

Bartosz Jagodziński

The role of the special forces in military conflicts in the 20th and the 21st centuries

Part I

Many times the history confirmed the fact that the military security of a country depends not only on the possibilities of defending their own territory. It has also been influenced by military activities outside the country in the name of the international security meant in general terms. The range of security threats to contemporary states tends to broaden with globalization development (which is an inevitable process) based on the IT and telecommunication revolution and the visible differences in societies' lives and deep religious, ethnic and civilization-related conflicts. The term 'international terrorism' of different ideological shades, coming usually from the Islamic extremism and hatred towards the dominance of a better off part of the society over the poorer ones, has taken recently a new worrying meaning. On the one hand there is still a threat of classical military conflicts despite the fact that their probability has diminished, on the second hand – the world is under the pressure of local hot spots on the verges of the relative stability zone and the pressure of an unexpected terrorist attack against civilians and the whole social and economic infrastructure.

War is a relationship between countries after they break peaceful relations between them. Considering a state as the state of war is possible, if:

- 1) the parties the war regards are countries;
- 2) transition to the state of war followed its declaration;
- 3) diplomatic ties were broken;
- 4) there were – although not as a *sine qua non* condition – acts of struggle.

The end of a war marks the signing of a peace agreement, which starts peaceful relations.

A military conflict means a struggle between the parties which have different legal and international status with the use of military forces. We speak about a military conflict when:

- 1) at least one of the fighting parties has regular military units or police and military formations;
- 2) conflicted parties are organized and take planned actions, although the level of this organization and the grade of synchronization do not have to be high;
- 3) military actions have to continue for quite some time and thus to create "a timeline of the conflict", which can distinguish its stages or phases;
- 4) intensity of the military action should be high enough not to regard it only as an incident, also its virulence should cause a high number of casualties.¹

¹ T. Łoś-Nowak, *Współczesne stosunki międzynarodowe*, Wrocław 2010, p. 160.

so, the term ‘military conflict’ is much broader than ‘war’. The parties of the conflict do not have to be countries, they can also be other participants of international relationships, groups of political, ethnical, national or religious nature, acting in a particular country.

‘Special units’ are land forces, air forces and naval forces units, consisting of soldiers (operators) sent to the most difficult military missions. They distinguish themselves from other regular military formations by a high level of broad range and long term training. Soldiers from such units learn how to adapt to different conditions and to survive in each situation and each environment.

Special units are composed of elite staff, associated with particular sorts of military forces – land forces, navy and air forces. Each unit has its own history, like for example the British SAS or American Rangers which have their origin during the Second World War. Other units were formed in a post war period.² Since that time special units and airborne units are elite components of military forces in numerous countries. There is the mystique and understatements around them. It attracted and still attracts many young people – brave, physically fit, ready to take any risk and to scarify for the service.

Disbandment of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of the USSR, the expansion of the worldwide terrorism, the growth of the organized crime and new local conflicts in different regions of the world caused the necessity of having elite and well trained special units to safeguard the strategic interest of many countries and the sense of security among societies. Such units are tools for the policy of security and for strategic interests of the most influential countries.³

Special units are outside the conventional military theory. Details of special operations are often classified (for many years and sometimes – forever).

The main mission of one of the special units, i.e. Special Forces⁴ is to run special operations in alliances or coalitions, on their own or in connection with other structures of military forces, in peacetime, during a crisis and wars, in the country and outside. Soldiers serving in that forces are voluntaries.⁵ They are professionals. The way they operate is something that differs them from other soldiers. After a very strict selection process they are constantly trained and are constantly ready for action. Unlike the conventional forces, special forces have to be ready for action no matter if it is a peacetime or the time of war. The environment in which they act is very dangerous; each and every soldier of special forces is exactly aware of the effects of failures and mistakes made during the operation. It is one of the main reasons why special

² A. Stilwell, *Sily specjalne w akcji*, Kraków 2014, p. 6.

³ Z. Wawer, *Zanim uderzył GROM. Historia jednostek specjalnych i wojsk powietrzno-desantowych Wojska Polskiego*, Warszawa 2013, p. 7.

⁴ Based on Article 3.3 of the Act of 21 November 1967 on the common obligation of the defence of the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws 2018, item. 1459, as amended) the Special Military are a part of the Polish Army as one of its kind.

⁵ It is such situations that the people interested in being special forces candidates apply for the units, where they undergo a selection, training, courses and then they are assigned to particular combat teams. The most important factor is involvement, the real determination to join the elite units and self-discipline.

operations are regarded as high risk missions. At the same time they are of great benefit to international security.⁶

Despite the fact that nowadays the probability of a classic war conflict on a big scale has decreased, there are still local military conflicts. There are more and more asymmetrical conflicts⁷, in which it is special forces that play a tremendous role. All types of threats, roots of which there are in Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa (like the WMD proliferation⁸), refer in reality to every country. There is a strong demand for modern, regular military forces, able to defend their own territories. But primarily there is a need to create and develop efficient special forces with high combat readiness, able to operate in the country and outside, and also some common operations with other special units, including unconventional actions during the war, peacetime and in crisis situations.

Analyses of modern wars and military conflicts, in connection with historical experience indicate that to be successful - for example, in asymmetrical conflict, a few elements are needed. They are⁹ the following:

- 1) quick response to a threat or an attack. Due to their organizational structure, the profile of trainings and their tasks, the special forces are kind of light units with full headcount and high promptitude. It means that they are able to react immediately and they guarantee quick response to any threat or attack;
- 2) keeping secrets and hiding their actions, and most of all – preparations to the actions, from the enemy and the mass media. Usually special units withheld their tasks, structure, equipment and headcount, they do not use heavy equipment (like tanks or combat cars) but armoured vehicles. This way the special units are able to move secretly and to penetrate the enemy's territory;
- 3) precise actions and the right identification of target, which allow to strike crucial elements of the enemy's system; military precision – strikes have to be extremely precise because the enemy takes advantage of asymmetry, operates in a civilian environment, their bases, if there are, are often in other countries; psychological

⁶ M. Ryan, C. Mamm, A. Stilwell, *Encyklopedia oddziałów specjalnych*, Warszawa 2003, p. 7

⁷ An asymmetrical conflict is a clash of two different types of organizations, ways of thinking and acting, sometimes also of different ways of living. An asymmetric conflict cannot be reduced to a military clash with disproportionate potentials of the stronger party with a weaker one regarding the numbers, technique or training. The term means rather way of operating than the number of forces applied. An asymmetric opponent strives usually for such ending the conflict so that the second party would not take any advantage from its superiority even if it is possible tactically or technically. Cf. https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Konflikt_asymetryczny [access: 6 I 2017].

