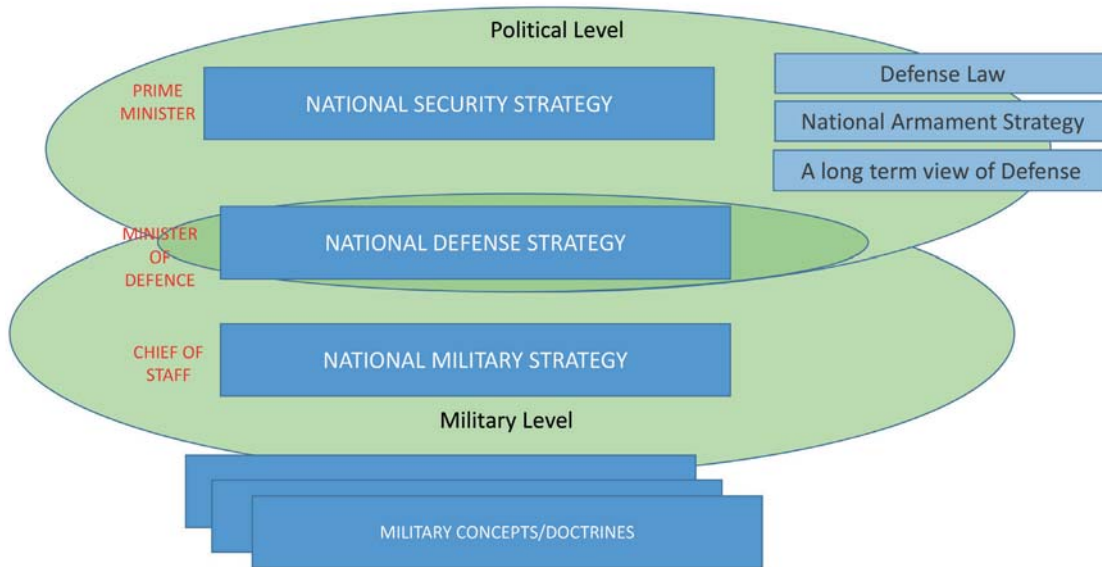


Figure 2: Key Security and Defence Strategy Documents. Source: NMI Induction Training Brief to Newcomers OCT2021

After conducting a thorough mission analysis on the basis of the above defence and national security strategic guidance documents, it will be possible to identify missions and tasks both within the defence sector and shared with other ministries; identify national security threats relevant to the defence sector; identify MOD responsibilities/roles; describe desired end states; build and size sets of required capabilities; and finally define scenarios.

3. The result will be the production of several documents: the Defence Planning Directive or Guidance¹² (DPD or DPG), and derived from these the Force Planning Directive and the Operational Planning Directive.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) will produce the Defence Planning Directive or Guidance. In the Spanish case, planning is divided into Military Planning and Resource Planning.

⁹ Equivalent to the Spanish “National Defence Directive (DDN)”.

¹⁰ Also known in certain nations as “Defence White Paper”.

¹¹ In the Spanish case, we are talking about the Defence Policy Directive.

¹² In Spain, this is done through the DPM (Military Planning Directive), which emanates from the DDN.

DEFENSE PLANNING PROCESS WITHIN SPAIN

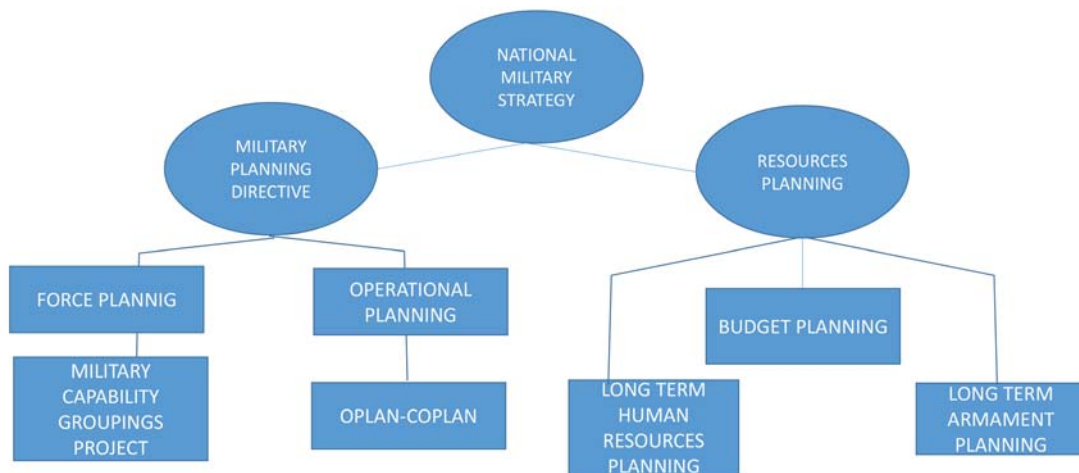


Figure 3: Articulation of Defence Planning in Spain: Source: Author's own elaboration

From the Military Planning Directive flows the Force Planning Directive and the Operational Planning Directive.

The Force Planning Directive will set out the structure of the SAF, its size and the capabilities to be maintained and achieved. In Spain, it would be the equivalent of Military Capabilities Planning.

The Operational Planning Directive will set out the possible scenarios for SAF action.

The last step is the approval of the so-called “Concept of Operations” (also called “joint operational concept”), which in Spain is the Concept of Employment of the Armed Forces (CEFAS).

4. Budget planning.
5. Once the funding obtained is known, it will be possible to know which needs can be financed.
6. “Readiness Assessment” where, at the strategic level, the degree to which the missions assigned by the National Military Strategy (NMS) can be fulfilled will be assessed by analysing the state of Personnel, Material, Education and Training and Support Infrastructures, and comparing these results with the capabilities achieved after the funding obtained.

Readiness in Spain

The equivalent in Spanish of the readiness is “alístitamiento” (enlistment), which defines for a given unit the readiness and operational capability to carry out an assigned mission, for an established environment intensity.

The concepts of operational readiness, operational capability, and environment intensity are related, since the lower the operational capability of a unit the longer the period required for it to be ready to perform a mission, and the higher the intensity of the environment the longer it takes for it to be ready to perform a mission. In other words, the time for the unit to be “ready” is lengthened.

In Spain, the JEMAD, as the person responsible for the operational effectiveness of the SAF, issues guidelines to direct the readiness of the Force and assesses and monitors the operational readiness of the Force’s units¹³.

The readiness of a Spanish unit is a responsibility shared by the organisational and operational structure, and takes the form of levels of availability, coverage of personnel, material and resources, and a degree of I/A (Training).

Operational readiness is the amount of time¹⁴ a unit has to be in a position to perform its assigned tasks in an operational environment of a given intensity, which in the case of overseas operations will be understood as the time to initiate projection¹⁵.

In the case of Spain, no organisations have been created exclusively for the elaboration of readiness reports at any level.

