

## **The EU BATTLE GROUPS: Regiments of the Empire**

by Roger Cole (*updated May 2006*)

*"We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies to be sovereign and indefeasible." - 1916 Proclamation*

*"Are we all clear that we want to build something that can aspire to be a world power?" - EU Commission President, Romano Prodi, 13/2/01*

In 1916 the Irish people were given a choice: support the Irish Volunteers of the Irish Republic or the Regiments of the British Union and Empire, a choice between Irish Independence or Imperialism. In 2006, as the Irish Defence Forces are about to be integrated into the EU Battle Groups, the Regiments of the European Union and Empire, the Irish people are again being offered a choice between Imperialism and Irish Independence. The decision of the Government to have 200 Irish soldiers join the EU Battle Groups is just another step in the process in the destruction of Irish Independence, Irish Democracy and Irish Neutrality. The integration of Ireland into an Imperial, militarized neo-liberal European superstate allied to the US will ensure the full and active participation of all of Ireland in the resource wars of the 21st century. The defeat of the EU/US axis is the only inevitable outcome of these wars.

**The Peace & Neutrality Alliance** advocates another choice - a United Independent Irish Republic - as part of a democratic Europe, a partnership of Independent, democratic states, legal equals without a military dimension. We believe a reformed United Nations is the institution through which Ireland should pursue its foreign policy and security concerns. The choice for the Irish people is clear, and it is the same as it has been for generation after generation. The choice is either the Republic or Imperialism.

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### **The Resource Wars of the 21 st Century and the EU Battlegroups**

The collapse of the European Empires, British, Belgian, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish made the ruling elite of each of the states realise that they could not re-establish their Imperial traditions except by combining and creating a new "European" identity.

They sought to create a "European" elite that was committed to the steady and gradual destruction of the national democracy and Independence of the states within the EU via a series of treaties (of which the proposed EU Constitution was to be a capstone), and their transformation into a centralised, neo-liberal, militarised, Imperial Superstate, allied to the US. It was their joint intention to engage in Imperial wars of conquest. The US invasion and conquest of Iraq in order to gain control of Iraqi oil and to consolidate US/ Israeli military domination of the Middle East was actively supported by 14 EU states - Belgium, Britain, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain (initially) - most of which also sent troops to participate in its invasion and/or occupation.

It was only the massive opposition in 2003 by millions of ordinary people within the states of Europe to this restoration of the European Imperial tradition that prevented the EU states from more actively supporting the war. As a consequence of these massive

demonstrations and the rejection of the EU Constitution by the French and Dutch people the whole project is under threat and the emerging "European" elite is now more divided than ever as to how to respond.

The reasons given for the war, for example that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, were lies. The real intention was to replace Saddam as ruler with Chalabi, a committed ally of the US and the EU who would privatize the Iraqi oil industry. Unfortunately for the US, the plan has gone badly wrong and Iraq now has an Islamic Shia dominated Government friendly with the Iranian Government.

Since the US described Shia dominated Iran as part of the "axis of evil" this has been a bad result that now needs to be rectified.

A substantial element of the EU/US elite is therefore preparing to attack Iran in order to ensure "regime change" and to regain the momentum lost as a consequence of the Iraq war and the referendum results. With the election of the pro-war Chancellor Merkel in Germany the chances of such a war proceeding have increased dramatically. She would be well aware that Bismarck used war to create the German Empire and that war against "Muslim fundamentalists" could be used to create a European Empire. The EU/US is steadily putting more and more pressure on Iran not to proceed with its development of nuclear power, alleging that such a development would allow it to develop nuclear weapons. At the same time they are putting no pressure on Israel to abolish its existing nuclear arsenal or to withdraw from the occupied territory of Palestine. Instead they have withdrawn aid to the Palestinian Authority because they did not like the result of a democratic election. If Iran does not accept the current diplomatic efforts to force it to stop its nuclear developments, then the EU will say it has no alternative but to support a US military strike on Iran.

As in 2003 there will be massive protests, but since the British, Danish and American people re-elected their Imperialist leaders, and Merkel was elected in Germany, the elite clearly feel it can easily handle any opposition. It's our function as part of the Irish and global anti-war movement to make sure that the mobilisation against another Imperial war is so strong that they quickly come to realise that they got it very wrong again.

We need to take advantage of the fact that the war option does not have the support of the entire US/EU elite. The massive drop in support for Bush among the American people including retired generals, the victory of the centre left in Italy, the defeat of the French Government's neo-liberal measures via massive demonstrations, and the recent electoral defeat of the Imperialist New Labour Party are all indications that it will not be easy for the EU/US elite to go to war with Iran.