⁸ The BMW proliferation, next to the global terrorism phenomenon, has been perceived for many years as one of the most serious threat to the world security and because of that it stays within the constant interest of special services. The proliferation means spreading the BMR and its means of transfer to the so called 'countries of the risk'. The subject of proliferation are also materials, raw materials, devices and know-how, that can be of dual-use, i.e. in both civilian and military sectors. Cf. <http://www.abw.gov.pl/pl/zadania/przeciwdzialanie-proli/8,Przeciwdzialanie-prolifracji-BMR.html> [access: 6 I 2017].

⁹ H. Królikowski, *Geneza i rozwój polskich operacji specjalnych oraz sił zbrojnych*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 216–217.

precision – in this case they must regard the fact that any mistake or failure will be used as fighting tools, and most of all – criticism from the enemy, internal opposition and the mass media;

- 4) organizational, intellectual and tactical flexibility – unpredictable operational and tactical situation as well as conditions and the environment of the struggle is a basic assumption while preparing the structures and training;

Special units are used in a wide range of actions: from strategic and tactical activities to reaching military, political, economic and psychological goals. They are used in big scale conflicts and in the so called ‘surgical operations’, requiring great precision. They are also used in crisis operations, including humanitarian aid actions.¹⁰ Those units are able to develop and get immediate readiness for action in a changing struggle environment on the ground, at sea and in the air (the black tactics, the green tactics, the blue tactics). It leads to a situation when, in the time of international terrorism, local crises and new types of low-intensity conflicts, special units took the leading role, while in the past they were used as assistance to regular forces. And different kinds of conventional troops are at present an assistance to their operations and perform complementary tasks for spec ops.¹¹

The basic features of special forces versus rest kinds of military forces are the following:¹²

- 1) diversity of tasks – these are diversion and recognition, including the special recognition, diversion against the military and economic infrastructure of the enemy, as well as diversion against the most important elements of the communication and IT systems;
- 2) diversity of the area of operation, i.e. on the ground, at the sea, under the water, in the air – in the distance from the main forces;
- 3) the number of fighting units – these are less numerous forces, acting in fighting teams, having less abilities in scope of firepower and mobility but having ability to extremely precise strikes;
- 4) the tactics depends on conditions – in case conventional forces are impossible to be used for different reasons; the tactics itself is totally secret and surprising for the enemy.

The structure of the special forces consists of independent units and sub-units of selected, specially trained soldiers, well prepared to act in small groups always in the environment of an increased risk. Operations performed by special forces in different environments (ground, sea, air, under the water) and the way they act requires proper equipment and armament. At present soldiers from those units need (depending the tasks and environment) the following¹³:

¹⁰ „Special OPS” 2014, No. 1, special edition: *Wojska Specjalne*, p. 6.

¹¹ „Special OPS” 2013, No. 2, special edition: *Wojska Specjalne*, p. 6 et seq.

¹² *Wojska Specjalne w systemie obronnym RP – aspekty organizacyjne, doktrynalne i modernizacyjne*, B. Pacek, P. Soroka, M. Kubiński (ed.), Warszawa 2013, p. 22.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

- 1) efficient weapons (guns, carbines with a laser designator or a highlighter, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, grenades, ammunition, explosives);
- 2) effective system of missile defence (helmets and bullet-proof vests);
- 3) functional system of observation and recognition (binoculars, night vision goggles, infrared cameras, sights, eyeglass image intensifiers, navigation, sensors, drones);
- 4) reliable communication system (radio station, underwater wireless communications equipment, satellite navigation systems, system of the battlefield management, system of the video online transmission);
- 5) systems of individual equipment (modern uniform with lower radiation signatures to unable to detect the soldier; special swimming gear and parachute jumping equipment);
- 6) mobility means (different types of motor vehicles, including light armoured vehicles, quads, launches, underwater motors, helicopters).

The above mentioned equipment and armament does not include all necessary elements that enhance the soldiers activities. Each mission, depending on its nature, requires proper equipment for its efficient course.

Taking part in special operations is the highest level of initiation in the military craft. The training place emphasis mostly on physical strength, team work (creating strong emotional bonds) and big abilities of soldiers. The way of fighting is dependent on non-material (individual) factors of each soldier, i.e. intelligence, motivation, mutual trust, resourcefulness and emotional involvement. Soldiers from the special units are trained in the regions controlled by the opponents, in the regions defended by them, which are culturally different. They can lead secret operations to get intelligence data, to organize sabotage missions, to retake hostages, to abduct people or to eliminate the main target. They can also be engaged in anti-terrorist actions, anti-drug trafficking actions, they can wage psychological wars and to oversee cease-fires. Such units can act in the form of a battalion¹⁴ and organize assault operations and in the form of two-person teams. Full training of an operator ready for action can take even 10 years. Every soldier acting in a small team has to obtain numerous skills, including fluent knowledge of at least one foreign language¹⁵, handling different kinds of guns, driving any mechanical vehicles, abilities to blend in.¹⁶

Special units are usually limited regarding the staff number compared to conventional military units. Officers-in-charge of different levels can take advantage of their skills, mobility, their reconnaissance actions in the enemies' territories, in favour of the main forces. They can also take other actions on their own like strikes on military goals important (from the strategic or operational point of view),

¹⁴ Organizational military unit smaller than a regiment – ca. 300–700 soldiers (rarely more than 700). Cf. <https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batalion> [access: 6 I 2017].

¹⁵ H. Królikowski, *Wojskowa Formacja Specjalna GROM im. Cichociemnych Spadochroniarzy Armii Krajowej 1990–2000*, Gdańsk 2001, p. 10.

