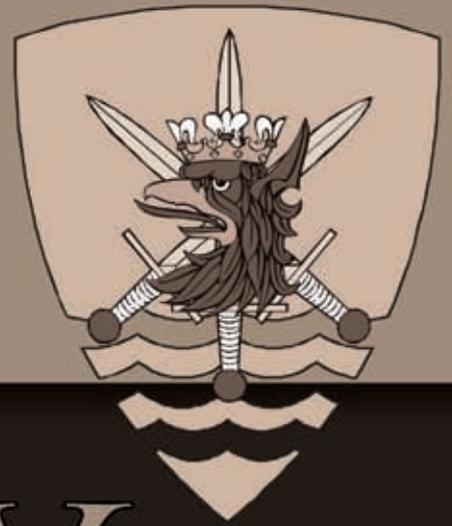


The Baltic Amber

Multinational Corps Northeast Magazine



ISAF X/1

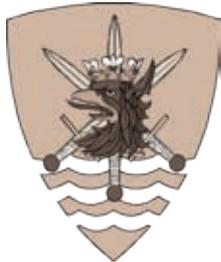
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www.mncne.pl



EDITORIAL

The Baltic Amber reflects the natural resin amber, that can be found on the beaches of the Baltic Sea close to Szczecin. It is well known in Poland, the host country of HQ MNC NE. *The Baltic Amber* is the authorised official magazine of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast, intended to inform and educate members of the Headquarters and assigned formations as well as international groups and individuals.



The Baltic Amber Afghan Mission - ISAF X/1

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Dear Officers and NCOs,

After half a year of your absence here in Szczecin, I have a great pleasure to welcome you back. You, the personnel of the MNC NE, creating Standing HQ for the HQ ISAF X and filling there so many dominant posts, were a first of NATO lower readiness headquarters, which contributed so significantly to the HQ ISAF, as well as to security and stability in that country. I would like to congratulate all of you, for your outstanding service during the mission in Afghanistan.

Those six months of duty in Kabul, from February to July 2007, are a milestone for the Corps history and it will shape our future tremendously. You have done a great job and you all deserve the highest respect. Now, MNC NE has had its contribution to the process of security and stabilization of Afghanistan.

You also proved that multinationalism is not an empty word. Nations working together can learn from each other both on professional as well as cultural levels. You showed it in real operation. It is also very important for this Headquarters. I am sure that your contribution to stabilization in Afghanistan will help that country to sustain the conditions necessary to flourish and will give the country peace and opportunities to develop.

Zdzislaw GORAL
Lieutenant General POL A
Commander Multinational Corps Northeast

Long, long way to Afghanistan

Military operations, especially missions such as the ISAF mission need to be prepared long in advance. Therefore also the road of Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast to Afghanistan was long and marked with landmarks or simply exercises and trainings...

In the tour of mission preparation process, year 2005 probably set the most important moment for the Corps. During an exercise COMPACT EAGLE 2005 the Corps managed to pass the Full Operational Capability (FOC) test with all criteria deemed "satisfactory without comments". No sooner than in

February 2006 the Corps received an official certificate which was an obligatory condition for the Corps to be deployed. Thus, the first step on the road to Afghanistan was made.

The ISAF mission was to be the first mission for MNC NE soldiers. Therefore, the pressure on preparing well was high as well as the expectations. All in all, the process of preparations constituted a set of trainings of different types, which aimed at bringing closer

the idea of the mission. There was Individual Deployment Training (IDT) and Advanced Individual Deployment Training (ADV IDT), Mission Specific Training (MST) and Mission Preparation Lectures (MPL). Among others, one should also mention Functional Area Training I & II (FAT I & II), Key Leader Training (KLT), Mission Rehearsal Training/Exercise (MRT/MRE) and finally a Permanent Headquarters Exercise (PHQ EX).