But if the war party wins out it will mean that the EU Battle Groups will be called into action.

These resource wars of the 21st century, or the "war on terrorism" as our establishment media call it, provide justification for the growth in military expenditure. The EU Battle Groups are just a small but crucial part of the EU/US military partnership in what the Pentagon Defence Review described as being a "long war".

This war will transfer financial resources away from health, education and social housing. The "war on terrorism" also allows the elite to create a climate of fear in which it will be easier to push through a sustained attack on the working and living standards of the ordinary people of Europe via the services directive and other neo-liberal driven measures.

The "war on terrorism" is also leading to a sustained attack on civil liberties creating moves towards a super EU police state.

### **The EU Battle Groups**

An EU Defence policy was not an issue for a long time and it was not until the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 that common foreign and defence policy provisions were made part of EU law. The Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 massively expanded the EU's CFSP. In June 1999 the EU established the Political and Security Committee consisting of the member states' ambassadors to the EU and the European Union, and the Military Committee consisting of the member states' chiefs of defence staff to advise the PSC on military issues. The EU Military staff also provides military advice.

In December 1999 the EU agreed to set a military capability target known as the Helsinki Headline Goal. It included the establishment of an EU Rapid Reaction Force of 50-60,000 soldiers with a self-sustaining military capacity including intelligence, air, naval and combat support capable of deployment within 60 days up to 6,000 km from the borders of the EU, sustainable for at least a year. The EU states in practice lacked the capability to do so. They did not have enough soldiers trained for such an independent EU military activity, as most were allocated to NATO. The EU RRF also lacked the necessary strategic lift, attack helicopters, IRS-capabilities, air-to-air refueling tankers, airborne electronic warfare capacity and anti-missile defence. Nevertheless in December 2001 the EU declared itself to be "militarily operational".

However since the RRF was not actually functioning they agreed to start with a smaller military force. The idea of EU Battle Groups was first suggested at the Franco-British Summit in Le Touquet in February 2003 and made explicit in the London meeting in November 2003.

The EU Defence Ministers in their meeting in Brussels in 2004 adopted the decision. They will act as the "shock troops", regiments of the emerging Empire. Thirteen Battle Groups are being created with 1,500 combat soldiers each, which means, allowing for rotation, etc, at an average ratio of seven to nine for each combat soldier, a total force of approximately 156,000 combat soldiers. It is planned that they could operate as separate units or in joint expeditions.

The objective was to ensure that the first few would be ready by 2005 and between 6-7 by 2007 with the remainder established by 2010. General Wolfgang Schneiderhan is Chair of the EU Military Committee with direct military responsibility for the EUBG's.

Initially each Battle Group would have to be able to go to a theatre of operations up to at least 6,000 km (which includes the Middle East) from the borders of the EU within 5 days of being instructed to do so by the EU Council, and be able to stay there for at least 120 days, allowing for rotation. More recently they have been given the authority to operate in any part of the globe. They have to be able to operate in hostile

environments including deserts, mountains and jungles, and have a high degree of training, equipment, command structures and planning units.

An EU Battle Group is to be *"the minimum military effective, credible, rapidly deployable, coherent force package capable of acting alone, or for the initial phase of larger operations."*

A Battle Group consists of the following:

- Force Headquarters
- Force Commander with staff
- Mechanised Infantry Battalion
- Commander with staff
- 3 x Mechanised Infantry Company
- Logistics Company
- Fire Support Company (Mortars/Light Artillery)
- Combat Engineering Platoon
- Air Defence Platoon
- Reconnaissance
- Intelligence Platoon
- Helicopter Support Unit
- Medical Service Platoon
- Military Police Platoon

Each of the three or four mechanized infantry companies is expected to field 10-12 combat vehicles armed with 30- 90mm cannons, supported with 6-9 light howitzers or 120 mm heavy mortar systems, anti-tank missiles, air defence systems, and helicopter gunships.

Airlifting a Battle Group is a major problem as it requires a huge expenditure on the military transport aircraft required, such as the C-17 Globemaster which can load 78 metric tonnes and has a 5,000 km range, therefore only requiring 30 flights to deploy an EU Battle Group. The lack of strategic airlift has meant several EU states have ordered the A- 400M. Several EU states which are in NATO have also agreed to buy AN-124 Condor aircraft from the Ukraine which are massive planes capable of carrying 120-150 tonnes of cargo up to 5,000 km. These are very expensive planes.