¹⁶ A. Toffler, H. Toffler, *Wojna i antywojna*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 130–131.

pre-emptive strikes, retaliatory strikes or rescue actions. Nowadays more and more such units are used in the fight with terrorism, in operations of humanitarian nature, in rescue operations, including retaking hostages, and in assisting actions to restore or introduce democratic rules. In case of large scale military conflicts special units play an important role for officers-in-charge in the theatre of operations, performing other than conventional operations. Most special units are prepared to perform combat tasks in a strictly specified part of the world. This is the reason of such meticulous training (foreign languages, culture). They are trained regularly in designated regions, often together with foreign soldiers. It happens that they assist diplomatic actions as well. Soldiers from special units are called *Quiet Professionals*.¹⁷

Short history of special military forces in Poland

Modern special military forces refer directly to the tradition of the Polish commandos fighting during the Second World War and are the vanguard of other such units in the world. Among all other units in the Polish Military they raise the biggest admiration and respect. Apart from the tradition also the experiences from the times of the Polish People's Army and, most of all, from the times of the system transformation influenced the present shape of the special military forces in Poland. The functioning of such units during the Cold War era was justified by the war doctrine which assumed involvement of large armoured and airborne forces and nuclear strikes by air and rocket units. Recognition and diversion were the tasks of the special units. First Polish recognition sub-units were formed in the beginning of the 1950s in the towns of Opole and Sztum. Further development and transformations of existing special units contributed to the formation of the 1st Assault Battalion in the town of Dziwnów in 1964 (which was moved to the town of Lubliniec in 1968), which task was to operate in the distance of more than 300 kilometres from the frontline. In the end of 1960s special companies (KS) in the cities of Kraków (48 KS), Bydgoszcz (56 KS) and Bolesławiec (62 KS). In the mid-1970s the works on formation of the special unit for the Navy started. In 1975 the Division of Divers subordinated to the 3rd Fleet of Ships was formed (since 1987 it was the Division of Special Operations).¹⁸ Then, political changes and the international political situation decided on the special units and special sub-divisions. The new reality revealed that several hundred thousand soldiers army with expanded special sub-units modelled on the Soviet pattern and prepared for special operations in the Western Europe makes no sense. At first the tasks of special sub-units and units of recognition and diversion of the Polish People's Army were the recognition, operational diversion and parachute landing in the backlines of the enemy. Groups that were operating on their own and independently from the main forces were to provide

¹⁷ Cf. Mc Nab, *Sztuka przetrwania na morzu z US Navy Seals*, Warsaw 2002, p. 7 (introduction by John T. Carney Jr., the US army col. ret., chief of the Special Operations Warrior Foundation).

¹⁸ Raport by the K. Pułaski Fundacja entitled *Sily Zbrojne RP – stan, perspektywy i wyzwania modernizacyjne*, p. 87 (author of the analysis: P. Fleischer).

the necessary information and neutralize threats from the advance of the frontline. At that time the General Staff did not project for special units situations of any independent operations and being the tools of international politics or international military relationships, like the US Green Berets or the British Professional Regiment of the Special Air Service. The reason was the lack of sovereignty by the Polish foreign policy following the membership in the Warsaw Pact and the USSR *modus operandi* in this field.¹⁹

In the beginning of the 1990 there is a new geopolitical order in Europe. It was necessary to re-define the Polish special military forces directions of development, aim of which was – which is interesting, to concentrate on the defence only. After the attack on the diplomatic post in Lebanon in 1990 the Polish Ministry on Interior started the formation of an elite military unit called The Group Of Operation and Manoeuvre (Mobile) Reaction. Officially it was established on 13th July 1990 (JW. 2305). Its supervisor and its first commander became Lt Col Sławomir Petelicki.

In the 1990s all military forces were subjects to transformation processes. In 1990 the Division of Special Operations of the Navy was replaced by Special Groups of Divers, which were part of the bigger Group of Hydro-graphic Vessels. Also the 1st Assault Battalion was transformed in 1993 into the 1st Special Regiment, which was directly subordinated to the Commander of the Ground Forces.

It is worth noting that each of the units was subordinated to different commands, which resulted in different levels of financing of the training, equipment and cooperation. The GROM unit was the most privileged back then; in the beginning it was financed via the structures of the Vistula Military Units under the Ministry of Interior to make its existence secret and it was subordinated directly to the Ministry of Interior until 1999. Since the 1st October 1999 the GROM unit has been officially subordinated to the Ministry of National Defence.

After Poland joined the NATO in 1999, there was an increase in Polish special units' involvement in foreign missions. In the beginning of the 21st century soldiers from the 1st Special Regiment of Commandos was directed to Amber Fox operation in Macedonia. In 2001 in Kosovo the GROM unit was operating. Terrorist attacks in the USA in 2001 and operations against Al-Qaeda and Hussein regime in Iraq forced a more intensive involvement of special units abroad. Elite special units took part in operations in Afghanistan within the Polish Military Component. In 2002 in the Persian Gulf, even before the American and its allies' invasion on Iraq, the Polish FORMOZA and the GROM unit were also operating. The GROM commandos took also part in Iraqi Freedom operation, where together with the Navy Seals they carried out an operation on the oil terminals in the port of Umm Kasr.

¹⁹ M. Olton, M. Zientarzewski, A. Nogaj, *Zanim uderzył GROM. Historia jednostek specjalnych i wojsk powietrznodesantowych*, Warsaw 2010, p. 129 et seq.

The establishment of the special military unit in the structures of the Polish Military Forces

The first decade of the 20th century is the time of work on the changes of the special units command structure. The necessity of a separate headquarters for those units was the result of international commitments within the NATO.

Following the worldwide geopolitical changes and the 9/11 attack in New York, the NATO summit was organized in Prague. Polish side declared then the readiness – regarding its special military units, as ‘a national specialty’ in the alliance. Then, the four countries: Poland, the USA, the Netherlands and Norway proposed to the NATO Council the *NATO Special Operations Forces Transformation Initiative* (NSTI). Poland as one out of four countries propounded the enhancement of those forces potential. The country saw also the need of establishing proper alliance institutions to coordinate, develop and use special forces on the strategic level. The initiative was supported by the NATO members. During the NATO summit in Riga in 2006 there were some establishments taken to bring the initiative into force. Eventually, the NATO Special Operations Coordination Centre by the Allied Command Operations in Mons (Belgium) was established.

At the end of 2005 within the General Staff of the Polish Army there was established the Special Operations Headquarters, the task of which was to make formal and legal conditions to establish a new type of military forces, i.e. Special Forces and the Special Forces Headquarter. This direction was approved by the Minister of Defence on 25 October 2006, who issued a decision on the Special Forces Headquarter establishment with effect from January 1st, 2007.