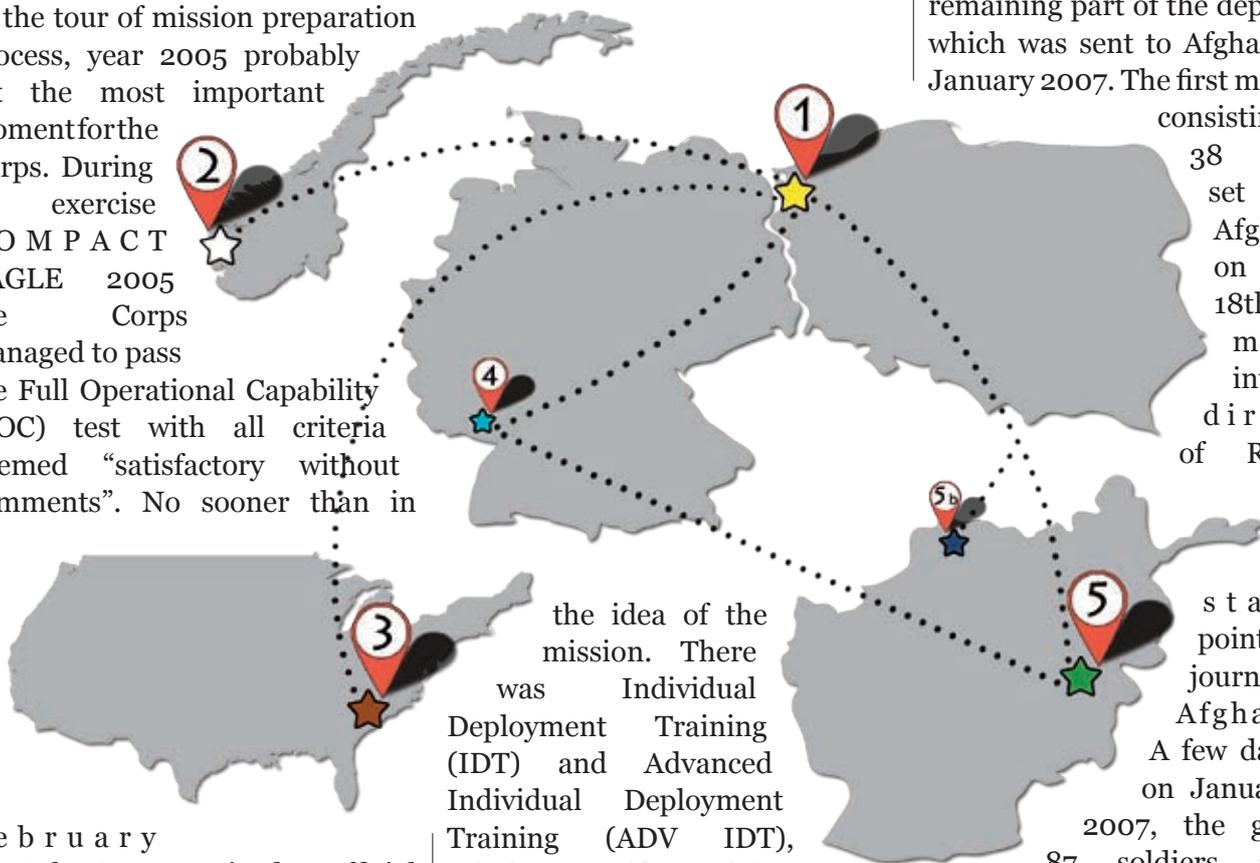
The approaching deadline of setting off for Afghanistan resulted in intensified process of

preparations. Early autumn was dominated by the exercise FAT EAGLE 2006, which was conducted in the Baltic Barracks, the seat of HQ MNC NE. Then the training was moved to Stavanger, Norway, where Mission Rehearsal Training took place. In order to reach a high level of preparedness, the soldiers went as far as to Fort Bragg, USA.

All MNC NE personnel were not deployed at the same time. Some officers headed for Kabul already in late autumn 2006, in a way preparing the ground for the remaining part of the deployment, which was sent to Afghanistan in January 2007. The first major part,

consisting of the 38 soldiers, set off for Afghanistan on January 18th, 2007 moving into the direction of Ramstein, which was the starting point of their journey to Afghanistan.

A few days later, on January 25th, 2007, the group of 87 soldiers appeared on the Goleniow Airport accompanied by family members and media representatives. A US Air Force C-17 cargo plane allowed them to join 77 previously deployed officers and non-commissioned officers several hours later.



- ★ Szczecin, home of HQ MNC NE
- ☆ Stavanger, 9. - 19.10.2006
- ★ Fort Bragg, 9. - 20.11.2006
- ★ Ramstein, 18.1.2007
- ★ Mazar-e-Sharif
- ★ Kabul, 25.1.2007



Location of MNC NE soldiers deployed to ISAF mission



TURKMENISTAN

UZBEK

Fact sheet

Capital: Kabul

Official Languages: Pashto, Dari

Government: Islamic Republic

President: Hamid Karzai

Area: 652,090 km², 34 provinces

Population: 31,889,923 ^{2007 estimate}

Density: 46/km²

Currency: Afghani (AFN)

Timezone: UTC +4:30

Ethnic Groups:

- 42% Pashtun
- 27% Tajik
- 9% Hazara
- 9% Uzbek
- 4% Aimak
- 3% Turkmen
- 2% Baloch
- 4% Other