The purpose of the EU Battle Groups is to go into battle, to go to war, as Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Secretary General of NATO has said:

*"Battle Groups could be used to go to war. Why did the EU create the Battle Group? It is not just to help rebuild a country. The Battle Groups are not for building schools. We shouldn't think the EU is for soft power and NATO for tough power."*

Irish Times 11/3/05

The states of the EU, either individually or in groups, are to provide the necessary combat trained troops and required equipment and they are:

1. France
2. Italy
3. Spain
4. UK and possibly Ireland
5. France, Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Spain
6. France and Belgium
7. Germany, the Netherlands and Finland
8. Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria
9. Italy, Hungary and Slovenia
10. Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania
11. Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal
12. Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia and Ireland
13. UK and the Netherlands

In the case of Battle Groups in which a number of states participated, one state would be regarded as a "lead nation" which would take operational command and provide the Headquarters of the Battle Group. Membership of the Battle Groups would be open to non-EU NATO countries such as Turkey that are applying for EU membership or NATO states.

#### **The Danish Protocol**

Denmark is not taking part in the Battlegroups because the movement for Danish Democracy won a major victory which ensured that a number of legally binding protocols were added to the Amsterdam Treaty including one that excluded Denmark from the process of the militarisation of the EU.

The Peace and Neutrality Alliance has campaigned for years for a similar protocol to be added to the various EU Treaties that would also exclude Ireland along the following lines:

*"With regard to measures adopted by the Council in the fields of Article J3 (1) and J7 of the Treaty of the European Union, Ireland does not participate in the elaboration and the implementation of decisions and actions which have defence implications, but will not prevent the development of closer cooperation between member states in this area. Therefore Ireland shall not participate in their adoption. Ireland shall not contribute to the financing of the operational expenditure arising from such measures."*

#### **The Irish political Elite and the EU Battlegroups**

The Irish political elite, however is totally committed to the creation of a European Empire and, like their Redmondite predecessors, has rejected Irish Democracy, Irish Independence and Irish Neutrality and refused to accept such a protocol for Ireland. As far as they are concerned the Irish Army is to play the same role in the European Union as the Irish Regiments of the British Union used do.

The Irish political elite have already made their commitment to the integration of Ireland into the EU/US military industrial structures absolutely clear; by their decision to join Nato's PfP without a promised referendum, by voting against a Bill to amend the Constitution to enshrine neutrality into it in February 2003 and, in particular, by

destroying the longstanding policy of Irish neutrality by allowing thousands upon thousands of US troops to use Shannon airport. Between January 2003 and October 2005, 549,457 US troops landed in Shannon airport on their way to or from the war in Iraq.

In the first three months of 2006 the number of troops landing in Shannon airport increased by more than 20,000 compared with the same period in 2005, a total of 116,450.

Since International law under the Hague Convention of 1907 states that a neutral country cannot allow its territory to be used by belligerents in a war, the Government has now destroyed Irish neutrality by supporting the illegal invasion, conquest and occupation of Iraq, and by allowing thousands upon thousands of US troops to use Shannon airport on their way to Iraq. They also refuse to search US planes that might be carrying prisoners to torture centres.

They therefore are strong supporters of the EU Battle Groups and have made it absolutely clear they intend to ensure that Irish troops will be allocated to them.

They have a slight problem. Existing Irish legislation does not allow any armed force to operate on Irish soil except those directly under the control of Dáil Eireann and as a consequence of their defeat in the first Nice Referendum they were forced to pass legislation that would prevent Irish troops participating in EU military engagements via the Battle Groups unless they are mandated by the UN, the Irish Government and Dáil Eireann. However the FF/PD Government has made it clear that it will introduce legislation that would remove these legal impediments to the Irish Army being integrated into the EU Battle Groups.

While they claim they intend to keep the so-called "triple lock", the rest of the EU states have no such legislation and an Irish Government that is actively supporting an Imperialist war already will have no problem supporting another Imperialist war.

There are other problems. The states that have formed groups to jointly establish an EU Battle Group are geographically beside each other in order to facilitate military co-ordination, so Ireland's obvious partner is Britain. Even the Irish elite however realise that it would be difficult to sell the idea of Irish Rangers fighting shoulder to shoulder with members of the British Paratroop Regiment. They are, therefore, trying to create an atmosphere to facilitate such a Battle Group. In that context, a successful full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement is crucial. Such a full implementation would be promoted by the elite as final resolution of the longstanding conflict between the advocates of Irish Independence and British Imperialism which would not only allow the creation of a British/Irish EU Battle Group but would be promoted as a real and concrete act of peace and reconciliation between the two nations which, acting together, can bring "peace" to other parts of the world, especially the Middle East.