The new type of military forces consisted of all Polish special units from different organizational structures. The GROM Military Unit subordinated directly to the Ministry of Defence, the 1st Special Regiment (now: the Commandos Military Unit) was one of the units subordinated to the Ground Forces Headquarter, Special Groups of Divers (now: the FORMOZA Military Unit) were part of the Reconnaissance Vessels Group of the 3rd Fleet of Ships subordinated to the Navy.²⁰

For the last few years elite units of GROM, FORMOZA and the Commandos Military Unit were joined by two new units. In December 2008 the Unit Of Command Support and the Security of Special Forces NIL was established (since October 1st, 2011 – the NIL Military Unit). It is responsible for IT support and logistics for the rest special forces units. Its task is to organize command systems and command over special forces in the country and abroad. In 2011 on the basis of the Military Police branch in the town of Gliwice the AGAT unit was established. It is a combination of the light parachute infantry and the mountain infantry intended for special operations. The AGAT Military Unit was started as a result of reform and structural changes of the Special Division of the Military Police branch in Gliwice.

²⁰ *Wojska Specjalne w systemie obronnym RP...*, p. 31.

Military policemen from the liquidated unit were incorporated in the new unit's ranks after a very strict selection. The main tasks of the AGAT Military Unit are the following: direct operations on the ground, anti-partisan operations and counter-terrorist operations, as well as securing critical infrastructure.²¹ The unit carries out its operations either on its own or together with Special Forces' Task Teams, after dividing its part, the priority task of which is isolating the object assaulted and making for the enemy impossible to obtain the object support (dummy tasks and the security tasks included). Additionally, the unit provides its forces the possibility to dominate the enemy in a facility and taking it over. The AGAT Military Unit is in principle a light assault unit of a landing nature, acting within the Polish Military Forces. Its specialty is to carry out direct operations behind the enemy lines and in the enemy fleet. It carries out sniper operations, it rains aviation on designated targets. There are two assault divisions in the unit: "Alfa" and "Bravo". The whole unit got its full operational capabilities in 2016 and became the most heavily exploited type of Special Forces.²² It cooperates with other special units and its operators are highly trained for example in a jungle (the French Guiana) by the French Foreign Legion instructors. Some chosen operators were provided a training on shooting techniques, fighting in urban areas and closed facilities by the US instructors from the Security Assistance Training Management Organization – SATMO.

Air transportation and operational support of all Special Military units is provided by the 7th Air Squadron of Special Operations based in the town of Powidz, which is part of the Air Forces.

The Special Operations Component Command was on duty in 2015 for the first time in the NATO Response Force, in which Poland played a role of a frame country. Important results of the service in the NATO Response Force are, *inter alia*, numerous exercises and trainings to keep the forces in a particular state of combat readiness. Additionally, a functional command system and communication system were important as well as their interoperability with alliance systems. Polish Special Military, according to the assumptions, were able to build the architecture of command and communication systems, which allowed to carry out the tasks efficiently within the NATO Response Force. It also guaranteed access to intelligence. The Polish Special Military Units Command is called "Polsocom"²³ in NATO.

The Strategy of the National Security in the Republic of Poland of 2007²⁴ strengthened the Special Forces in the command system of the Polish army and defined their tasks. The main tasks are counteracting asymmetric threats and the necessity

²¹ <http://archiwalny.mon.gov.pl/pl/artykul/11492> [access: 30 I 2017].

²² „Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie”, Vol. 7, Kraków 2014, p. 32, available at: [http://uek.krakow.pl/files/common/uczelnia/wydawnictwo/2014/ZN_7\(931\)_2014_net.pdf](http://uek.krakow.pl/files/common/uczelnia/wydawnictwo/2014/ZN_7(931)_2014_net.pdf) [access: 19 V 2017].

²³ <https://specjalsi.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/sily-specjalne-w-strukturach-armii-wybranych-panstw-europejskich/> [access: 18 V 2017].

²⁴ Available at: <http://www.ms.gov.pl/resource/7d18e04d-8f23-4128-84b9-4f426346a112>, p. 25 [access: 12 I 2017].

of cooperation with other organs responsible for the general security in the country. It was also proposed to enhance the development of this kind of military in order to work out the best way of their use.

Another strategic document listing the tasks of the Special Forces was the Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland of 2009.²⁵ The role and the place of the forces were even more emphasized than before. The document confirms that the Special Forces as the fourth kind of the Polish Military Forces are destined for special operations in the country and abroad, during peace time, crisis and war. Operations carried out together with conventional forces or on their own can be of strategic or operational nature. The structure of the Special Forces is based on the separate sections and sub-sections consisting of selected, highly trained and well equipped soldiers. They are prepared to act in a high-risk environment and able to complete tasks beyond the reach of conventional units.

Leading the special units of the Special Forces Command

In each country overseeing the special units and their organization are the tasks of the highly specialized command with trained staff. In the USA it is The United States Special Operations Command (*USSOCOM* or *SOCOM*)²⁶, in NATO – respectively: the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (*NSHQ*)²⁷ and the Special Operations Command Europe (*SOCEUR*)²⁸, in Italy – *Commando Forze Speciali (COF)*²⁹, in France – *Commandement des opérations spéciales (COS)*³⁰, and in the UK – *Directorate of Special Forces (DSF)*³¹. The idea of a Special Forces operational command was based on the fact that our geographical position can cause situation that security and stability of the country is endangered by conflicts on the outskirts of Europe, by infringement of basic economic interests, and – last but not least – the present, although invisible, spectre of terrorism in the country or outside, where the Polish citizens' lives can be threatened.

While verifying crucial changes in the structure of the Polish Military proposed in the 1st Strategic Defence Review (2005), a dozen or so defence plays were carried out to simulate numerous tasks in the country and abroad. It was clear that our action capabilities in an area distant to logistical and recognition base were insufficient. Recognition of the situation in a distant area was dependent on the recognition systems

²⁵ Available at: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:-VTIf34zKQ0J:www.umwd.dolnyslask.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/Bezpieczenstwo/Prawo/Strategia_Obronnosci.doc+&cd=1&hl=pl&ct=clnk&gl=pl&client=firefox-b, s. 22 [access: 12 I 2017].

²⁶ <http://www.socom.mil/> [access: 8 I 2017].

²⁷ <https://www.nshq.nato.int/nshq/> [access: 8 I 2017].

²⁸ <https://www.soceur.eucom.mil/> [access: 31 XII 2016].