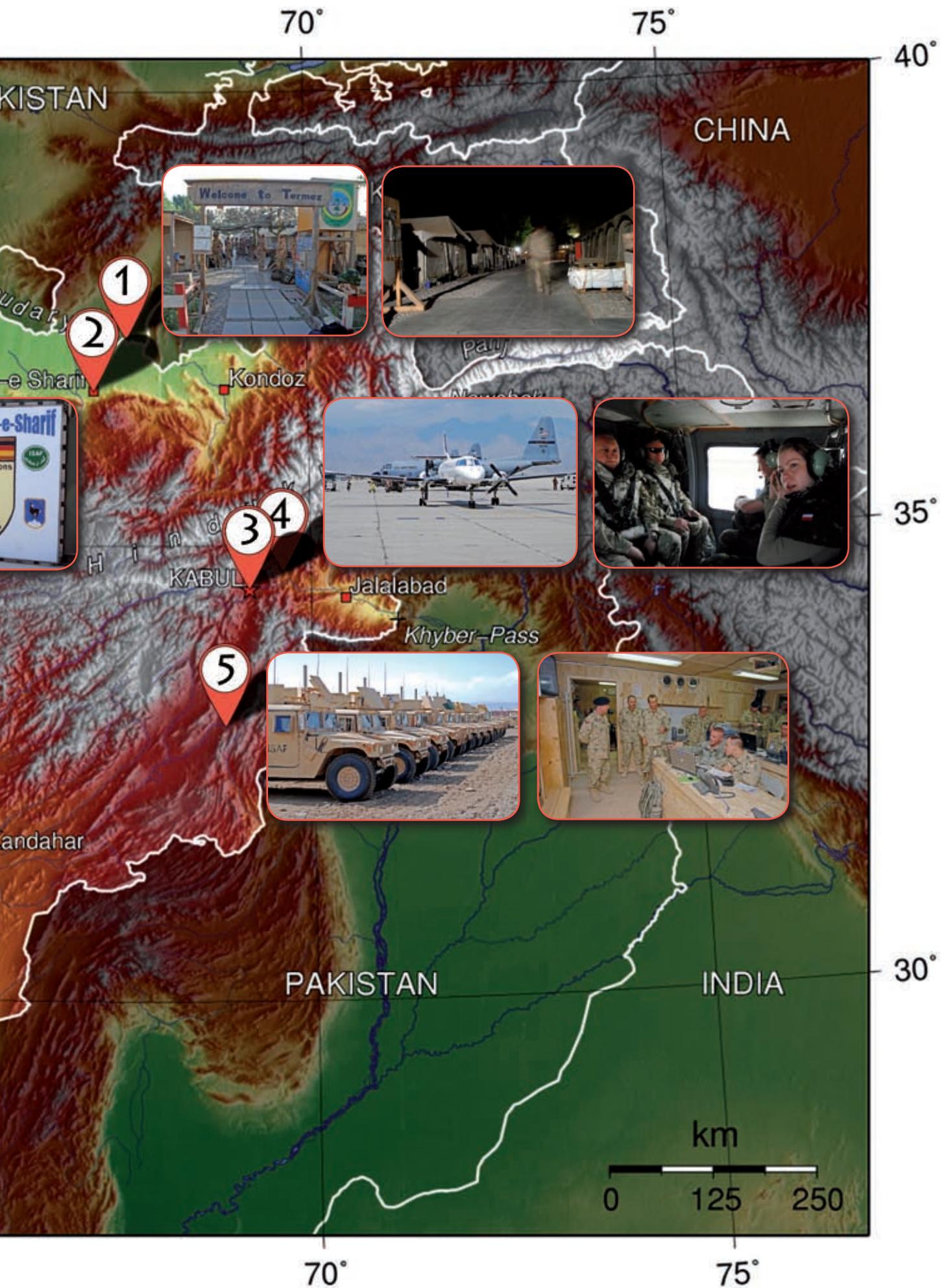
Religion:

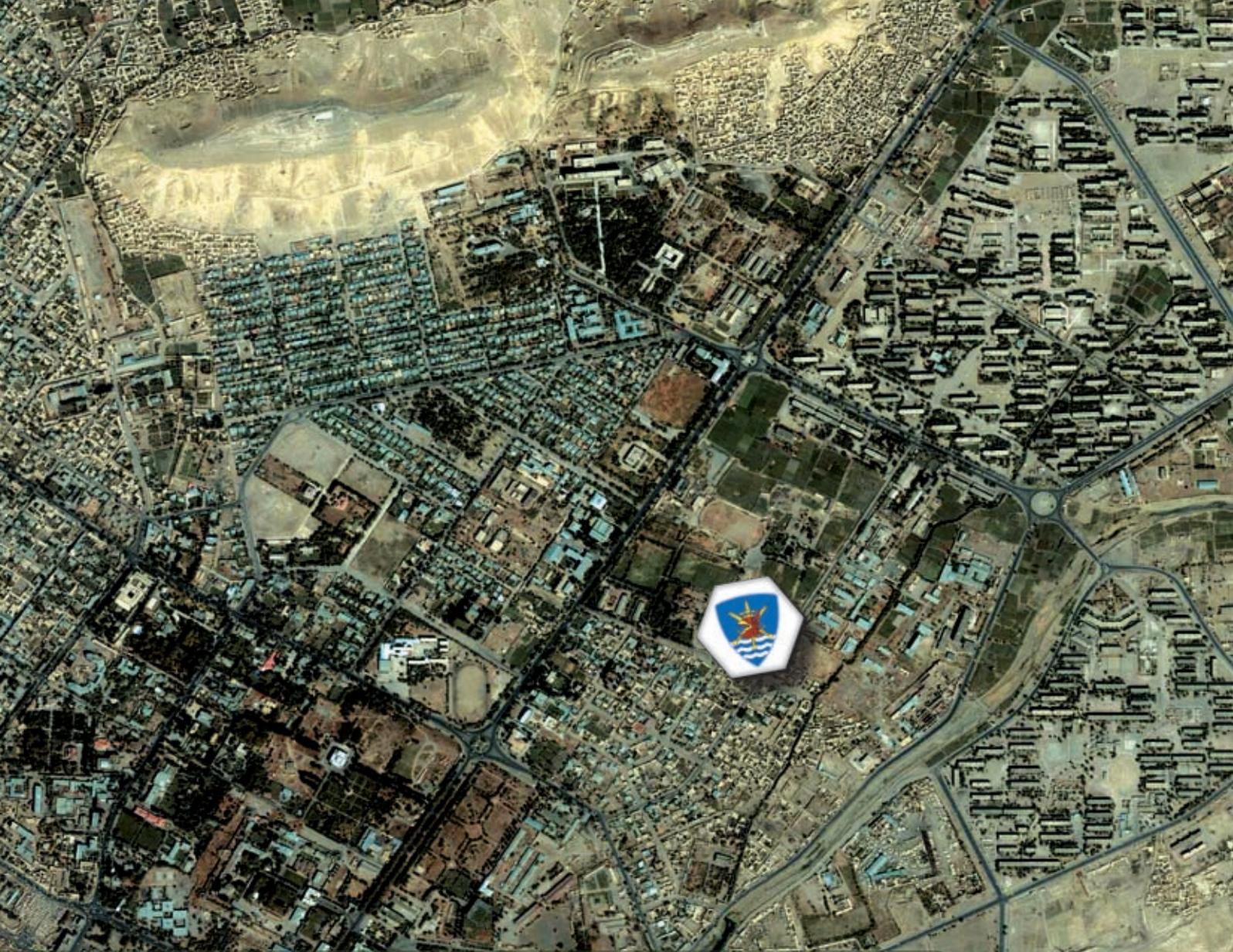
- Muslim:
- Sunni 74-89%
 - Shi'a 9-25% (estimates vary)
- Other



Places visited by COM HQ MNC NE during his official visit to Afghanistan. For detailed information check pages 16 - 19.







MNC NE AS A PART OF ISAF

The aim of the mission is to assist the Afghan authorities in providing security and stability in order to create a fundament for the reconstruction and effective governance. Referring to the

ISAF Commander's intent, it is important to convince the Afghan people that long-term peace and growing economic prosperity is possible as long as they continue supporting their own government

and its international partners. Even though not only NATO forces got involved in Afghanistan, it seems that they constitute the most important element of this mosaic of international influence upon this country. NATO's engagement in Afghanistan is definitely not one-dimensional and cannot be easily grasped by statistics. However, the number of approximately 35,500 coming from 37 countries

Spread within Kabul-based Headquarters ISAF, MNC NE personnel served well for 6 months contributing to better life of Afghanistan and security in the world.



International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been functioning in accordance with the Bonn Conference since December 2001. Under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, an international force was initiated with the aim of assisting the Afghanistan Transition Authority in creating and maintaining security in Kabul and its surrounding areas;

In August 2003 NATO assumes command and control over the mission;

Since October 2003 NATO operates beyond Kabul in the form of Provincial Reconstruction Teams and on temporary deployments;

The ISAF mission consists of five phases: Assessment and Preparation; