

MILITARY POLICE AS AN IMPORTANT ACTOR OF THE NEW SECURITY ENVIRONMENT. THE EXPERIENCES OF THE POLISH MILITARY'S GENDARMERIE FROM ITS ISAF MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

The paper deals with the core activities of the military police/gendarmerie. It is mainly based on the actions of the Polish Gendarmerie forces connected with the ISAF operation in Afghanistan. Firstly, the changing nature of the security environment is described, focusing on the new threat picture, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Secondly, the new roles played by the armed forces are described, especially related to stability and reconstruction operations. The specific and important role of the Polish Gendarmerie is also described, especially as far as the ISAF mission is concerned. Lessons learned are shown. The international cooperation in this regard is also underlined, setting an example to follow.

Key words: Security environment, the armed forces, military gendarmerie, capabilities, ISAF

Introduction

The reality we face in the second decade of the 21st century is directly connected with security issues, and in particular the ways of providing security, both in its

current and future dimension. The reasons are not only the revolutionary changes in science and technology, but possibly first of all, the characteristics of the already diagnosed and existing threats and forecasted challenges for the global security environment, for which we have not yet found sufficient responses. Although we do live in times when the threat of a full-scale global conflict has been, as it may seem, eliminated, the new phenomena, issues and events that appear have a significant impact on sustaining and creating genuine international stability in the future. Those phenomena include, among others, crises (economic, social, political, ethnic etc.), political instability and failed states, transnational organized crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, ethnic conflicts or ecological and climate disasters. Those phenomena, however, are not only limited to one state or region as it used to be, therefore a state as a sole agent of creating its security is no longer efficient. The phenomena and threats are interwoven and multi-dimensional, and their occurrence is usually rather of a systematic nature. Identified external threats, and also potential challenges, for instance political ones, imply those of an economic and psychological character, those, consequently, lead to internal ones, creating a chain reaction of interrelated phenomena.

Additionally, it should be noticed that for more than two last decades there has been an evolution concerning the use of the armed forces. This evolution – in spite of a broader spectrum of experiences – began with the involvement of outside forces in finding a solution to the conflict in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. It was the first operation in which front-line troops with operational tasks took part. Nevertheless, it was the experience gained in Iraq, Afghanistan and Chad that was the foundation for taking action towards the improvement of capabilities focused on an expeditionary profile: the mobility and capability to conduct operations, which up to now were focused on defending the territory of their country in remote areas of the world. The next point is to widen the capabilities of cooperation with the civilian society environment, as well as other actors active within the area of operation, towards an approach that combines all aspects of the redevelopment of a specific country or a fallen state.

Which roles are to be played by the armed forces?

The armed forces should possess a wide range of capabilities, both military and non-military, which will enable them to be involved into a wide range of operations. Within these capabilities we should create task forces adequate for solving particular crisis situations, characterized by high mobility, an ability for redeployment, self-sufficiency, taking advantage of modern technology and the capability to operate in a joint multinational civilian and military community. These forces should take into consideration the support of the host country only to a small extent; moreover, often at the beginning of the operation they should be able to operate without its full support.

The key tasks drawn from the analysis of the operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Chad are as follows: (1) providing and/or maintaining control over key facilities in the area of operation e.g.: airports, seaports, main lines of communication or political centers, (2) controlling urban areas and other key areas that are necessary for the success of the operation; (3) deterring and showing particular behavior patterns in the areas of responsibility (in accordance with the aim of the operation and RoE), (4) maintaining law and order in the chaos-stricken areas, (5) protecting and rescuing the civilian population; (6) separating the parties of the conflict, (7) providing support for the distribution of humanitarian aid, and support in case of a natural disaster.

In this regard, the most important tasks and missions should be focused on participation in the stability and reconstruction operations. In this regard, special roles are to be played by all the entities of the Polish military subsystem, for example the Military Gendarmerie (MG), having, according to the Polish law, opportunities to participate in international operations organized by international organizations. The ISAF operation in Afghanistan is the best example.

Which role for the Military Gendarmerie?

The Military Gendarmerie of the Polish Armed Forces is a separate, independent and specialized formation. It is not a separate service but on the other hand, it

is directly subordinated to the Minister of the National Defence. Its tasks and competencies are defined in the Act on Military Gendarmerie and Military Law Enforcement Bodies from 24th of August 2001. The basic task of the Military Gendarmerie, in times of peace, crisis and war, is to prevent violations of military discipline and public order by military personnel outside their region of accommodation, and effectively respond to these violations by the detection of crime in the armed forces and the criminal prosecution of the perpetrators.

The task of the Military Gendarmerie is also the protection of life and property from illegal military attacks, the protection of security and public order, property and individuals. Important tasks are performed not only within Poland, but also abroad, during peacekeeping, stabilization and reconstruction operations and missions.