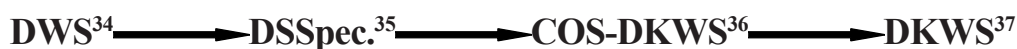
²⁹ <https://specjalsi.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/sily-specjalne-w-strukturach-armii-wybranych-panstw-europejskich/> [access: 18 V 2017].

³⁰ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commandement_des_op%C3%A9rations_sp%C3%A9ciales [access: 18 V 2017].

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Director_Special_Forces [access: 18 V 2017].

of the third countries, air transportation was too limited, it was also impossible to organize military support on the spot. There was a lack of agreed net of secret communication with potentially cooperation forces. There were also no agreed procedures of common actions. A decision should have been taken to establish bigger special forces with high combat preparedness, able to carry out operations together with other armies (special forces), trained for unconventional actions and equipped with special combat means.³² Such military forces were established on January 1st, 2007 as the fourth type of the Polish Military Forces. Since 2009 they are capable of commanding the national special forces within a common operation of integrated military forces or as an independent support for the national structures and the society in crisis situations.

The scheme presents a reform of the Special Forces command³³:



Scheme 1. Reform of the Special Forces command.

Source: self-study.

According to the Act of 24 May 2007 on the change of the act on the common duty of defending the Republic of Poland³⁸, there has been a new type of military forces in the Polish Army since January 1st, 2007, i.e. Special Forces. One of the first tasks of the Special Forces Headquarters (DWS) was to improve the integration and coordination between the military units (which, according to the author of the article, is significant because it shows the potentials of the mutual use of experiences gained in the international allied operations/missions and also in trainings and courses of competence exchange between them). The provision of Article 4 of the Act stated that the competences of the Special Forces command are the following:

- 1) command and control of the Special Forces units;
- 2) planning, mobilization and operational development as well as the use of the Special Forces;
- 3) training of the Special Forces units;

³² A. Karkoszka, *Wojska Specjalne w systemie obronnym RP – aspekty organizacyjne, doktrynalne i modernizacyjne*, Warszawa 2013, p. 18 et seq. The work includes papers and communiqués from the international conference organized by the National Defence Academy, the Special Military Headquarter and the E. Kwiatkowski Polish Industry Lobby, entitled *Polskie Wojska Specjalne w systemie Obronnym RP – aspekty organizacyjne, doktrynalne i modernizacyjne*. The conference took place on 24 October 2012 in the MoD Conference Centre.

³³ B. Jagodziński, *Współpraca służb i formacji specjalnych w zakresie działań specjalnych*, „Przegląd Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego” 2016, No. 14, p. 59 et seq.

³⁴ Special Forces Command.

³⁵ Special Forces Command.

³⁶ Special Operations Centre – Special Military Component Headquarters.

³⁷ Special Military Component Headquarters.

³⁸ The Act of 24 May 2007 on the changes of the act on the common obligation of the Defence of the Republic of Poland and on the changes some other acts (Journal of laws 2007, No. 107, item 732).

- 4) preparing combat forces and means of the Special Forces for military action and for their future use in situations described in legal acts and ratified international treaties.

The detailed DWS tasks were the following:

- 1) building systems of consistent command and control, system of support and ensuring the activities for special operations;
- 2) elaboration of development and usage concept of the military units in special actions, supervision over training process in such units;
- 3) taking action and coordination of the special units usage abroad and – in the country, including the preparation of the Special Forces for the cooperation within the Combined Joint Force Special Operations Component Command;
- 4) oversight of the combat abilities level of forces and measures planned for special actions, establishing the armament needs, equipment, training and exercises needed;
- 5) elaboration of the recruitment rules for special units and guidelines of education and improvement of their staff;
- 6) operational analyses and implementation of experiences from trainings, exercises and missions to adjust organizational structures and training to the real field requirements and threats.

In contrast to other commands of the Types of Military Forces, the command of the Special Forces was not to pass subordinated organizational units to the Operational Headquarters for the time of combat activities. It made the command of the Special Forces a command of operational nature which was also responsible for their use and command in the battlefield. So, it was a fully integrated command in Polish Army that linked the command of special operations in all areas (ground, sea, air) which made the Special Forces the one and only joined sort of military in **an hourly-working regime**.

During the operations the Special Forces Headquarter played a role of a *force provider* and a *force user* at the same time. This role distinguished DSW from other commands of the Polish Army which played only one role out of those. Thanks to such legal position the commanding officer of the Special Forces had a real influence not only on the units' development plans but also on their training and preparations for special operations (which is extremely important in such type of units). He could also quickly respond and react to any changes of the operational situation by adjusting the sort of and amount of forces for action.³⁹

By the formal decision No. Z-45/Org/P-5 of 4 August 2008 of the Minister of Defence DWS was moved to garrison Kraków in the town of Pychowice. It had a Joined Operational Centre, from which commanding officers, experts on logistics, aircraft, recognition and meteorology could contact with subordinated forces acting in any place in the world. The DWS officers could observe online the pictures sent by operators from helmet cameras. This way they could monitor subordinates online and

³⁹ „Special OPS” 2014, No. 1, special edition: *Wojska...*, p. 10 et seq.

command them by taking decisions on operations carried out even a couple thousand kilometres from Kraków. Such commanding centre the JW NIL spec ops can organize in any place during less than 2 hours.

The following special units were subordinated to the Special Forces:

- the GROM Military Unit (JW 2305)⁴⁰,
- the Commandos Military Unit (JW 4101)⁴¹,
- the FORMOZA Military Unit (JW 4026)⁴²,
- the NIL Military Unit (JW 4724)⁴³,
- the AGAT Military Unit (JW 3940)⁴⁴,
- 7. Squadron of Special Action (operationally subordinated to DKWS but operating within the Air Forces)⁴⁵.

On 31 December 2009 the DWS achieved its fighting readiness, i.e. the ability to command the national special operations in the frames of the joined defence operation of the national integrated military forces or within the support of the national structures in crisis situation. Before 2013 it had also achieved the ability to plan allied special operations and to command them as the eight country worldwide (before Poland such ability had the US, the UK, France, Turkey, Spain and Italy). This way Poland

⁴⁰ The counter terrorist unit established in 1990 on the initiative of col. Sławomir Petelicki supported by the Minister of Internal Affairs Krzysztof Kozłowski (it got its full combat readiness in 1992) following the political changes in Poland and threats of attacks by Palestinian terrorists.