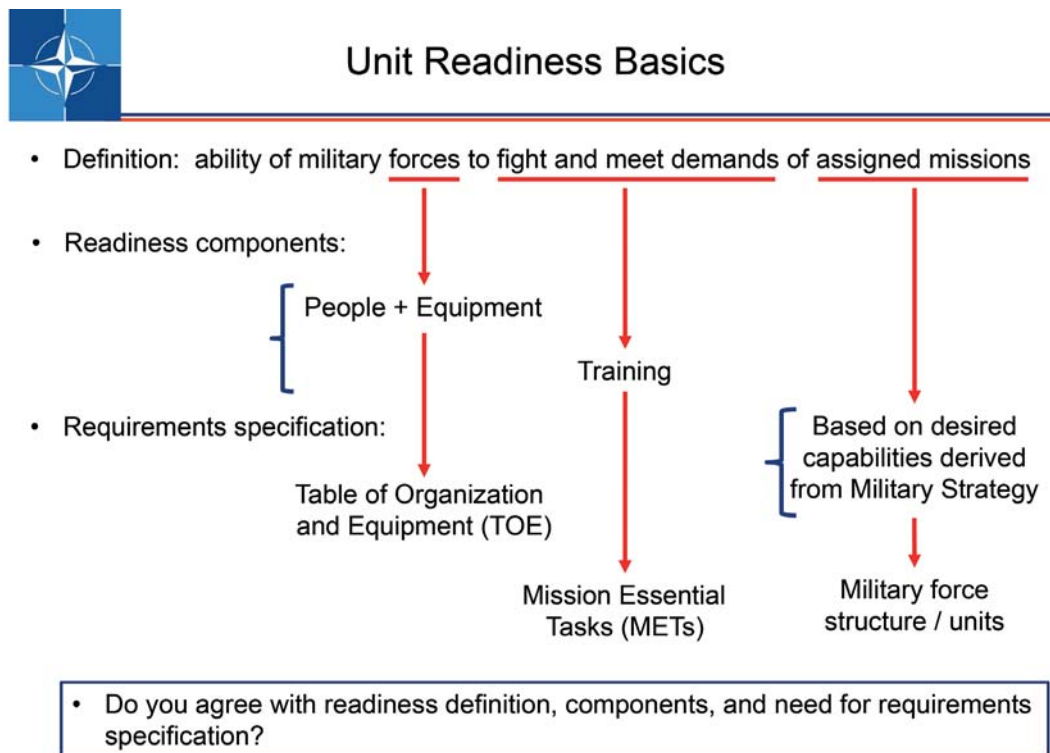


Figure 4: Simplification of the concept of Combat Unit Readiness. Source: Author’s own elaboration

¹³ PDC-01(A). Doctrine for the employment of the Armed Forces. (2018).

¹⁴ This will lead to the existence of “Immediate Response Forces” (Notice to Move (NTM) between 2 and 20 days), “High Readiness Forces” (NTM between 30 and 90 days), “Low Readiness Forces” (NTM 180 days or more) and Unavailable Forces.

¹⁵ JEMAD Directive 05/12 on the evaluation of the operational capability and availability of armed forces units.

JEMAD Directive 05/12 states that, given the difficulty of measuring the availability of the Force's organic units, at the strategic-operational level only the readiness of the planned contributions of the Armies/Navy and organisations directly subordinate to the JEMAD (Military Emergency Unit, Joint Cyberspace Command and Operations Command) to the JSOR¹⁶ (Joint Statement of Requirements) of the Joint Force Core (JFC¹⁷) should be analysed on the basis of certain requirements (operational availability, sustainment capability measured in days and intensity of the environment). In other words, at the strategic-operational level, only the forces attributed (transferred or enlisted) to the operational structure are considered.

Each of these capabilities is defined by its component elements: material (M), infrastructure (I), human resources (R), training (A), doctrine (D), organisation (O) and interoperability (I), which will facilitate its analysis according to the "MIRADO-I"¹⁸.

The availability and need for a particular type of capacity and its use, the relevance of each activity to a given operation and its complexity vary from case to case. Consequently, the importance of each joint function in each type of operation is emphasised. This is therefore a key element at the military strategic and operational levels in determining force requirements.

Last, there is the intensity of the environment, the degree of military opposition, or organised violence, present in an area of operations. This can be High, Medium or Low.

Conventional combat operations predominate in the first, although these may be combined with asymmetric-type actions. In "Medium" there is a mix of limited conventional and non-conventional operations, with the latter usually predominating. And, in the absence of an organised military opposition, "Low" operations are mainly conducted to ensure freedom of action against non-conventional threats.

Readiness assessment in Spain

The missions of the Spanish Armed Forces are taken from the Constitution and Framework Law 05/2005 on National Defence. These missions are carried out through the execution of operations that are classified as either standing or reactive, depending on the degree of force readiness and the time of activation¹⁹.

¹⁶ Forces and assets assigned to a joint force for the accomplishment of a mission. It is defined by the assignment of so-called serials. Each serial defines the unit type and associated tactical capabilities.

¹⁷ NFC: understood as a set of units, headquarters/command elements assigned to the operational structure or prepared for rapid deployment and employment by the JEMAD.

¹⁸ PDC-01(A). Doctrine for the employment of the Armed Forces.

¹⁹ PDC-01(A). Doctrine for the employment of the Armed Forces. (2018).

To address these missions, “Force Development” is carried out to ensure that the military capabilities of the SAF respond to the operational needs identified in each military planning cycle. This process includes the assessment of their degree of readiness. In other words, it focuses on the assessment of the force transferred to the operational chain.

Within the Defence Staff, use is made of JEMAD Directive 13/15 for the preparation of the Joint Force (JF) Periodic Readiness Report²⁰ (FC). It is therefore the element that serves to assess the state of readiness focused on in the Joint Force Core (JFC). In other words, it includes both transferred units and those enlisted in the different Contingency Plans (COPs/COPLANS).

All units, headquarters/command elements and trainers of the FC not included in the NFC are integrated into the NFC through the rotation cycles²¹ established by the Armies/Navy and joint bodies. This ensures readiness, i.e., the timely availability and operational capability to carry out an assigned mission, while guaranteeing the sustainability of operations over time.

The Military Planning Directive (MPD) sets out the criteria and instructions for building the Joint Force with the required readiness and capabilities to be able to cope with operational and contingency plans.

The Concept of Employment of the Armed Forces (CEFAS) identifies the operations that the Armed Forces must carry out, as well as the types and degrees of effort required of them.

The NFC’s degree of readiness is obtained from the analysis of the information provided by the Army/Navy and agencies under the JEMAD and is used to:

- Report to senior departmental authorities on the Operational Capability of the Joint Force Organisational Units and its evolution, and on the readiness of the NFC.
- Provide a Force Planning estimate of the state of military capabilities, as defined in the Military Planning Directive.
- Identify gaps and areas for improvement in the organisational structure to achieve the level of readiness required by the operational structure.

The Spanish report²² is grouped into three main blocks: Status of the Operational Capability by Capability Areas, status of the Joint Force Cores and status of the Specific Area.

²⁰ The FC is made up of all the members of the “Forces” of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, in addition to the determined components of the commands subordinate to the JEMAD. Armies/Navy are organised into Headquarters, Force and Force Support.

²¹ The units go through the states Stand-Up, Stand-by, Stand-Down.

²² Readiness report 2020. Defence Staff. Kingdom of Spain.