While the Irish elite supports the Good Friday Agreement as a stepping-stone towards a European Empire, Irish Democrats and Republicans see it as a stepping-stone towards a United Independent Democratic Irish Republic. The issue of EU Battle Groups, therefore, has as much relevance to Irish people living in Northern Ireland as it has to those living in the Republic of Ireland. The GFA is only a small part of a bigger jigsaw.

Unfortunately for the Irish elite, the conquest of Iraq has already divided all the political parties into pro and anti imperialist groups and PANA is confident that similar divisions will develop in regard to their attitude to the EU Battle Groups.

What is absolutely clear is that what Fianna Fáil and the other imperialist parties offer is Ireland being dragged deeper and deeper into Imperialist wars rather than a fight for Irish Independence and democracy.

What they offer is inevitable defeat. There is no chance whatsoever of crushing the Muslim people in the Middle East. The 21st century Crusader armies, of which the Battle Groups are to be part, will be defeated, as were the Crusader Armies of the Middle Ages. It is only their racist arrogance which prevents them from seeing this reality.

The Irish elite however know that Good Friday Agreement or not participation in the Trafalgar celebrations or not, commemorating the death of an Irishman who won a VC defending the British Empire in India or not, selling the concept of an Irish Rangers/ British Paratrooper EU Battle Group would be difficult. So they have tried other alternatives.

They seek to be part of the Nordic Swedish/Finnish/Norwegian/Estonian, EU Battle Group. It will be difficult. Since the Battlegroups have to go to war within five days an extremely high degree of military interoperability needs to be achieved. The distance between Finland and Sweden and Ireland makes this option very hard to implement in practice.

The FF/PD Government has virtually no opposition from the Irish political/media elite.

The Fine Gael Party, Ireland's major opposition Party, have made it clear that if they go into Government they will not only ensure that the Irish Army is integrated into the EU Battle Groups but that they will also abolish the "triple lock" legislation. Fine Gael has already totally rejected Irish neutrality.

The Irish Labour Party has been a long-standing supporter of the emerging EU Empire, although they originally opposed it. At their recent party conference their delegates massively supported the EU Constitution although Labour Youth voted against. Soon after, the French and Dutch people voted to reject it and the left led the campaign in both countries. More recently the British Congress of Trade Unions voted overwhelmingly to oppose the EU Constitution.

This growing opposition to the EU Empire by the left throughout Europe is bound to weaken the Empire Loyalists within the Irish Labour party, especially its trade union section. It is possible that it might be convinced to end its support for the Irish Army being integrated into the Battle Groups. It did after all oppose the Iraq war and, unlike FG, it is committed to maintaining the "triple lock" legislation.

While the Labour Party is also committed to a pre-election pact with Fine Gael, the issues of the EU Batttle Groups and the service directive might mean that if it has to choose between the Irish Trade Union Movement and Fine Gael, the current leadership, despite what they are saying at the moment, will be forced to pick the trade union movement.

Therefore while the outcome is not clear, the possibility of the Irish Labour Party and the Irish Trade Union Movement ending their alliance with the Irish Empire Loyalists remains a real option.

Sinn Fein and the Irish Green Party are opposed to Irish participation in the Battle Groups and support the "triple lock" legislation as do a number of independent Dáil Deputies.

Virtually the entire media in Ireland has supported the war on Iraq, EU Battle Groups and the use of Shannon by the American Empire up to the hilt until now, although some elements are beginning to change their minds. However the growth of the Internet has already facilitated alternative methods of spreading information. The power of corporate media to set the agenda is coming to an end.

### **The Nordic Battle Group**

Since the Nordic Battle Group is the preferred group of the Government, the pamphlet by Jan Joel Andersson of the Swedish Institute for European Policy studies, "Armed and Ready?" about the Nordic Battle Group is worth reading. Published in March 2006 it states that on 22 November 2004, Sweden, Finland and Norway declared they would establish a Nordic Battle Group and that Estonia joined shortly afterwards. The NBG was to be ready by January 2008. It will have two light companies equipped with splinter-protected light wheeled vehicles, one heavy company equipped with Hagglunds CV9040 tracked infantry, combat vehicles armed with 40-mm automatic cannon and a logistics company. Combat Support Units drawn from a "menu" of capabilities will complement the core battalion. These capabilities include fire-support (mortars, armour), engineers, air defence, helicopters, ISTAR, CIS-support, CBRN and force protection. It will also have pre-identified strategic air and sealift resources, tactical air transport and close air support, logistics and Special Forces units.