⁴¹ This military unit was formed in 1961 as the 26 Recognition Battalion subordinated to the 6 Pomerania Airborne Division, designated to special tasks (recognition and diversion) behind the enemy lines. In 1993 it was transformed into the 1 Special Regiment named from the 1995 as “the Commandos”. In 2007 the unit was subordinated to the Special Military Headquarter.

⁴² The naval special unit was founded in 1975. Initially it was operating as the Special Operations Division (officially: Special Frogmen Group) within the Third Flotilla of Ships; since 1990 it was moved to the Group of Hydrographic Vessels (later – Group of Recognition Vessels) of the Third Flotilla of Ships under the name Special Frogmen Groups. The present name comes from 2007; in 2008 it was taken out of the Navy structures and subordinated to the Special Military Headquarter. At the beginning the unit carried out tasks typical for combat frogmen, particularly recognition of coasts for naval assault, attacks under the water on the enemies’ vessels, ships, port infrastructure and other coastal facilities, including hydro technical objects. Between 2000 and 2003 FORMOZA operators took part in the Persian Gulf operations of the embargo control there, and since 2008 they had joined Polish special troops in Afghanistan in the stabilization mission there. Cf. <http://www.special-ops.pl/leksykon/id137.jednostka-wojskowa-formoza> [access: 8 I 2017].

⁴³ It was founded as the Command Support and Logistical Support Unit for the Special Military. It is comprised of soldiers from other units of the Special Military. Its main tasks are information support, command and logistical support for special operations carried out by the Special Military in the country, abroad, independently and with allied forces.

⁴⁴ The unit was formed on 1 July 2011 on the basis of the Special Branch of the Military Police in the town of Gliwice. The first commander of the unit was col. Sławomir Berdychowski, former soldier of the JW. GROM. AGAT is a specialized light infantry unit to secure and support special operations, and to carry out operations behind the enemy lines. Furthermore, it is trained for anti terrorist operations, anti partisan operations and securing critical infrastructure.

⁴⁵ 7. Squadron of Special Action was formed in 2010 following the needs of an air support for special operations. The main task of the Squadron is securing special units in the country and abroad. Its formation was a result of obligations coming from the NATO membership.

became the first and only state in the middle and eastern Europe that can declare such possibilities and get the status of the frame country, and in the result, become an unquestionable leader in the topic of special forces in the region.

The Special Forces' Headquarters were established in result of the American partners' assistance in planning, finances and equipment. Since February 2009 several hundreds of American experts, liaison officers from American and French special services have joined the DWS. The Americans, acting in the Special Forces Headquarters for more than 25 years, assisted also to our command and control to prepare a plan of the full readiness for actions. Since the beginning they advised on the organizational structure, doctrines, equipment and personnel training. Leading NATO representatives, politicians and the US military pointed out Poland as the role model for other countries that reformed their military forces. The process was concluded in a direct cooperation with the USA, which paid ca. 80 million US dollars for it and trained more than 100 officers. The result of such a big involvement of American partners was an agreement signed in 2009 on the cooperation between the US SOCOM and the Polish Special Forces Headquarters. Additionally, Poland carrying out the process was joined by some other countries from the Central Europe (Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary and Germany).

The status of Poland as one of the most important or one of the frame countries in the scope of NATO special operations was the simplest, the quickest and the cheapest way to the NATO operations command (since 2014). It is worth pointing out that it is not possible in the case of other kinds of military forces (the Ground Forces, Navy or Air Forces). Between 2012 and 2013 more than 200 DSW officers and from other subordinated units took part in special courses and trainings in the USA free of charge. Also France (FRASOCOM-COS) gave assistance and consultancy to the DWS. The Americans gave access to selected intelligence, the French gave information on their special operations and allowed to use their special training centres in Djibouti (combat in the desert), the French Guiana (combat and survival in a jungle) and Pau (the state-of-the-art centre Close Quarters Battle⁴⁶ in Europe – CTA). Polish commandos can be sent to every place in the world, so the DWS instructors and special units soldiers were trained additionally in Brazil, India, Turkey, Georgia, Norway, Jordan, Israel and in Belize.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Combat in closed areas (combat in a small distance, close combat, combat in the rooms) is a special method of combat used by the properly trained and equipped military units, military subunits, police subunits, etc. It is used to take control over facilities and fight inside them. Teaching the basics of combat in a small distance is also in the program of conventional military units. It is a result of the fact that the combat is carried out more and more often in build-up areas. Such tactics called *Quarters Combat* (CQC) or *Close Quarters Battle* (CQB), is a kind of combat, in which usually small subdivisions (teams) combat the enemy with an individual weapon in a small distance or taking up hand-to-hand combat or use an assault knife or sword bayonet. For Polish units using the tactics see: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walka_w_przestrzeniach_zamkni%C4%99tych [access: 9 April 2014].

⁴⁷ More on agreements and international cooperation of the DWS with foreign partners in:

The Special Force's Headquarters had relatively big plans for its subordinate units. They referred to training abilities and operational abilities improvement, increasing the number of combat teams (up to 2016), improving the abilities of a kinetic support for special operations, building the airlift and air support abilities (until the end of 2018), a complex system of logistical and information support for special operations (until the end of 2014).

According to the reform of the Polish Military command and control structures the commands of the Kinds of Military Forces, including the Special Forces Headquarter were de-shaped on December 31st, 2013. Five special units with a dozen or so other units and military institutions were directly subordinated to the General Commander of the Kinds of Military Forces (DG RSZ) responsible for commanding them during peace time and crisis, for their training and equipment.⁴⁸

There is six new inspectorates in the General Commander of the Kinds of Military Forces (DG RSZ), including the Inspectorate of the Special Military (IWS). Its role was to prepare and organize trainings with headquarters and military, fulfilling the tasks of an armament and military equipment custodian in the Special Military preparing Special Military resources for combat actions. The Inspectorate of the Special Military Forces (IWS) did not have any command role for individual units of those forces.⁴⁹

Further changes came on January 1st, 2014 when the Special Military Headquarters was transformed into the Special Forces Headquarter (DSSpec.) subordinated to the General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces (DG RSZ).