- Status of Operational Capacity by Capacity Areas²³
- This is provided based on data made available by the organisational structure and will be measured by quantifying and analysing the MIRADO-I factors, i.e., for each Military Capability, with its associated priority according to the MBM, the status is reported in percentages.
- NFC status:
 - The aim is to present a comparison of the NFC's JSOR serials, with limitations between the current and previous year. A short assessment is introduced, and capabilities are identified that need to be boosted to improve the degree of readiness.
- Status of the specific field:
 - This indicates the contribution of each force structure to the joint capabilities in terms of the operational capacity of the units associated with each of them, the achievements attained and the lines to be promoted in the short term.

The report also includes:

- Analysis of existing ammunition.
- Proposed actions to improve operational capacity.
- Risk analysis: once the operational capability and availability of units for operational use has been analysed, the risks that could compromise the achievement of the Defence Objectives are identified.
- Conclusions, in which the JEMAD identifies specific lines of action, possible doctrinal developments and issues to be introduced in joint training.

Having completed the explanation of how readiness assessment is carried out in Spain at the strategic/operational level, to conclude this section we will clarify how the assessment of the readiness level of the units at the tactical level is carried out.

In the Army, in the so-called "ET Availability Plan", and to keep the degree of readiness of the units assigned to the NFC up to date, the commands subordinate to the JEME with units included in the NFC or assigned to other commitments must submit their corresponding reports on the operational status of units on an annual basis. The resulting operational status will reflect the ratio of a unit's combat power

23

The following capability areas have been established: command and control; engagement capability; situational awareness; projection; sustainment; survival and protection; and contribution to state action.

to its total allocated combat power²⁴, and an assessment of the unit's command and control and logistic support capabilities.

Last, it is worth mentioning that the units that are part of the different NFCs, i.e., identified in the "JSOR" serials, will have to pass the corresponding readiness level assessment to attest that they meet the requirements identified by the NFC. This is done through the so-called CREVALs (Combat Readiness Evaluation of Land HQs and Units). The relevant authority after CREVAL will certify whether it meets the availability and capability requirements.

For the rest of the units that are not transferred to the operational chain and that remain in the organic chain, the evaluation is carried out indirectly through the General Army/Navy Readiness Plans. The units produce what is known as the "Unit Readiness Report (INFALIST²⁵)", which is submitted every six months by the organic chain, and which in some way includes data similar to those included in the readiness reports of other countries.

Examples of readiness systems in other countries

Readiness in the USA

The National Defence Strategy²⁶ specifies that forces must be prepared to defeat (defeating) any aggression that may come from an external power; be prepared to deter (detering) other aggression anywhere in the world; and be able to deal with (disrupting) terrorist and WMD threats, all while defending (defending) the national territory. For many years, the measurement of capabilities associated with the "Four C²⁷" has been the basis for measuring military readiness.

"Military Readiness" and the concept of "Sustainability" have been the subject of intense debate in the United States. The Department of Defence defines Military Readiness and Sustainability as essential components of a military capability, given that having a capability initially that does not sustain the effort over the required period is not adequate.

24 According to the combat powers reflected in the appendix to the publication Data for the Development and Confrontation of Action Lines. Appendix to the Operations Planning Method. Tactical Level. PMET OR5-014.

25 Until a few years ago, this INFALIST was known as the "Unit Availability Report (UAR)",

26 The US National Defence Strategy is the reference document for understanding US defence interests and threats. After a decade without an update, the Trump administration ordered the Secretary of Defence to update it. It was published in 2018 and is the complementary element of the 2017 National Security Strategy.

27 Four D's: defeating, deterring, disrupting and defending.

The US believes that an inadequate level of readiness could incite potential adversaries to attack its national interests. American leaders consider it key to be able to know at all times whether or not the SAF is prepared to deal with a situation that may arise. To this end, knowing the shortfalls and the costs associated with the attainment of resources, in combination with the available funding, will make it possible to know whether the objectives of military readiness, sustainability and therefore the desired capabilities can be achieved²⁸.

In the first decade of the 21st century the two concepts were considered separately, but from 2012 onwards, the concepts of Status of Resources and Training Systems (SORTS) and the days of supply (DOS) were merged to reflect the status of a unit. From then on, it was renamed GSORTS (Global Status of Resources and Training System).

The first reflects the staffing situation, the I/A and the equipment at its disposal, and the second indicates the number of days of supply (DOS) maintained at each level of command to sustain the force's capabilities over time.

In 1991, the Defence Advisory Group in the United States contracted the RAND Corporation²⁹ to review the processes for measuring and evaluating readiness. Large force projections in Eastern Europe, Iraq and Afghanistan, and expeditionary combat experience gained during these deployments, have contributed definitively to the development of metrics, level control and scientific readiness measurement mechanisms³⁰.

The conclusion was that readiness cannot rely exclusively on the immediate availability of resources and budget allocations to correct identified shortfalls. The consultant's study proposed that readiness should be examined from different points of view:

- L/R
- Equipment
- Support
- Supporting infrastructures
- Personal (from all perspectives)
- Mobilisation capacity
- Generation of joint operational organisations
- Efficient resource management

28 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Guide 3401D to the Chairman's Readiness System.

29 This company is still present today in the DoD and is still very much present in the readiness analysis and evaluation processes. <https://www.rand.org/>

30 The term scientific should be understood as the opposite of imprecise or subjective measurements.

- And, should it be the case, the national capacity to increase arms production.
- The study argued the need to link readiness and sustainability by linking information at different levels:
 - Peacetime I/A with the associated availability cycle
 - Scenarios for action and projection capacity
 - Location of the warehouses from which materials are to be projected
 - Time and mobilisation capacity
 - Intensity of the combat environment

Consequently, the US SAF nowadays assesses readiness in three dimensions: Unit Readiness (tactical level), Joint Force Core Readiness (operational level), and Sustainability.

The focus on tactical unit readiness reports is gradually shifting away from the obsession with trying to fill in the gaps in unit templates. Instead, the focus has shifted towards trying to minimise the time needed to achieve the capabilities required of such a unit.

The readiness of the Joint Force Cores is fully focused on integrating the capabilities of the specific components but adding the capabilities of the units that provide the joint force projection capability.

Sustainability is seen in terms of maintaining levels of forces in combat at all times.

The feasibility of integrating readiness assessments and reports and understanding the interaction between these three dimensions is considered essential.

In the US, there is a specific structure dedicated to the evaluation of the readiness systems³¹. The Chairman's Readiness System (CRS), implemented in 1994, provides Combatant Command, Combat Support and Combat Logistics Support (COCOM), Service, and Combat Support Agency (CSA) (C/S/As) units with a common framework for conducting readiness assessment reports. As mentioned above, the focus is on the evaluation of joint groupings, i.e., on the forces transferred to the operational chain.

The CRS provides the means to assess the readiness of the entire Department of Defence (DoD) to meet the missions assigned by the Military Security Strategy (NMS) and captures the state of readiness at all three levels: strategic, operational and tactical.

The CRS allows the Secretary of Defence to advise on critical gaps and strengths in force capabilities identified during the preparation and review of contingency plans. This allows a risk analysis to be carried out and to see what effects such shortcomings have on the extent to which the assigned missions of the DoD can be accomplished. But it also outlines how to assess the preparedness of the C/S/As.

³¹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Guide 3401D to the Chairman's Readiness System.