During the previous missions of the Polish Armed Forces, Military Gendarmerie soldiers were part of the Polish Military Contingents (PKW) creating separate sections. They were also sent to the multinational structures, taking positions mainly in the structures of the international police.

There's a possibility to divide the main tasks realised within these missions into eight points: (1) the protection of the PKW soldiers and the civilian personnel, (2) prevention of crimes and offences by the disclosure of offenders, (3) searching for lost property of the PKW, (4) ensuring the compliance with the local law by members of the PKW, (5) establishing and maintaining communications with elements of the MG and other contingents, including the allied forces and local police, (6) securing traffic control, identifying the conditions of the roads and informing about threats, (7) transportation protection, and (8) VIP protection.

This type of tasks have been conducted by the Military Gendarmerie units under the UN flag for many years, previously within the UNDOF missions in Syria, UNIFIL in Lebanon, and IFOR, SFOR, EUFOR, KFOR in the Balkans. With the advent of stabilization operations, the Military Gendarmerie faced new challenges and tasks. In the first part of the operation, in which the military actions are similar to those during a war, the role of the MP is reduced to protecting the armed forces. However, on the next stages of the stabilization mission, the role of the military factors decreases. The importance of the stability activities increases, and simultaneously, the importance of the gendarmerie forces increases.

An important feature of the stabilization operations is the preparation of the local police to be able to control the safety and public order in the respective country. Therefore, when the Polish Armed Forces had been sent to the first major stabilization operation - Iraqi Freedom in Iraq, Military Gendarmerie for the first time received an important task, namely to train the New Iraqi Police. Thus it was the essence of the stabilization operation in this country.

These tasks were carried out by properly prepared units and teams from the Special Units of the Military Gendarmerie. Part of the task force were the gendarmes - police officers prepared to train the Iraqis and also involved into the protection teams. While conducting Operation Iraqi Freedom, the number of tasks carried out by the Military Gendarmerie training group was growing. Another stabilization operation engaging the Military Police was the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. This operation, engaging the Polish Military Gendarmerie in combat tasks, has been realised under conditions of extreme danger. For the first time in its history, the Military Gendarmerie was used to protect armed forces units realizing mandated tasks. In Afghanistan, as part of the ISAF operation, the MG took over the job in a wide range of protective activities. For the first time the weapons of the Special Forces of the Military Gendarmerie were fired in combat.

At first the Military Gendarmerie received typical police tasks in the ISAF operation. Like in other missions, policemen were responsible for assisting the commander of the Polish Military Contingent in the field of law enforcement and military discipline of the soldiers. These core tasks, although performed within a stabilization mission, was oriented rather at the war-like actions than on a peacekeeping operation. During the first six rotations, the main tasks realized in Afghanistan by the MG were those related to the investigation and prevention of crime. From the seventh change, in 2010, the Polish Armed Forces sent to Ghazni area ten Advisory Groups - Police Liaison Teams (Police Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams - POMLT). They consisted of the Military Police Soldiers from both units - Special Forces and Military Gendarmerie. POMLT's task was to train and prepare the Afghan National Police to ensure law and order in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the ISAF and coalition forces.

The Afghan policemen trained by POMLT were to support the ISAF forces, even during the mission - thus increasing security in the area of Ghazni. Each POMLT consisted of about 40 soldiers, trainers and those who covered their performance.

Three to six vehicles were allocated to each POMLT. All POMLT-led training was based on the same programme - done through the all Afghanistan. Advisory Teams, made up mostly by MG, were deployed in the various units of the Afghan police, on the various levels. The very presence of policemen in the districts, provinces or regions motivated the Afghan police to work. Moreover, although it was a great risk, no one has invented a better form of training than the common action of an experienced police officer with the novices.

In Afghanistan, there are three different types of police. The first one is the Afghan Uniformed Police. This is a typical formation. It deals with law enforcement and establishes order. Most of the tasks relate to patrolling and traffic control. This police force is also able to detain and arrest criminals. The second one is the Afghan Border Police. Its tasks are similar to the Polish Border Guard. It also deals with the protection of their country borders, prevents illegal border crossings and the smuggling of goods. It works at airports and border crossings. Its role is involves a visa service for immigrants. The third one is the Afghan National Civil Order Police. It works across Afghanistan as organized battalions and brigades organizing patrols, providing law enforcement, and preventing crime in public places. It tackles the dissemination of terrorism.

A Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (POMLT) does not replace the local police, but helps to train it and conduct practical training. It also performs advisory tasks. What is most important is that the Afghan National Police has achieved the highest level of skills and activities, both individual and in teams. Apart from the realization of its core tasks, POMLT also fulfils the role of a bridge between Afghan security forces and ISAF forces. This makes it possible to increase support for the detection of improvised explosive devices, or to recognize the enemy's intentions.

It is worth mentioning that the POMLT soldiers are trained to manage medical evacuation and independent action in the risk zone. They can also close an airport during a time of risk. Experience shows that the process of training the Afghan police is not easy. Aside from their typical training, the credibility of the Afghan people is essential. It is possible that some of the trainees work with the Taliban, and even they have been directed to training. Furthermore, it is feared that by training they would try to get to know the coalition armed forces. It has to be remembered that some of them have trained as police officers who then go to

the opposite side. The big problem is corruption in Afghanistan. It concerns all sectors of society, the military and the police inclusive. POMLT's problem is on the one hand to prepare the Afghan police to fight against corruption, while on the other hand to eliminate corruption in the ranks of the police itself.

To train the Afghan police is in a small way like typical training activities. It is done by instructors/translators, with whom it is often not easy to work every day. Potential police officers are not educated people, there is a need to learn everything from the beginning. To ensure the right future of the Afghan police, it is crucial to prepare, first of all, the instructors, who then would train their subordinates. The best prepared Polish MG instructors trained the Afghan police. What is particularly difficult and dangerous within the operation of Advisory Teams - Police Liaison Committee, is to train the Afghan local police anti-terrorist branch.

POMLT realized this task together with the Special Forces soldiers. Besides the above-mentioned groups that work in the particular changes of the operation, the ISAF Military Police also performs common military police tasks. The Polish Military Contingent Commander has the Military Police Department at his disposal. Its composition is as follows: (1) Head of the Department - in FOB Ghazni; (2) Deputy Head of the Department - in FOB Ghazni; (3) Senior Inspector of Investigation - Investigators - BAF Bagram; (4) Guide of the drug detection dog - BAF Bagram; (5) Investigation Section - investigation - FOB Ghazni; (6) Dog guides Section - FOB Ghazni; (7) Investigation Section - FOB WARRIOR. The structure of the Department of Military Police and the specific deployment of its components results from the contingent needs and previous experience with the operation. Gendarmes from different sections, depending on the tasks, travel to other bases. A typical police task obliges the MG to clear action against the perpetrators of violations of discipline or the crimes committed by soldiers of the Polish contingent. Many times it also happens that the MG soldiers assist Polish soldiers and support them in difficult situations.

With regards to the numbers. Since the beginning, 1,166 soldiers of the Military Police have participated in the mission in Afghanistan. Taking into account the involvement of the Military Gendarmerie soldiers, the maximum level was achieved in the year 2010/2011 (the eighth and ninth shifts), when the number of the Military Gendarmerie soldiers increased to about 250 (the number changed

depending on the individual rotations during the mission). Taking into account the reduction of the quota, due to the process of transferring power to the Afghan authorities in the area, there is a 140 person component of the Military Gendarmerie that hands over its duties to the 11th shift (131 person component).

The range of tasks that are done by the Military Gendarmerie soldiers is closely related to the structure of the component. At first, the Military Gendarmerie soldiers participation was mainly related to the protection of the contingent in terms of prevention and investigation. Currently, the responsibilities are much wider and the main emphasis is put on state police and training. The component of the Military Gendarmerie works not only in the Polish Military Contingent. The units are as follows: (1) Department of Military Police; (2) Police Training Centre Afghan Ghazni; (3) Afghan Police Training Centre Rushmore; (4) a team of specialists Mazar-e-Sharif / the 11th shift will be passed to the ANCOP; (5) a team of specialists Adraskan EGF (6) Police Advisory Team, (7) Military Advisory Board / Military Advisory Team, (8) National contributions to the Commands and Staff, who conduct research in the field of arms and explosives (specialist Paladin Labs and Counter IED).

The tasks are closely related to the typical structure of the military police, and include mainly the following areas: (1) Department of the Military Police: (a). preventive and investigative security operations; (b). preventive actions focusing on crimes, offences, drug offences and disciplinary and alcohol consumption offences, as well as the oversight of arms, means of combat and equipment; (c). supporting the commander in maintaining discipline in the contingent. In addition, within this department there were two soldiers on duty as part of the team dealing with the forensic techniques.

The main task of the Afghan Police Training Centres is to train police personnel from the primary level through improving skills, ending with conducting specialized courses. Teams of Police Advisory Training (PAT), Military Advisory Teams (MAT) - the main task is to advise, supervise and support the ANSF in the performance of its tasks.