The Special Forces Headquarters (DSSpec.) was supposed to be an organizational unit responsible for command and control of the special military units. Its task was to project both the guidelines of development and to plan the use of military as well as to prepare resources for combat actions and crisis situations. For the time of operations some isolated special military sub-units with their leadership were subordinated to the Operational Headquarters of the Kinds of Military Forces (DG RSZ).⁵⁰ Such solution allowed to keep the Special Military Forces' autonomy (despite the DWS dissolution), and – what is more important – allowed to serve as the force user and force provider, which was the essence of their existence. It was the Special Forces Headquarters (DSSpec.) task to issue national certificates for elements chosen for the NATO and the UE forces, to verify the readiness of combat teams resources and readiness to separate them out for allied and international structures. Unfortunately, the reform survived in this shape only 10 days. The Special Forces Headquarters (DSSpec.) was quite unexpectedly liquidated. Instead, the Special Operations Centre – The Command of the Special Forces Component was established that was subordinated to the Operational Headquarters of the Kinds of Military Forces (DG RSZ) and not to the General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces.

„Special OPS” 2014, No. 1, p. 12 (special edition).

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Ibidem.

In 2015 the Ministry of Defence started legislative and organizational works on the “revision of the reform” which had been introduced only one year earlier. On 16 July 2015⁵¹ the Special Operations Centre - The Command of the Special Forces Component was subordinated directly to the General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces. Since its creation, i.e. 10 January 2014, it was subordinated to the Operational Headquarter of the Kinds of Military Forces. Next change being a result of the above reform was the COS-DKWS transformation into the Command of the Special Forces (DKWS) which meant a direct subordination of all five Special Military units to DKWS. According to the 2019 data these are⁵²: the GROM Military Unit, the Commandos Military Unit, the FORMOZA Military Unit, the NIL Military Unit, the AGAT Military Unit and – operationally – the 7. Squadron of Special Action, placed within the Air Forces.

The DKWS personnel provides the backbone of the Special Operations Component Command (SOCC) of the NATO Response Force (NRF). DKWS performed its first combat shift in the NATO Response Force in 2015.⁵³

The General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces is the supervisor of the Command of the Special Forces Component that commands special units.⁵⁴ The Command of the Special Forces Component plays a double role, it prepares the military to make use of it and commands them (the identity of the force provider and the force user roles). So, the training is submitted to the plans by the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces and the Operational Headquarter of the Kinds of Military Forces.⁵⁵ The Inspectorate of Special Military (IWS) is within the structure of DG RSZ as its inner cell.

In 2017 the Ministry of Defence decided on the merge of the Inspectorate of Special Military and The Command of the Special Forces Component into one structure. This way Polish special units will be placed in a consistent management system and will be subordinated to the General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces. This is another revision of the management and command system of Polish spec ops.

The Minister of Defence issued a decision on November 13th, 2017 on the organizational changes in special military in the result of which the Inspectorate of Special Military was merged with the Command of the Special Forces Component. The changes started in the beginning of 2018. Before that the Inspectorate of Special Military was responsible inter alia for development planning of the special military, procurement of equipment and international cooperation. The Command of the Special

⁵¹ <http://do.wp.mil.pl/artykuly/aktualnosci/2015-07-17-cos-dkws-przekazane-w-podporzadkowanie-dg-rsz/> [access: 3 I 2017].

⁵² <http://wojskaspecjalne.wp.mil.pl/pl/43.html> [access: 8 I 2017].

⁵³ <http://wojskaspecjalne.wp.mil.pl/pl/42.html> [access: 3 I 2017].

⁵⁴ <http://dgrsz.mon.gov.pl/aktualnosci/artykul/najnowsze/2015-07-17-zmiana-w-dowodzeniu-wojskami-specjalnymi/> [access: 20 I 2019].

⁵⁵ <http://dziennikzbroyny.pl/aktualnosci/news,4,9242,z-zycia-wojska,zmiana-w-dowodzeniu-wojskami-specjalnymi> [access: 3 I 2017].

Forces Component operating in Kraków was responsible for training and spec ops operations in the country and abroad. All special military units and – operationally – the 7. Squadron of Special Actions were subordinated to the chief commander of the Command of the Special Forces Component. According to the decision of the minister the competences of those both institutions were consolidated and given over to the chief commander of the Command of the Special Forces Component. The Special Military Forces are currently subordinated directly to the General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces.⁵⁶

Therefore Polish Special Military Forces are to be placed in an unified command structure. According to the Ministry of Defence the purpose of this change is to fully prepare the Headquarters to command the NATO Response Force. Already in 2020 the Headquarters together with its subordinated units will be on combat duty. The fusion of the Command of the Special Forces Component and the Inspectorate of Special Military Forces is a further step to unify the command structures in the Polish special units. DKWS will be subordinated directly to the General Command of the Kinds of Military Forces. In this new structure spec ops are to be prepared for combat duty in the NATO Response Force.⁵⁷

The document *Wizja Sił Zbrojnych RP 2030*⁵⁸ by the Ministry of Defence describes the tasks and actions of all kinds of Polish military forces. It is planned that special military will have higher and higher position in the organizational structure of the military forces. They are supposed to be formations of the highest combat readiness, availability and the level of training. They are still going to carry out special operations on the ground, at sea and in the air, both on their own and together with other kinds of military forces. They are still able to strike crucial objects and strategic individuals, to save hostages, to disempowered data transmission nets and communication infrastructure, and to disturb the coherence of defence systems.

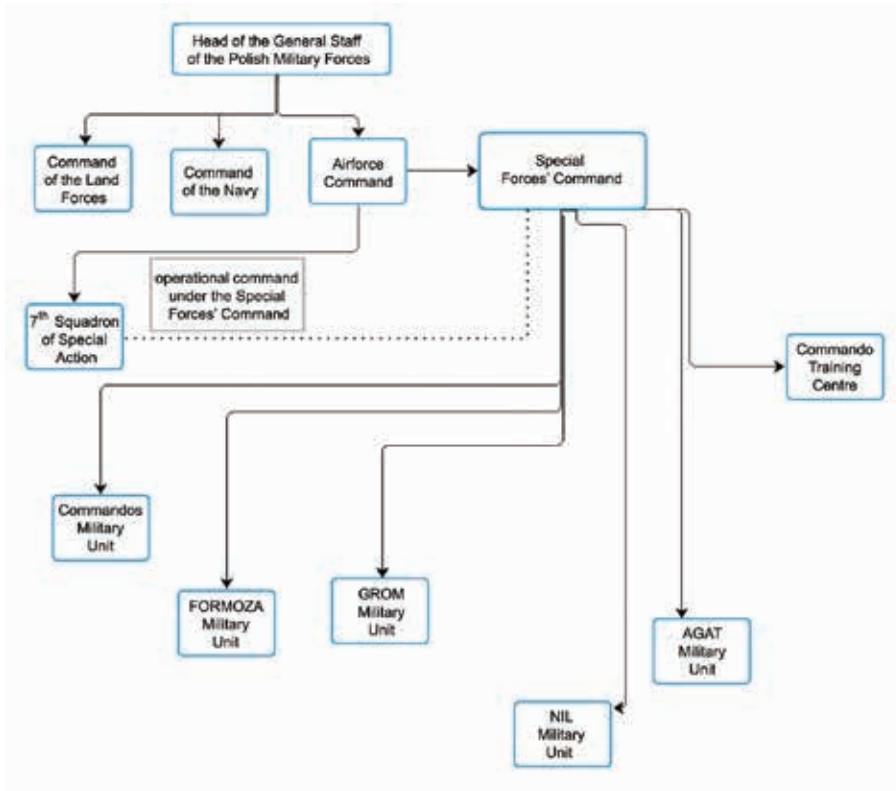
The number of Special Military will come to ca. 3% of the whole Polish military personnel number.⁵⁹ Financial means for the Special Military Forces are incomparably lower than money for conventional military and account for 2% of the Polish Military Forces budget.