Until the establishment of the CRS, the only existing system for measuring readiness was the aforementioned GSORTS “global state of resources and training system”. The GSORTS served two key functions: 1) as the registry of all joint operations; and 2) it recorded the operability of units transferred to the operational level, containing accurate data (metrics) in terms of readiness.

US units currently report on their readiness level using the two complementary systems: GSORTS and DRRS-S (Defence Readiness Reporting System-Strategic).

GSORTS reports provide information on how the unit is equipped and trained to be part of a joint operational organisation that can be transferred up the operational chain. It also includes the subjective assessment made by the Head of Unit.

Furthermore, it conducts what is known as a unit resource level assessment, known as a “C-level evolution”, which compares the resources the unit has with those needed to carry out wartime missions.



Unit Readiness Reporting Form

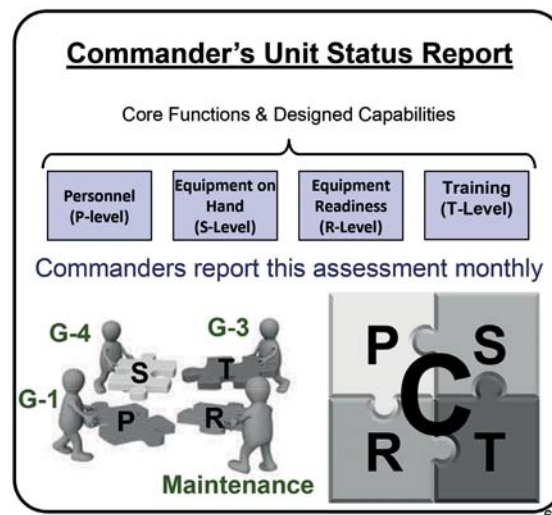
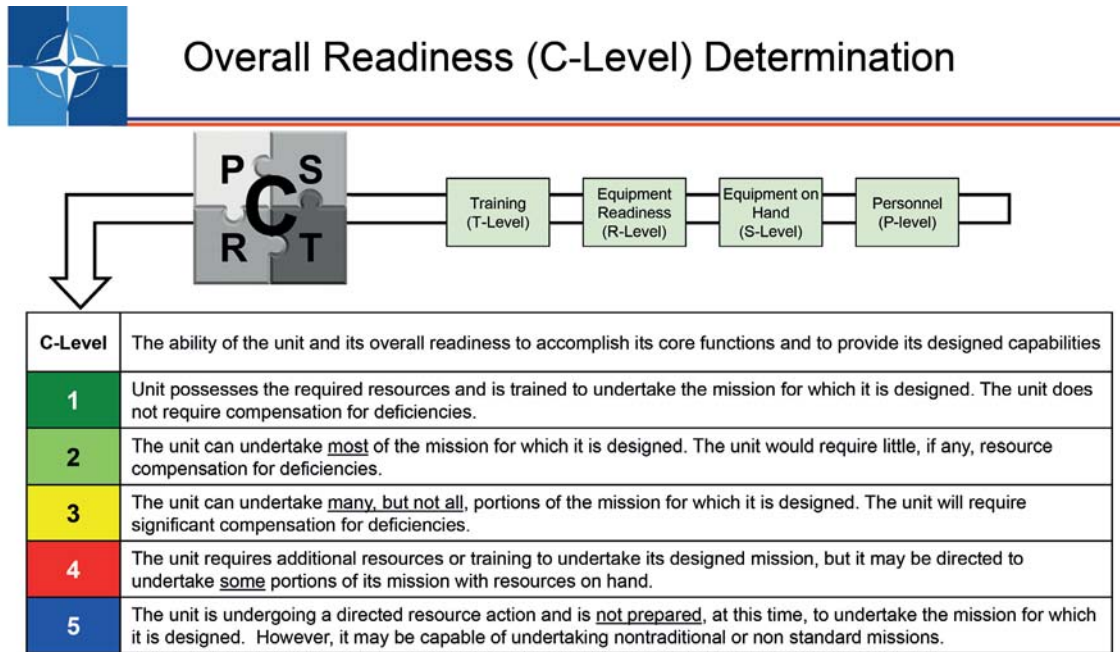


Figure 5³²

Level C includes assessment of personnel status (level P), available equipment and supplies (including DOS) (level S), equipment status (level R), and training assess-

³² The figures in this section are taken from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Guide 3401D to the Chairman's Readiness System.

ment (level T), including NBC environment. The level varies between 1 (unit ready) and 5 (not ready). See Figure 6.



- C-Levels reflect the commander’s expert military judgment and assessment regarding the readiness of the unit.
- The C-Level is NOT an evaluation to grade a commander’s performance.

3

Figure 6: Aspects included in the Readiness Assessment at the Tactical level. Source Guide 3401D.

- The DRRS provides assessments of the degree of achievement of the so-called METL (*Mission Essential Tasking List*). They define the means required and the tasks that a unit of a battalion/brigade/division must be able to accomplish.

The DRRS establishes the assessments of the degree of achievement of the METLs according to the speciality (type) of each unit, so that managers can measure their level of readiness.

The system evaluates the task considered “essential” within the framework of a set of conditions under which the task is expected to be performed, as well as the requirements deemed necessary by the Head of Unit for the successful accomplishment of the mission. Until 2018, many of the tasks had a high expeditionary component.

There are three categories of METL assessments used to reflect the unit’s capabilities:

- Main tasks
- Assignment to a specific Operation
- And assignment to a top priority plan (Level 4).



Unit Readiness Reporting Form

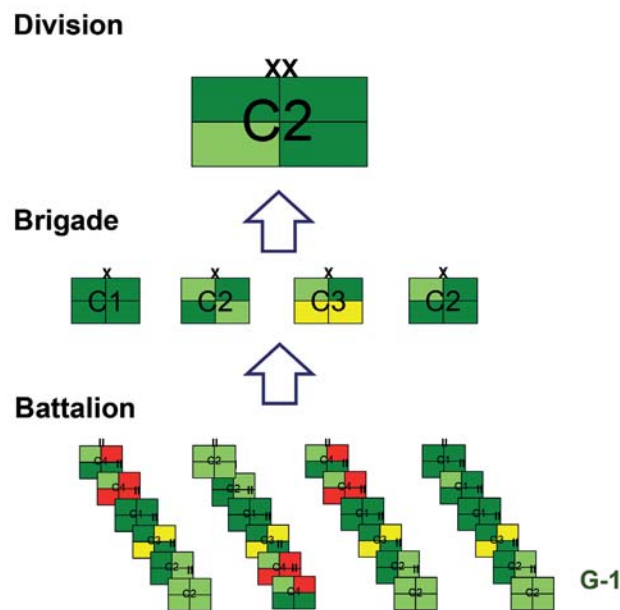


Figure 7: Tactical Level Report: Source Guide 3401D.

The assessment of the main tasks involves analysing the assigned missions according to the type of unit (tank battalion, mountain company, transmission regiment), while the categories “assignment to a specific operation” and “assignment to a plan” relate to the unit’s “assigned” mission within an operational environment.

As reflected in Figure 7, the readiness reports of the lower levels (battalion) condition (logically) those of the higher units (brigade), and these in turn condition the Divisions of which they form part.

