**Background**

The defence ministers from the Baltic States and several western countries initiated the Baltic Battalion Project (Baltbat) in the autumn 1994. The initial idea of the project was firstly to fulfil a wish from the Baltic States to create a peacekeeping unit and secondly to promote the co-operation between the three Baltic States and between the Baltic States and the western countries.

**Phase 1 - the peacekeeping phase**

Baltbat was initially organised and trained as a peacekeeping battalion suitable for United Nations Chapter VI operations. The battalion - in the peacekeeping version - was organised with a multinational staff, a multinational headquarters & logistic company and three rifle companies, one from each of the three Baltic States. The equipment was basically for peacekeeping operations and the weapons for self-defence only. The training was carried out both in western countries and in respective Baltic States.

The “peacekeeping” training period was finalised in the second half of 1997 during several exercises in all three Baltic States. The aim of the exercises was to report Baltbat ready for deployments from 1998 onwards.

The battalion as a whole was never deployed to a mission. The reason for that was the lack of finances in the Baltic States, lack of logistic support and logistic concept and lack of sustainability after a possible 6-month deployment. In order to compensate for the missing, but wanted deployments, 1/3 of the battalion was from mid 1998 to the beginning of 2000 three times deployed to Bosnia as part of the Danish Battalion.

**Phase 2 - the infantry battalion phase**

A new dimension for Baltbat was discussed and decided during 1997 and 1998.
The new challenge for the project was to reorganise and train the battalion as a light infantry battalion capable of executing Peace Support Operations. This second phase of the project is planned to be finalised by the end of year 2000.

Lessons learned

The project has faced many problems during the last 5 - 6 years. It is important to underline that the following lessons learned and observations are my personal opinion/observations, based on my 6-month service as 2IC/Baltic Battalion Training Team in the period 1. August 1999 - 31. January 2000.

Project managing

A Steering Group at Ministry of Defence level and a Military Working Group at Army Headquarters level manage the project. Both bodies include representatives from the Baltic States, the western countries, Baltbat and Baltbat Training Team.

Baltic Battalion Training Team

Right from the beginning of the project Baltic Battalion Training Team was established in order to support, train and supervise the battalion. Focus was initially on training the battalion and running the battalion leaving only minor responsibility by the organic commanders and leaders. Later on the decision to leave more and more responsibility on the organic commanders and leaders was taken. The Baltic Battalion Training Team remained in place in an advisory role.

It is my experience that the decision to let the Baltic Battalion Training Team advice instead of training the battalion was a less sensible decision. It is obvious that the commanders and leaders still need to be trained and supported in a direct and close way. It was also obvious that the Baltic Battalion Training Team did not fully succeed due to the fact that the distance between the battalion and the training team became larger. Another problem was the quality of the personnel in the training team. The different supporting countries are manning the posts in the training team in various ways. It has to be a must that the training team officers are educated and trained in tactics and logistics related to brigade and infantry battalion tactics. The company advisors must be experienced company commanders from units equal to Baltbat. The age of the advisors must be equal to the commanders and leaders in the battalion. If that is not the case problems in building up confidence between the battalion and the training team will occur.

Tactics and Doctrine

Another problem was the decision to use British Tactics and Doctrine. The choice of tactics and doctrine is closely related to training and training standards and Table of Organisation and Equipment. Baltbat is organised as a motorised infantry battalion with a headquarters company, a logistic company and three rifle companies. The organisation is in many ways comparable to a Nordic mo-
torised infantry battalion where the philosophy is to use the vehicles as long as possible. That is not the British philosophy. Adding to the problems of using British Tactics and Doctrine is the fact that the majority of the training team officers, dealing with the battalion staff and the company commanders, are coming from the Nordic countries and not from the United Kingdom.

A possible way forward could be to develop a common Baltic States doctrine and tactics based on realistic personnel, equipment and training standards. This is in my opinion a right and relevant task for the Baltic Defence College in close co-operation with the three Baltic States General Staffs.

**Personnel matters**

Officers entering Baltbat for service have an uneven and often unsatisfactory level of basic officer’s education. This means that it’s often necessary to train basic skills before training function related matters. Officers are often rotated with very short notice and without any regards to the units/staff activities. Another problem is the lack of time for hand-over, which naturally leads to a drop in the training performance for the unit/staff.

The level of English language is in general satisfactory but some officers are entering the battalion with little or no English language skills.