Sweden has assumed overall responsibility and 1,100 personnel. Finland will contribute combat support, such as a heavy mortar platoon, a Chemical Biological Radiological and nuclear detection detachment, a unit in the joint Swedish-Finnish intelligence ISTAR Company and military police, making a total of 200 soldiers. Norway will contribute another 200 troops in medical services, logistics and strategic lift. Estonia will provide 40-50 troops for force protection.

There is no mention of Ireland, but the Minister of Defence has said 200 Irish troops will join the Nordic Battle Group. While he declares he does not like the term Battle Group, any objective analysis of the military equipment outlined above clearly shows that the Nordic Battle Group is not about making tea, it is about being able to go to war, to do battle. That the Irish media parrot the words of the Minister for Defence simply reflects the fact that it is openly complicit in deceiving the Irish people about the real purpose of the EU Battle Groups.

The Battle Group has to train as a single unit so that while each participating state has the right to withdraw its own national contingent it is extremely unlikely that any state would do so, as the Battle Group would then not be able to function properly. In the case of the Irish State, since it already is a strong supporter of an illegal Imperialist war for oil, it would be the last to pull out of another Imperialist military adventure.

The Headquarters of the Nordic Battle Group will be in Northwood, outside London.

Operational planning will be co-ordinate between Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Britain and now Ireland and the EU Military staff in Brussels. The EU will appoint operational control, probably a Swedish Commander.

Since the EU Battle Group has to be able to go to war anywhere in the world within 10 days, airlift capacity is of crucial importance. It could use British C-17 Globemaster planes or the AN-124-100 Condor Planes from the Ukraine. To be independent it would have to buy its own planes. The C-17 Globemaster costs \$202 million each. Ireland would be expected to help pay their share. So much for giving priority to the A&E services. Given such expenditure the Nordic Battle Group is planning to use lighter equipment.

### **The EU Security Strategy Military Intervention without a UN mandate**

The EU Security Strategy, "A Secure Europe in a Better World", was written by the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and endorsed by the EU in December 2003.

The EU strategy totally endorses President Bush's doctrine of preemptive war:

*"Our traditional concept of self-defence... was based on the threat of invasion. With the new threats, the first line of defence will often be abroad... we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs".*

The strategy goes on to state that not all these threats can be countered by military means and a mixture of instruments must be used. This however leaves the way open for humanitarian aid being used as a tool in the fight against "terrorism".

Concord, a pan-European federation of over 1200 development NGO's, has repeatedly cautioned against the EU Security policy misusing humanitarian assistance in such a way.

The fact is the EU does not see itself as being bound by the necessity of securing a UN mandate before it sends the EU Battle Groups to a war. While references are made to observance of the UN Charter (similar references are made in the NATO Treaty) nowhere does it state in the EU Treaties that the EU Battle Groups need a UN mandate. While International Law clearly states a UN mandate would be required before a state was invaded, the EU, like the US, is prepared to ignore such law.

### **Warmaking and Peacemaking**

While the democratic forces in France and the Netherlands defeated the EU Constitution, which would have further consolidated the militarisation of the EU, the existing treaties remain in force including:

Article J7.2 that states:

*"Questions referred to in this article shall include humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking."*

John Bruton, ex-leader of Fine Gael, and the EU representative in the US said after the Amsterdam Treaty was passed:

*"Peacemaking means imposing, by the use of force, peaceful conditions under the terms laid down by the peacemaker. It is very difficult to distinguish that from*

*warmaking."*

Dáil Eireann 22/10/99

The EU elite does not need a EU Constitution to establish Battle Groups and we can be sure that Mr. Bruton is reflecting their attitude when he says there is no difference between warmaking and peacemaking.

### **Command Structure**

The decision to deploy Battle Groups would be taken by the EU Council in response to "a crisis" or a "request from the UN".

The deployment of the EU Battle Groups therefore do not need a UN mandate.

The EU Civilian and Military Planning Cell is now well underway in Brussels.

The Cell is directly responsible to the EU High representative Javier Solana. It will have the responsibility of coordinating and generating the capacity to plan and run autonomous EU military operations.

Several of the states participating in the EU Battle Groups are also developing specialist skills. For example, Finland is providing troops trained in combating chemical and biological weapons, Lithuania is providing experts in water purification and Greece is providing troops with maritime transport skills.

Britain is ensuring members of the Paratroop Regiments are being allocated to the EU Battle Groups and clearly their specialty is shooting unarmed Civil Rights marchers.