The units that must perform the DRRS are all those that are assigned in the document “Forces for Joint Commands”, which can potentially be transferred, and which belong to an Operations Plan (OPLAN), Contingency Plan (CONPLAN) or support to Civil Authorities (DSCA).

North Korea’s demonstrations in 2017 prompted a shift in focus in the readiness assessment process. Since the fall of the “Iron Curtain”, preparations have been geared towards the projection of Expeditionary Forces. After 9/11, the emphasis shifted to counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism education and training. The resurgence of the nuclear threat posed by the supreme leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Yong-nam, has prompted renewed consideration of readiness for large-scale combat operations.

United Kingdom

In the UK, the Department of Defence has also developed a sophisticated system for defining, measuring and reporting on the readiness levels of its SAF.

First, it should be made clear that there are no specific readiness offices.

As in Spain, there are no Tactical level Readiness reports (either for the Army/Navy or for the Division and lower type units).

The readiness assessment focuses on the units transferred to the operational chain. The assessment of units not transferred to the operational chain is entrusted to the Preparedness Systems.

When a unit is assigned to a joint formation, it is transferred to the Chief of Staff (CHOD) through the Permanent Joint HQ. This unit receives the so-called “Readiness Order”, where the requirements associated with the force generated are marked. The readiness of individual units is therefore assessed and then extrapolated to define groupings for different operational scenarios outlined in the Defence White Paper.

The readiness assessment of a unit included in a transferred operational organisation includes three elements: personnel coverage, material coverage and I/A, the latter (training) having a very high specific weight.

There is only one annual readiness report that covers the strategic-operational level, like in Spain. The DoD regularly produces a confidential report to the High Council of Defence containing an analysis of the risks faced after analysing the balance of requirements in terms of capabilities and the levels achieved with the financial resources allocated.

The availability of the units varies between Ro and R11³³. Ro means that a force is properly equipped, trained and ready to deploy within the operational chain cluster; while R11 means that a unit could require around 365 days to prepare and deploy.

The readiness report also defines the capability of a force to undertake future operations in three measures (from B1 to B3). The first measure (B1) reflects the readiness of a given unit in peacetime. The second measure (B2) provides an assessment of the capability of the elements that are ready to be deployed to operations in a given timeframe; and the final measure (B3) accounts for the capability to conduct and sustain large-scale military operations. The report itself is based on a traffic light system

33 Ro - Immediate readiness - force elements ready to deploy, appropriately manned, equipped and supported. R1 - Extremely high readiness at two days' notice. R2 - Very high readiness at five days' notice. R3 - Very high readiness at 10 days' notice. R4 - High readiness at 20 days' notice. R5 - High readiness at 30 days' notice. R6 - Medium readiness at 40 days' notice. R7 - Medium readiness at 60 days' notice. R8 - Medium readiness at 90 days' notice. R9 - Low readiness at 180 days' notice. R10 - Very low readiness at 365 days' notice. R11 - Very low readiness with more than 365 days' notice.

showing the possible statuses: green (satisfactory), yellow (minor deficiencies), amber (serious deficiencies) and red (critical).

In recent years, the DoD has issued instructions to place more emphasis on improving B2 and B3 and has begun to better define these requirements in terms of the logistical support and combat power required, while also considering the required shift in recent decades towards expeditionary operations, but with a renewed emphasis on large-scale military operations.

Australia

Focusing on the Australian readiness assessment system, there are two levels: Tactical and Strategic. These levels are understood as “ready to be employed in the present”, and “preparing to face challenges in the future”.

The Australian Defence Forces (ADF) have historically focused on the tactical level. Its continued involvement in natural disasters (mainly floods and forest fires) and its role in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 testify to the effectiveness of tactical readiness. The objective is to obtain projectable, well-equipped and trained “units of action” based on a strict system of preparedness, leadership and effective C2³⁴.

Strategic readiness measures how “future-proof” the ADF is. Strategic preparedness is based on the institutional arrangements needed for future challenges including, among others, the capacity to modernise, mobilise, experiment, test and evaluate. The Army must be able to conduct Multi-Domain Operations in a joint environment. The Australian SAF has prioritised strategic over tactical readiness in the Defence White Paper. This document outlines the four pillars on which defence modernisation will be based: networking, protection, lethality and enablers.

Australia’s Defence White Paper (LBDA) 2016 sets out a comprehensive and accountable plan for Australia’s defence. It takes a comprehensive approach to bring together for the first time in a single document the key investment element needed to develop and sustain Australian Defence capabilities, by establishing a ten-year Integrated Investment Programme.

These key elements include equipment, infrastructure, information and communications technology, science and technology and personnel.

This document draws attention to the Australian government’s concern to expedite defence investment processes if circumstances dictate.

The LBDA incorporates a comprehensive review of the force structure to make it capable of responding to the challenges of the future operating environment (2030),

³⁴ Outline at the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies. Defence of Australia White Paper 2020 (LBDA) 2016.

ensuring alignment between strategy, capabilities and allocated resources. In other words, the Defence Planning Cycle. The result is a credible and balanced plan for an agile and powerful ADF, with far more consistent capabilities than today.

The key objective of the force structure review was to ensure the achievement of the key “enablers”: infrastructure (ports, airports, I/A fields), CIS, equipment (ships, aircraft, submarines and armoured assets), I/A of the personnel and the units, and assurance that the latest technologies are present in all fields.

Like in the US, in this LBDA the Australian Government recognises that an internationally competitive Australian defence industry is a fundamental element of National Defence development. Without the support of Australia’s industrial base, defence cannot be effective, especially in an increasingly high-tech world.

In the LBDA, training and instruction of personnel and training of units are considered essential elements for the successful implementation of the capabilities and strategic objectives set out. The staff is the essential enabler to develop the other capacities.

Although the specific chapter dedicated to readiness has disappeared in this LBDA, as was the case in the previous version of 2009, maintaining readiness levels at high levels remains an obvious concern.

The focus continues to be on units with very high availability and others with a lower level of availability.

The ADF, like the US, has the concepts of readiness and sustainability at its heart. This sustainability includes aspects of troop rotation, availability of strategic transport assets, supply and spare parts, and civilian companies to rely on in case of need.

The Australian readiness system will be complemented by establishing regional partnerships, especially in Asia and across the South-West Pacific.

Russia

In line with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s geopolitical vision, Russia’s military leadership has established its strategic posture in the world order in a thinly veiled manner. In the 1990s, Russia’s post-Soviet military faced a precipitous decline, combined with budgetary setbacks, and an absolute loss of readiness at all levels and affecting all aspects of the military. The First Chechen War in 1999 showed the serious shortcomings of the Russian army.

While the Russia-Georgia War of 2008 showed some sign of improvement, the readiness of the Russian military was at minimal levels. While Moscow successfully achieved its strategic objectives in that conflict, there were critical shortcomings in tactical engagement, logistics and operational art.

The Kremlin’s “Mediterranean strategy” has shown that the level of readiness has increased substantially. Russia’s forward presence in Syria is related to efforts to develop new military capabilities in a broader geopolitical context.

Moscow's recent massive exercises³⁵ (even during the Pandemic) should be interpreted as a direct response to the alleged build-up of NATO forces in the Eastern European, Baltic and Black Sea regions.

The modernisation and reform efforts of the Russian military are outlined in the latest Strategic Dossier of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) on Russia's Military Modernisation.