**Chain of command and command relations**

The project and consequently also the battalion commander have faced many problems in connection with the chain of command and command relations. In my perspective the battalion commander is unable of commanding his battalion in terms of full command, operational command or operational control definitions. The three rifle companies are purely a national responsibility and the commanding officer of Baltbat is only requested to set the training standards to be met. Consequences are unequal priorities given to the project from the three Baltic States, insufficient logistic support to the battalion in terms of ammunition and personal equipment etc. It is clearly stated that the Baltic States are responsible for providing ammunition and personal equipment for the soldiers in Baltbat. But the Baltic States have failed/been unable to fulfil these demands leading to serious impact on the training. Another major problem is the possibilities of bringing “foreign” units to one of the other Baltic States. This is almost impossible due to lack of agreements, bureaucracy and lack of will between the Baltic States. These requirements have to be solved by the Baltic States otherwise phase 2 of the project - ending up with the planned Field Training exercise in October 2000 - will not be a success.

**Logistics**

In the early beginning of the project a lot of equipment was donated to the project from the supporting countries. Lessons learned are that the equipment
was donated without having a proper organisation and procedures ready in the receiving countries. The equipment was not in all cases properly handed over from the donating countries and often without manuals and spare parts. In addition detailed tables of equipment and organisation was missing. The problems were highlighted during the process of transferring the battalion from its peacekeeping organisation into the infantry organisation.

Future donations are to be better coordinated between the donating and the receiving countries. Donations of complete units or sub units including vehicles, weapons and spare parts etc. is recommended instead of donating single spare parts or equipment.

Depoyments to Bosnia

The deployment of 1/3 of the battalion three times in the period mid 1998 - early 2000 had an impact on the daily training. But on the other hand the battalion and the Baltic Countries also benefitted from the deployments both from a military and from a politically point of view. The overall impression is that the three contingents did a very good job together with the Danish battalion in Bosnia.

The negative side of the deployments is that the training of the two specialist companies were hampered and the possibilities of deploying the battalion headquarters in the field were impossible.

Way ahead - near future

The aim of the near future is to finalise phase 2 of the project with a successful field training exercise in October 2000. The fundament for a success is established due to the fact that:

• The deployments have ended,
• The Baltic Battalion Training Team has strengthened the training of the battalion and initiated a proper planning process for the exercise.
• The Military Working Group has put pressure on both the Baltic States and the supporting countries.

• Everybody (hopefully) has realised that this is the last chance of finalising the Baltbat project in its present configuration as a success.

Most of the involved personnel and countries are working hard on achieving the aim. But there is still a long way to go.

The Way ahead – the long perspective

A continued multinational (the Baltic States) way ahead is in my opinion only realistic if some basic requirements are fulfilled. Firstly a common Baltic Doctrine and Tactics at brigade and battalion level has to be developed. This is in my perspective a natural and good task for The Baltic Defence College supported by a few general staff trained officers from the supporting countries and some of the Baltic officers who joined the first course at the college 1999 - 2000. To carry on with British Doctrine and Tactics within Baltbat and national doctrine and tactics within the national forces will in my opin-
The next question is whether the Baltic States wants to rely on common doctrine and tactics and close co-operation. I think that the Baltbat project has shown that it is difficult to build up a multinational formation. It has been hard for the national armed forces to understand and accept why Baltbat needs to be prioritised when it comes to manning, finances, ammunition, etc.

One possibility is to carry on with Baltbat in its present configuration. I think that the last five to six years clearly shows that this is not a realistic and reasonable way ahead. Both the Baltic States and also some of the supporting countries have clearly shown a lack of interest and will to support the project. The other extreme is to leave any kind a co-operation between the Baltic States and rely completely on bilateral support and cooperation. I have seen a tendency to go more and more bilateral. This is from a military and economic perspective a better solution but dangerous if we forget to set common standards and interoperability demands. The common standards and interoperability demands have to be a part of the common doctrine and tactics. To go totally bilateral without any co-operation between the Baltic States is in my opinion unacceptable and unrealistic if the Baltic States are heading for a NATO membership. A vehicle for building a bridge between the Baltic States and the supporting countries could be to establish a multinational staff either at battalion or brigade level. This multinational staff should be test bed for the common developed doctrine and tactics. The staff can also participate in exercises abroad and within the Baltic States. Either in command post exercises (staff alone) or field training exercises by taking national companies or battalions under command. A few officers from the supporting countries should support the staff.