The need for a rapid response has major implications for the law in many of the national states. The Luxembourg Defence Minister stated:

*"Some countries will have to change their laws to be able to take their political decisions quickly and then their military must follow immediately" [www.iwar.org.uk](http://www.iwar.org.uk)*

This clearly means that if a quick decision has to be made to deploy the Battle Groups the "triple lock " legislation will have to be abolished, leaving the decision up to the Government, or maybe even the Taoiseach alone to make the decision to deploy the EU Battle Groups. The Fine Gael Party in the Dáil (9/5/06) has already suggested that such a decision be left solely to the Minister of Defence.

### **NATO and the EU Battle Groups**

The EU is very clear that the Battle Groups are to be developed as a military machine in a mutually reinforcing way with NATO initiatives such as the NATO Response Force. This is especially true given the overlap of EU/NATO/Partnership for Peace military that is well established. There is a very strong requirement for interoperability between the EU military forces and NATO military forces. NATO, like the EU Battle Groups has given itself the right to send in troops anywhere in the world.

In fact as far as Britain is concerned, to quote Geoff Hoon, UK Minister for Defence:  
*"NATO would always have the first choice to launch a military operation"*

The reality of the link between the Battle Groups of the EU and NATO was underlined by the report published by 2 ex-NATO chiefs in October 2005. To quote the report:

*"Failure to meaningfully improve Europe's collective defence capabilities in the coming years would have profoundly negative impacts on the ability of European countries to protect their interests, the viability of NATO as an alliance, and the ability of Europe to partner in any meaningful way with the US."*

In February 2005 in a letter written to the House of Commons Select Committee on the European Union Hoon describes the EU Battle Groups as being:

*"mutually reinforcing with the larger NATO Response Force ..... and having the potential to act as a steppingstone for countries that want to contribute to the NATO Response Force, by developing their high readiness forces to the required standard and integrating small countries contribution to multinational units."*

*Wherever possible and applicable, standards, practical methods and procedures for Battlegroups are analogous to those defined in the NATO RF.*

*Correctly managed there is considerable potential for synergy between the two initiatives."*

So there it is for all to see. The reality is the EU Battle Groups are not the basis for an alternative European power to the US, but an extension of the power of the US, which dominates NATO. The EU Battle Groups are an extension of the military power of the US/EU Partnership.

Hoon went on to say that the EU states should spend at least 25% of their defence budgets on research and new weapons.

The NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, was even more explicit when in Rome in December 2004 he said:

*"NATO and the EU need a partnership that covers all aspects of modern security policy; combating terrorism, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, preventing the emergence of failed states, and dealing with them where and when they occur."*

The Finnish Minister for Defence regards NATO as a "Partner" and calls for greater interoperability. He says:

*"standards and criteria for EU Battle Groups should be the same as those required for similar formations assigned to Nato's RRF in accordance with NATO standards and criteria."*

An official Finnish Ministry document states;

*"In practice, many EU countries will double-hat various troops to EU and NATO rapid deployment forces. It is up to those countries to ensure that their resources and personnel are not in simultaneous readiness to two different groups."*

*In practice, the Battle Groups will mostly be trained in NATO exercises."*

Since December 2003 as a consequence of NATO/EU consultations the EU has established a permanent military cell in SHAPE (NATO Headquarters) and NATO has established a permanent liaison arrangement with the EU Military Staff.

NATO has had an established NRF since October 2004. This is a 21,000 combat troop military force capable of being deployed within 5-30 days and is well equipped with high tech weapons.

Since most EU states are also in NATO and many states cannot provide the necessary troops and equipment to both the EU Battle Groups as well as the NRF, arrangements are being made to ensure the EUBG's and the NRF are mutually coherent and complementary.

The EU Battle Groups lack the necessary independent strategic airlift planes, mid air refueling and communication capability and independent intelligence resources.

### **Military Equipment.**

Thus, to operate independently of NATO, the EU Battle Groups need a commitment by EU States to spend a great deal more money on new military equipment, especially in air lift capability.

On the 7th of March 2006 the EU Defence Ministers agreed to establish a Common Defence and Technology Fund. Javier Solana said at the meeting:

*"We must spend more, spend more together and spend more efficiently."*

The longer-term concept of the EU Battle Groups by the Franco- German faction of the EU elite remains the idea that they could operate as separate military units directly under the control of the EU Council if required. The concept is reinforced by the need for the EU to have its own satellite system, under EU rather than US control. The EU therefore has spent €3.5 billion on its Galileo system which would be used to facilitate the operations of the EU Battle Groups. These 30 satellites would mean the EU would not be dependent on the US GPS or the Russian GLONASS systems, which are also being financed for military purposes. Since, for example, the US GPS system signal could be blocked or jammed at a moment's notice, the EU would be completely dependent on the US in its military expeditions unless it had its own satellite system. Germany held up funds for the development of Galileo until an agreement was reached on where the expenditure was to happen and agreed only after more was allocated to Germany.