This document acknowledges that, while Russia's armed forces are much smaller today than they were in the Soviet era, conventional military capabilities are now at their highest point since the Russian armed forces were formed in 1992. Since 2010, sustained investment has supported an equipment modernisation programme.

Since 2012, the readiness plan has included the creation of well-manned, well-equipped, highly trained and highly available battalion-type units.

Structural reforms were also carried out as part of the "New Look" programme, launched at the end of 2008, to improve readiness. As a whole, conventional armed forces now enjoy a much higher level of readiness than previously but are primarily oriented towards force projection, as seen in Syria and Ukraine.

For the time being, high-intensity conflict-oriented readiness is more than doubtful, not least because it does not yet have the necessary economic power. Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that this goal is on the minds of the Russian leadership.

China

The opacity of the People's Republic of China on readiness (as in many other matters) is absolute. The modernisation and sustained increase in defence spending since the late 1980s is indicative of China's interest in occupying a position of supremacy in the international context.

As in the case of Russia, its preoccupation with modernising weapons systems is evident. The difference with President Putin's country is that the forces do not as yet have an expeditionary vocation. While Russia has shown its interest in the Mediterranean, the Asian giant has shown its interest in the South China Sea, with a constant military presence on its east coast and military exercises on the high seas.

Concern about having a high level of readiness in China has varied between an emphasis on "total war" preparedness and "local war" preparedness. After its opening to capitalism and its intention to become an economic power, there were a few years when its units were more oriented towards being prepared for local and small operations. Now again, with relative calm at home and no acknowledged desire to venture beyond its borders, China's vision seems to be focused on the long term. Technology is being given top

35 Note that the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Crimea in 2014 was covered up by military exercises.

priority and effort is being put into the evolution of Command and Control concepts and structures. During the Deng Xiaoping era, the focus of military reforms was on improving combat capability by creating a powerful army, equipped with modern weapons systems that could not be ignored by potential adversaries. During the Jiang Zemin era, the focus was on operational readiness, adopting concepts of process automation and above all the digitisation of the battlefield for information management superiority.

Iraq

The concept of readiness in Iraq and its associated system in the Iraqi Armed Forces (IAF) was introduced by the US in 2004. Attempts were made to transfer the US system outlined above, but with the Iraqi MoD's own stamp on it.

In close cooperation with the Institute for Security Governance (ISG)³⁶ and the Office of Security and Cooperation in Iraq (OSCI) at the US Embassy in Baghdad, Operation NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) has been working to establish and improve a comprehensive readiness system.

In Iraq, the lack of an approved National Military Strategy that clearly defines the IAF's missions is the first problem facing NMI Advisors.

Following the American model, the Iraqi MoD has specialised in readiness structures, covering the "classic" levels. Within the Military Inspector General (MIG) under the command of a Lieutenant General, the so-called Strategic Readiness Committee, headed by a Major General, was established at the end of 2019.

At the operational level, and subordinate to the Lieutenant General DCOS-OPS (equivalent to an Operations Division of a Joint Staff), a so-called Operational Readiness Office has been created within the Directorate of Movements (M3), headed by a Brigadier General with a few staff.

Last, Tactical Readiness Offices have been established in the individual armies³⁷ (Services Command) and in the Special Operations Division (ISF Division).

The assessment is based on a colour system similar to that used by the US.

Level 1: Units are capable of planning, executing and sustaining military operations without external support, relying on their own capabilities and resources.

³⁶ It is a US project. It is located within the International School of Education and Advising (ISEA) of the Defence Security Cooperation University (DSCU). It is a Centre of Excellence for Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) of the Ministries of Defence. As a component of the Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and one of the largest international Security Cooperation institutions, ISG builds partner capabilities through tailored mentoring, education and professional development programmes based on US values.

³⁷ The Iraqi Armed Forces are composed of 5 armies (Army, Navy, Air, Air Defence and Army Aviation) and a number of independent units, including the Special Operations Division (ISF Div) and the Special Division (Special Div) responsible for providing security in the so-called Green Zone.

Level One	From 85% to 100%
Level Two	From 70% to 84%
Level Three	From 50% to 69%
Level Four	From Zero to 49%

Figure 8: Colour Readiness Level Measurement System used in the Iraqi Armed Forces. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Level 2: The units are capable of planning, executing and sustaining military operations with very limited external support on an ad hoc basis.

Level 3: Units are partially capable of planning, executing and sustaining military operations in collaboration with other units, requiring external support for an intermediate percentage.

Level 4: Units are severely constrained in planning, executing and sustaining military operations, requiring a very high percentage of external support from other units.

The evaluation of combat units at the tactical level is done monthly, and all Battalion, Brigade, Division and Operational Command (Regional Command Post) units must submit their reports periodically to the Tactical Readiness Office of their respective Army.

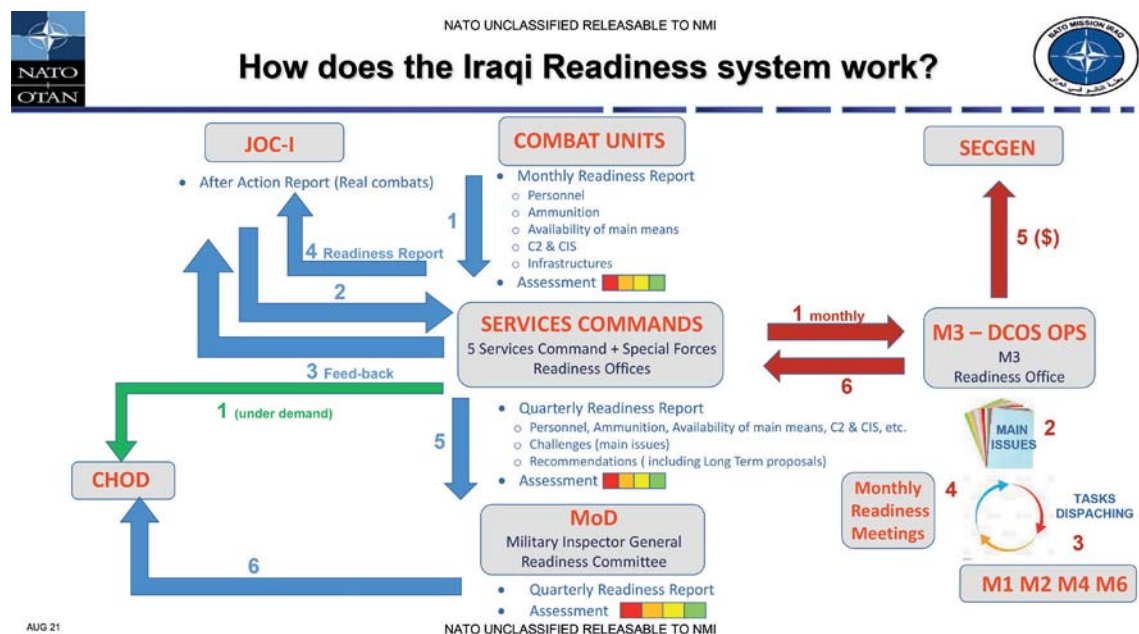


Figure 9: Iraqi Readiness System. Source: Author's own elaboration

This is where the first divergences from the American system become apparent.