PAT specific objectives include: a) ANP inspire the creation of new posts, b) advising the ANP in selected districts in which to carry out tasks, c) advising the ANP in the scope of the current policing in the province and districts, d) advising the ANP

in the coordination of planned activities with other ANSF units, e) advising the ANP in the planning of ISAF security operations in the provinces and districts, f) advising the ANP in the planning and management of materials and equipment, and logistics. MAT specific objectives include advising under the MAT (Military Advisory Team) at ANA brigade in the section on military police duties.

Of importance is also cooperation within the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF). This formation was established on the 17th of September 2004 in Noordwijk, the Netherlands. Poland has had the status of a partner since 2007. The creation of the EGF should be seen within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy and as a contribution to safety, respect for rights and justice. EGF forces are available to the European Union, there's a possibility to conduct simultaneous actions under the auspices of the UN, OSCE, NATO and other international organizations or coalitions of states. In the ISAF operation, the European Gendarmerie Force consisted of six countries of the European Union. In cooperation with the forces of the European Gendarmerie Force, from 2010, 10 soldiers of the Military Gendarmerie had been sent to the Mazar Sharif and Adraskan Military Police training centres.

In connection with the transfer of the area of Mazar-e-Sharif to the hands of Afghan forces, Military Gendarmerie soldiers will be directed only to the Training Center in Adraskan (6 men). Regardless of the involvement of the Military Gendarmerie in Afghanistan, the involvement in other missions also should be considered. With currently approx. a 3% commitment throughout the Polish Armed Forces in foreign missions, Military Gendarmerie is heading to increase this number.

Conclusions

The participation of the Military Gendarmerie in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan is a large and important effort. The lessons learned should be divided into three groups. The first one, ensuring the security of the Polish military continent meant the proper implementation of the Military investigative function - detection and prevention of different types. The second is a wide range of Afghan police training activities as the core of the mission. It is difficult to give a final assessment. On the one hand, a huge effort of Polish policemen was visible, engaging the large

commitment of Afghan police officers. On the other hand, it must be admitted that in Afghanistan the first phase of the operation has never ended. The insurgent forces have never been defeated. The full training of policemen is possible only after the successful completion of the first phase. The ISAF operation is a difficult experience, and the endeavours to prepare a stable peace are practically impossible. This could bring a partial success only.

The third group of activities in Afghanistan is linked to the Military Gendarmerie cooperation in the international environment. These effects are among the best. Such effects concern both the Military Gendarmerie officers occupying senior positions in international structures and service in the European Gendarmerie Force formations. They will bring good results also for the future.

It is possible to assess that the operations of the expeditionary forces will encounter determined countermeasures of their potential enemy – highly motivated and well-equipped. It concerns mainly terrorist organizations and rebels with their irregular way of conducting war, which by connecting advanced technology, modern communications systems and weapon systems together with the tactics used in the previous conflicts can make a determined stand in the area of operations, as well as strive to move conflict to our territory in order to put pressure on public opinion concerning the engagement in the operation.

The actions of expeditionary forces are much more prolonged, and their main determinant is the political dimension, and only afterwards economic, military or information actions. Lessons learned from the operations in Afghanistan let us say that the operational demands placed on the capacities of the forces should be interpreted as determining capability for expeditionary operations conducted in remote geographic areas of the world, and the ability of these forces to participate in the framework of a holistic approach represented by different actors (IO, GO and NGO's). Therefore, the Military Gendarmerie and non-military elements need to be engaged to a greater extent in the planning process and the implementation of the operation which aims at the solution of crisis (both at the state and Alliance levels), and civilian-military cooperation must be improved in a broader meaning than only CIMIC.

In this context, also the threats to international security must be perceived in a much broader context, in which the military element will not always play the most

important role. A good example is the employment of weapons of mass effect¹. We must also remember that many scientists and researchers, while seeking for solutions and means of the effective use of the armed forces, refer to the former approaches. Their reflections are limited and not taking into consideration the issue of challenges², which might not always be related to the current situation.

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1 The notion Weapons of Mass Effect (WME) is used in many contemporary security studies as the specific equivalent of the term Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). It is being justified by technological development that allows the conventional armed equipment to attain the effectiveness of the nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and radiological weapons. WME should be perceived as the categ tools of energetic/kinetic and non-kinetic destabilization and disintegration of any info system.

2 The notion of *challenges* is here understood as the integral parts of a set of forecasted events, phenomena, conditions, processes and so alike that must be taken into consideration by a subject (organization) should (must) take deeply into consideration in the process of projecting the future course of actions. By their nature, challenges are subjected and objected and they must be seen equally as threats and opportunities. Since they are neither negative nor positive – they are “electrically neutral”, the language of challenges should be the language of prognoses. A challenge, will be then any event that might occur, and which must be taken into account by the subject (organization) when designing its future strategies, attitudes and actions.