⁵⁶ <http://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/24454?t=Zmiany-u-specjalsow> [access: 20 I 2019].

⁵⁷ <https://www.defence24.pl/wojska-specjalne-pod-jednolitym-dowodztwem-komentarz> [access: 20 I 2019].

⁵⁸ Document available at: http://www.znp.wat.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=74:wizja-si-zbrojnych-rp-2030&catid=12:strategie&Itemid=18, s. 24 [access: 20 I 2019].

⁵⁹ Worldwide standards of the numbers of special forces in relation to conventional forces are 2–5%.



Scheme 2. Currently effective structure of the Special Military.

Source: self-study.

To sum up the above passage we can cite major gen. P. Patalong⁶⁰ that DWS formation (currently DKWS) was the result of political decisions taken by Poland during the two NATO summits and import an element on the way of getting a position of serious and reliable NATO partner in the area of special operations. Additionally, the establishment of the special military forces within the Polish Army enhanced the defence system in the country and filled the gap in the components of the Polish Army. It is also a basic response tool for current terrorist threats.

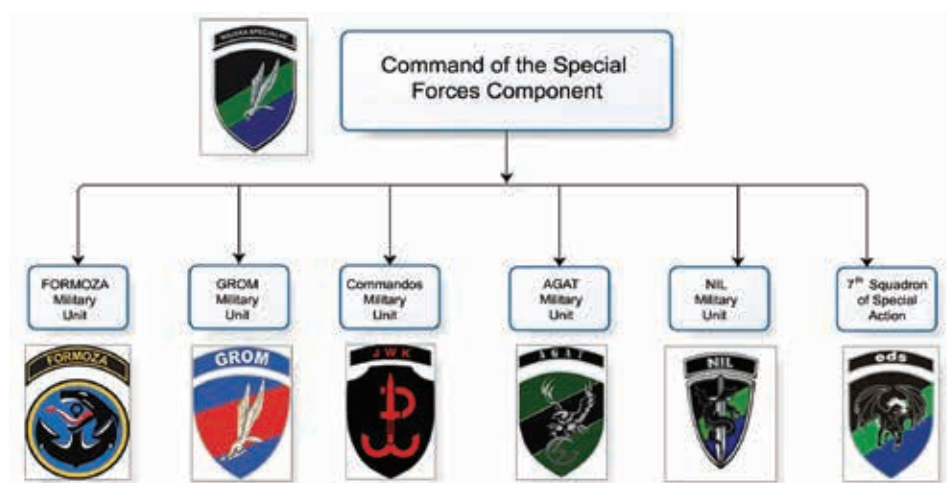
Special Military Forces are ready for immediate re action in particular situations, among of which there are the kidnapping of Polish citizens abroad, security threats to diplomatic posts, evacuation of Polish citizens from unstable regions and so on. They also play an important role in allied operations (coalition operations) carried out in an asymmetric conflicts. Forming the Special Military Forces provided the defence system of the country with a basic element of support to the forces subordinated to the minister competent for internal affairs in reactions for internal security threats of terrorist nature. Polish Special Military units are capable of independent special

⁶⁰ *Wojska Specjalne w systemie obronnym RP ...*, p. 33 et seq.

operations in each and every environment (ground, sea, air) which makes them a joined military force. They can carry out operations without an assistance of any other forces and realize the supportive tasks.

Describing the role of the Special Military Forces' commander as a force user and a force provider causes that he can react quickly and smoothly to changing operational situation and adjust the kind and the number of isolated groups (Combat Teams) as well as elements of support and provision to relevant situations.

The guidelines of the Special Military forces' development in the period 2009–2018 and their follow-up within *Program rozwoju Sił Zbrojnych RP na lata 2013–2022* allow the increase the number of combat elements of those forces, their full independence and the growth of their combat potential and effectiveness in cooperation with conventional forces in order to use them in the current battlefield during the peace time, crisis and war.



Scheme 3. The currently effective structure of DKWS.

Source: *Wojska Specjalne w systemie obronnym RP – aspekty organizacyjne, doktrynalne i modernizacyjne*, B. Pacek, P. Soroka, M. Kubiński (ed.), Warsaw 2013, p. 102.

Polish Special Military Forces have to comply with specific requirements regarding their numbers, trainings, equipment and organization of the most important tasks from the perspective of geostrategic position of the country. First, these are the tasks connected to the security of our country and an allied country, and then the tasks involving the spec ops in expedition operations.

Abstract

The article is the part of a bigger work on special units. Information on military conflicts and the history of the Special Military Forces in Poland have been presented

in its first part. Then the reasons of establishment of the Special Military Forces as a separate kind of the Polish Army were given. Further on, the topic of command and control was described, including the reform by the Ministry of Defence regarding the changes in the command of the Special Military Forces. Additionally, the schemes presenting the organization of the Special Military Forces and their position within the Polish Army.

The structure of command in the Special Military Forces has been changing over the last few years, and in 2013, 2014 and 2015 in particular. The stability of the process connected to the reform of the command came to an end only in 2018. The article describes also the terms of the force user and provider as the most important elements connected to the command and organization in special units.

Keywords: special military, special operations, special units, special units command, force user, force provider.