In the Air Force, Air Defence, Army Aviation, Special Forces and Navy, combat units are hierarchical, i.e., battalions (or equivalent) report through the chain of com-

mand to the higher echelon (brigade (or equivalent)). These brigades incorporate the battalion reports into their report and submit a single report to the division to which they belong. Last, the largest organisational unit (Wing in the Air Force, Brigade in Air Defence, Bases in Army Aviation and Naval Bases and Marine Brigades in the Navy) sends a single report to the Readiness Office of each Service Command.

However, the Army inexplicably breaks this rule, and each unit (battalion, brigade, division, Operational Command) independently sends its own readiness report to the Ground Forces Readiness Office, which means that this office receives some 530 reports.

The report consists of a “PowerPoint” file (see Figure 10).

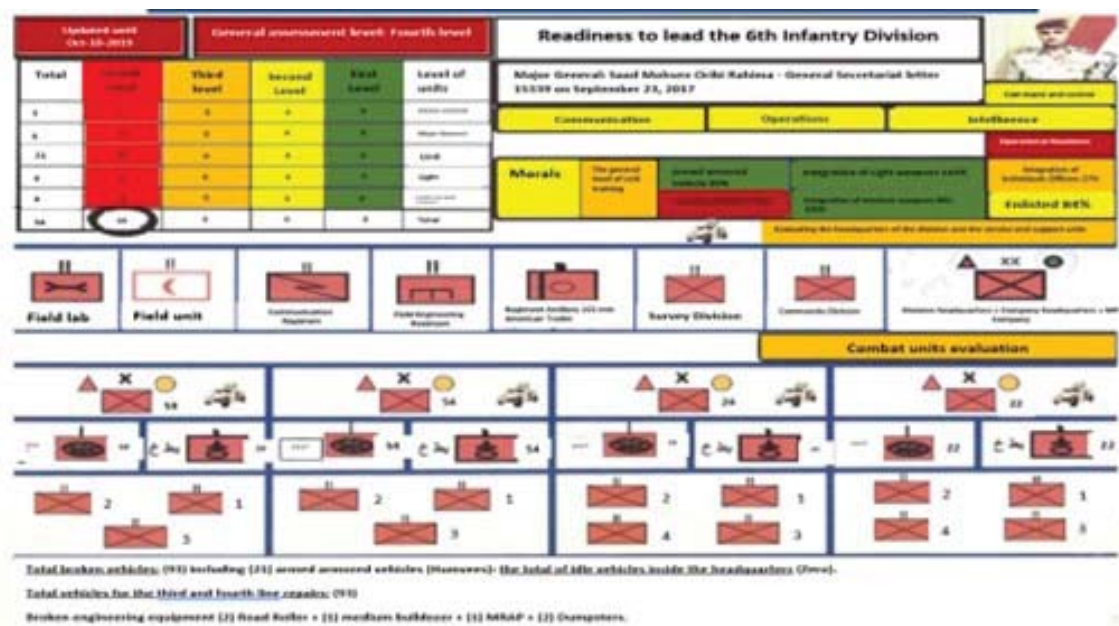


Figure 10: Example of an Iraqi Division Readiness Card. Source: Half-yearly Readiness Tactical Report 2017

In the Iraqi SAF there is only one chain of command, the organic chain. In other words, there is no operational chain and therefore no transfer of forces from the armies to the JEMAD. Therefore, the readiness report is only drafted on organisational units, making it impossible to assess joint entities or groupings as they do not exist as such.

These monthly reports are also submitted to the M3 Operational Readiness Office on a monthly basis. The role of this Operational Office is far from the mission that its name might suggest. It does not draft any kind of operational level readiness reports covering the analysis of the 5 Army/Navy forces in a joint environment in the current war against DAESH. Nor does it assess the readiness of the forces attributed to OPLAN or COPLAN, as they no longer exist.

This M3 Office is a compilation of developments reported by the armies (personnel coverage problems, logistical supply/maintenance needs, etc.). These developments are distributed by area and assigned for their resolution to the Directorates (M,s) of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Last, a monthly meeting (Monthly Readiness Meeting) is held, chaired by the Head of M3 (Division General), where the Armies/Navy are

informed of the results of the actions carried out by the different M3s to mitigate shortcomings and problems³⁸.

The closest it comes to considering aspects derived from lessons identified by a joint force in actual combat against ISIS (Operational Readiness) is as follows. The element directing operations against DAESH is the Joint Operations Centre-Iraq (JOC-I), under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. It is in this JOC-I that actions against terrorist cells are planned. Once planned, they are forwarded to the armies for implementation. In most cases, it is the Ground Forces that lead the operation. When the operation in question has been completed, the ET produces a “Post Mission Report”, which is forwarded to the participating armies and JOC-I, outlining lessons learned and possible improvements in terms of materials and procedures.

Every three (3) months, the Tactical Readiness Offices submit to the Strategic Readiness Committee a specific report on each of the armies, incorporating the unit files and a kind of summary of needs and a series of proposals for actions to be taken to mitigate the shortcomings. This report is currently quite brief and in most of the armies incorporates little added value to the sum of all the units’ shortages.

Last, and also on a quarterly basis, the Strategic Readiness Committee is supposed to submit the Strategic Readiness Report to the Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD) or the Minister of Defence. This has only happened once. On 4 July 2021, Inspector General Lieutenant General Emmad Al-Zuhayri presented the First Strategic Readiness Report to the Minister of Defence. Although its content clearly has room for improvement, it must be considered a success from an Iraqi perspective. In addition, this document has enabled NMI to produce an Advisory Report to improve both the strategic report and the corresponding tactical reports.

Following a detailed study of the First Strategic Readiness Report and the quarterly reports produced by the Army/Navy Readiness Offices, the most relevant elements identified were as follows:

- Instruction and training are barely considered in the reports. In fact, it is taken for granted that all units are perfectly trained, which is totally unrealistic.
- It is mainly oriented towards reporting on the availability of the media, which does not reflect the true readiness, providing only a very partial view.
- The requests and actions proposed by the Army/Navy are not linked to the missions coming from the National Military Strategy.

³⁸ This procedure is imposed by the excessive centralisation of the system. Ninety per cent of decisions must be taken by the Chief of Defence Staff (CHOD) himself. For example, a brigade commander may not make any changes of personnel, assets or even ammunition between subordinate units. A simple movement of boxes of mortar ammunition between battalions must be authorised in the handwriting of the CHOD. It is at this meeting, therefore, that the CHOD approves all the tasks necessary to mitigate the problems reported in the monthly reports.

- There are hardly any references to C4I capacity, nor are there any references to the Cyber Threat.
- Likewise, there are no impressions or assessments of their own, or of the Army Chiefs, or of the CHOD.
- There is no prioritisation in the proposal of elements to be corrected. Everything is at the same level.

New trends

In the last decade, most Western defence ministries have based their measures of SAF readiness compliance primarily on the “Four Rs” (defeating, deterring, disrupting, defending)³⁹. These “Four Rs” are conflict oriented. However, they do not cover all the missions assigned to the SAF in recent years.

As a result, countries such as the US is moving towards a more holistic approach, and three new elements have been added to “conflict preparedness”: crisis situations, competition for global/regional hegemony, and the ability to adapt to change.

In other words, there is a shift from a readiness assessment focused on the “Four Rs” to a new vision oriented towards the “Four Cs⁴⁰”. The SAF is now not only prepared for conflict; it must also be prepared to deal with crisis situations at home and abroad, maintaining competitiveness with potential regional adversaries, keeping an eye on new threats to adapt in the shortest possible time and deal with them in the best possible way.

To be ready for the first three Cs in the future, Defence Departments must balance current readiness with the challenges required to meet future challenges.

C for Change, or the ability to adapt to what the future may hold, will be essential.

The US has committed to the creation of a specific command (Army Futures Command-AFC) to focus on analysing what the SAF’s Concept of Operational Posture (CONOP) will look like in a Multi-domain Operations (MDO) environment. The three elements they consider in this CONOP are: a well-defined and enlisted force, capable of working in different domains and with the ability to rapidly adapt (converge) its capabilities to the domains where the crisis situation leads it to execute its missions.

Extrapolating this thinking to the Spanish national environment, we can say that the approach to the “Four Cs” has already begun and is underway.

³⁹ Lt. Gen. Charles Flynn. (2020). Article: The Question at the Center of Army Readiness: Ready for What?

⁴⁰ Four C’s: conflict, crisis, competition, change.

C for Conflicts is perfectly covered by the assessment of the readiness of the units assigned to the Joint Force Core. As for C for Crisis, apart from the reaction forces included in the NFC that can be used, the creation of the Military Emergency Unit back in 2005 laid the foundations for emergency and disaster management. The participation of the Army and Navy in operations Baluarte and Balmis have demonstrated the SAF's level of preparedness, and have shown that their orientation towards C for Conflicts has not led to a loss of capabilities to deal with crisis situations.

In relation to C for Competition for regional hegemony, defence investments, although limited and always scarce, are making it possible to keep a balance with neighbouring countries that could pose a threat. Nonetheless, a presence in the areas of interest is guaranteed for the time being.

C for Change, in the Hispano-Spanish context, is the Joint Concept Development Centre⁴¹ (CCDC) integrated in CESEDEN, which directs and coordinates the study of new operational concepts to support the enhancement of military capabilities.

Conclusions

Readiness has become the cornerstone guiding defence planning processes, providing policymakers with a measure of the degree of fulfilment of assigned missions and the shortfall (never surplus) in required capabilities in relation to available economic resources.

Readiness evaluation systems are not “per se” a guarantee of success. They are simply a way of obtaining data in a pseudo-scientific way, to know the state of readiness of a force. However, there are still other elements inherent to armies such as leadership and the will to win⁴² that must be considered.

The readiness systems of most Western countries have many points of convergence, most of them covering the evaluation of personnel, materials provision, assessment of the state of the infrastructure and especially so-called “training”, understood as the synthesis of the individual instruction of the combatant and collective training. Then, the particular circumstances of each nation and its National Security and Defence

⁴¹ Order DEF/166/2015 creates the Joint Concept Development Centre, CCDC, and establishes that it will direct and coordinate the study of new operational concepts that support the enhancement of military capabilities, maintaining the necessary relations with counterpart bodies in allied countries and international organisations, and with the Directorate General of Armaments and Material, for collaboration and information exchange. It will also promote and coordinate the study and development of joint and combined doctrine, maintaining the necessary relations with the bodies of the Armed Forces and international organisations responsible in this area, through the analysis of the lessons identified and doctrinal shortcomings.

⁴² These elements are de facto incorporated into the different systems such as recruitment or I/A to facilitate their achievement.

Strategies introduce additional aspects linked to their levels of ambition and representativeness at the regional level or in the global context.

Assessment of readiness is a necessity for countries if their executive branch wants to know whether their armed forces are prepared at all times to deal with threats to national security.

This assessment cannot be based on “feelings” or “hunches”. Readiness systems are moving away from subjective components and towards scientific data, applying increasingly accurate metrics and systems.

Readiness systems work at three levels: strategic, operational and tactical. All of them assess the state of the elements that define the capabilities needed to cope with the missions assigned to the SAF. These reports are communicating vessels. A tactical unit that does not meet the required readiness level, be it due to lack of resources, lack of training, lack of personnel or poor infrastructure, will affect the operational level, since the joint force into which it should be integrated will also be affected and may not reach the operational capability and readiness required by the strategic level.

The examples of readiness systems shown indicate different trends. While the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have invested a great deal of intellect and effort in defining and articulating capability measurement and unit evaluation procedures, there are other countries such as Spain that have adhered to NATO's strict guidelines. Countries such as Iraq have had to adapt a truly ambitious readiness system (like the American one) to the reality of a SAF that continues to fight with DAESH and that can do little training and instruction as most of the forces are still immersed in providing security to the civilian population.

The collapse of the Soviet Union conditioned readiness systems, gearing them towards achieving capabilities aimed at having expeditionary forces that should project international stability. The prominence achieved by terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS led to the effort to train counterterrorism and counter-insurgency units to adapt to operational scenarios. In recent years, due to strategic moves by the major powers, or nuclear powers, and above all Russia's intervention in Ukraine in 2022, there has again been a change in trends in readiness objectives, with large-scale combat theatres of operations returning to the forefront.

Knowledge of China's and Russia's readiness systems is rather limited, but in both cases experts in the field say that both powers have prioritised modernising weapon systems and having battalion-type units with the highest readiness. In the Russian case, it is currently oriented towards expeditionary projection forces, but all hypotheses suggest that they are gradually shifting back to units ready to confront high-intensity conflicts. In China's case, its “noiseless” preparedness for possible high-intensity conflict seems more than evident.

In essence, the new trend in partner countries' readiness is to balance short-term preparedness with the need to have an adequate level of readiness to meet future (long-term) challenges, even at the cost of taking greater risks now.

Generally speaking, the new trends in readiness (in countries whose economies allow it) are to invest in improving their military capabilities in the coming years, based on new weapons systems, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, state-of-the-art telecommunications and information systems (CIS), biotechnology and advanced energy management systems, including energy storage.

Disasters and emergencies of all kinds in recent years have demonstrated that the 21st century SAF must be prepared for all types of missions (not just conflicts). In short, in the words of Lieutenant General Flynn, today's readiness must be framed within the concept of the Four C's (*conflict, crisis, competition, change*).

Included in the panorama are pandemics, earthquakes, the defence of national sovereignty, a position of strength in the regional environment and participation in expeditionary operations alongside our allies, without forgetting large and small-scale conflicts, although the latter are the privilege of the world powers involved in the struggle for hegemony.

Focusing on our own system for assessing the operational capability and readiness of Spanish armed forces units, we can affirm that it is fulfilling its role, and therefore the Joint Force is reaching its required readiness levels to date to face the missions assigned by successive DDN.

CEFAS-21 specifies the Military Strategy through Military Strategic Lines of Action to achieve the Military Strategic Objectives, which are developed through General Action Frameworks. This CEFAS is one of the main challenges, learning to manoeuvre along the fine line between peace, crisis and conflict within the so-called "Grey Zone".

To improve, metrics should be incorporated to achieve operational readiness not only at the operational level but especially at the tactical level, to deal with activities that the adversary might use (cyber-attacks, propaganda, sabotage, covert or clandestine operations, riots, and the like).

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