The Battle Groups would have to take into consideration the role of the Future Rapid Effects System (FRES) centred on a "family" of 900 highly sophisticated combat vehicles costing £6.7 million each, with a lifetime cost of £55.5 million over 30 years.

Other equipment includes the new communication equipment Bowman & Falcon, Watchkeeper unarmed aerial equipment, the Soothsayer electronic warfare capability and the Panther armoured reconnaissance vehicle.

The combined defence budget of the EU states is €175 billion (compared with \$ 550 billion for the US) and they have a combined military force of 1.6 million troops, although at the moment only 5-10% (60,000) are deployable as a rapid reaction force thousands of miles from Europe. The EU elite is seeking to raise that number to at least 200,000.

The US political elite is constantly calling for the EU to spend more on militarisation even though it would have a long way to go to reach US expenditure (the US Army has 1.4 million troops, 400,000 of whom can be deployed globally).

Many others however see the EU militarisation only as an extension of the NATO military structures.

Jamie O'Shea of NATO has called for a EU Constitution with provisions that would be, *"compatible with NATO"*.

Many other EU leaders are open about seeing no difference between the EU, NATO and the US. At a recent NATO Conference in Sweden the Lithuanian Ambassador called NATO:

*"the greatest military alliance in history – combating global terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and failed states threats which are facing the Euro-Atlantic community"*

The EU commitment to spend €25 billion through OCCAR for the A400 M military transport aircraft is a demonstration of what the emerging EU superstate can achieve. Sixty are for Germany, 50 for France and others for Spain, the UK, Belgium and Turkey.

There are investment plans for acquiring an aircraft carrier and airwing by 2008.

### **The European Defence Agency**

In July 2004 the EU foreign Ministers (except Denmark) authorised the creation of The European Defence Agency. This has already been established with a start-up staff of 25 (now 80) and headed up by Nick Whitney. All the EU Defence Ministers including those of Ireland have control of it and meet at the Agency Headquarters at least twice a year. It has taken over the Western European Armaments Agency and its research cell and has a budget of €2 billion. Its importance is clearly shown by the decision to include it in the EU Constitution, which envisaged it as being central to the development of an EU Defence capability.

Its function is to promote coherence in European defence procurement, enhance collaboration on the development of equipment, promoting the European defence sector's technological and industrial base. It is also to foster European defence-relevant Research and Technology. It will probably take over previous EU armaments co-operations initiatives such as OCCAR and WEAG.

It also seeks to create an internationally competitive European Defence Equipment market, in particular by pursuing an EU-wide development and harmonisation of relevant rules and regulations particularly (by an EU-wide applications of relevant rules) of the LoI Framework Agreement.

Such a development would seriously threaten Europe's current arms export policy and be a threat to the national democracy of the individual states, as no further national ratifications would be necessary.

The Ceo's of Europe's top EADS, BAE Systems and Thales welcomed the establishment of the EDA and called for an increase in military expenditure.

These military corporations are continually seeking to influence the EU elite via direct lobbying groups such as ASD, the New Defence Agenda and the Kangaroo Group. The arms industry by now is very deeply integrated into the elite and the EU security research budgets are among the best examples of its success.

### **The Privatisation of war and the EU Battle Groups**

Mercenaries have played a significant role in war. 30,000 German mercenaries were employed by the British Empire in its efforts to defeat the National struggle for Independence by the USA. However so strong have the neo-liberal values become in the USA today that between 1994-2002 the Pentagon awarded 3,000 contracts to the modern mercenaries now known as Private Military Companies, or PMC's.

There are now 90 such companies operating in 110 countries and the war in Iraq has been a great boost for them. They constitute the second largest military grouping in Iraq after the US Army.

The revenue of British PMC's has increased from £32 million to £160 million since the war in Iraq. One of the larger PMC's, Blackwater, which is very active in Iraq, has stated it could put together a Rapid Reaction Force or Battle Group. As the neoliberal values spread in the EU from the US it is reasonable to assume that the use of mercenaries as Battle Groups or as auxiliaries to the Battle Groups will be strongly advocated by the EU elite in the not too distant future.

### **Conclusion**

When the Peace & Neutrality Alliance was founded 10 years ago to oppose the process by which the elite sought to destroy Irish Independence, Irish Democracy and Irish Neutrality and integrate this state into a neo-liberal, centralised, militarised superstate, few people believed us. Now with Irish neutrality totally destroyed, with Ireland having been transformed into a US aircraft carrier and the Irish Army about to be integrated into the Battle Groups of the EU, there are few who do not believe us.

In 1996, the same year PANA was established, an MRBI poll showed only 32% of people in the Republic of Ireland wanted the state to do all it could to preserve Ireland's independence from the EU. By 2005 that figure, in a similar survey, had increased to 45%. So the evidence backs up the fact that our 10 years' long campaign is having a real impact and more importantly, that we are winning.

The objective of PANA is to help translate the clear evidence of the growing opposition to the emerging EU Empire into votes for political parties and independents that are affiliated to PANA.

If the Irish political elite, led by the Fianna Fail/PD Government are to be defeated in their efforts to restore the Redmondite Imperialist tradition then an alternative political formation has to be created.

The large votes against the EU Treaties and the latest MRBI/TSN poll, which showed the majority of the Irish people would reject the EU Constitution also shows a growing opposition to a European Empire.

The massive anti-war demonstrations in 2003 and the enormous marches in 2005 in support of the Irish Ferry workers show, like the poll results quoted, that there is very real

and strong opposition to the transformation of the EU into a centralised, militarised, neo-liberal superstate among a very large number of people.

The parties that have played a key role in these demonstrations have been the Green Party, the Labour Party, Sinn Fein and the smaller socialist parties, as well as a number of radical independents. PANA has always acted as a catalyst in the efforts to build these political forces into an alternative alliance and an alternative Government, and we will continue to do so.

### **Victory**

There is no doubt that, on one hand building such an alliance to the imperialist formation that now dominates our political/media elite is not easy. On the other hand, since all the Fianna Fáil, PD, Fine Gael and unionist parties offer is a sustained attack on the living and working conditions of the people and a deepening Irish involvement in an ongoing war in which the defeat of the EU/US military is the only possible option, it might not be as difficult as all that. We should know from previous major political shifts such as 1912-1918, or 1927- 32 that many of the political activists operating within the elite change sides, and it will not be any different this time around either.

We should therefore accept that the defeat of the neo- Redmondites is absolutely inevitable; it's only a question of time. Our real task, therefore is to ensure that the alternative that develops is rooted in the anti-imperialist philosophy of Tone and Connolly. The creation of an alternative, based on an alliance of the political formations that have already shown their leadership in the 2003 and 2005 demonstrations against the war and in support of the workers in Irish Ferries, is and will remain the central objective of PANA. The linking of the militarisation of the EU with its neo-liberal economic goals in the minds of the people is of crucial importance if we are to win.

After all, the living standards of the ordinary trade unionist is going to be eroded very quickly by the service directive, and since we are being dragged deeper and deeper into war, it is more than possible that faced with the choice of dying for a neo-liberal elite led by a George W. Bush or a Hilary Clinton, as advocated by FF/FG/PD/DUP/UUP parties, or a Red/Green Alliance that is opposed to war, they will choose the Red/Green Alliance.

PANA has never been about protest. PANA has always been about winning. It is about defeating imperialism by gaining the support of the people for a real alternative: a United Independent Democratic Irish Republic with its own Independent Foreign Policy pursued through a reformed United Nations, with neutrality enshrined in our Constitution, and an Irish Protocol attached to an EU Treaty which would exclude our involvement with the militarisation of the EU.

PANA has steadily built up links with other peace movements throughout Europe and believe that our vision for the future of Europe is part of wider vision shared by growing numbers of people throughout the European states.

Throughout the whole of South America a wave of antiimperialist political forces is winning the support of the people and consolidating the political terrain. In the Middle East the total defeat of EU/US Imperialism is only a few years away. The

willingness of some Shia leaders to ally themselves with US Imperialism will undermine their ability to provide a coherent alternative, leaving the option for a democratic alternative, based on the unity of Iraq, to emerge as the only effective answer to Imperialism.

Not just in Ireland therefore, but also throughout South America, the Middle East as well as throughout Europe and in the US itself, through organizations such as United for Peace & Justice, a global anti-imperialist movement is being created. PANA is only one small part of that global movement. Defeating the efforts of the Irish political elite to integrate the Irish Army into the EU Battle Groups is also only a small part of a very much wider struggle. But win we will, and win we must. For all the Imperialists offer is war, poverty and defeat; all they offer is a return to the Dark Ages.

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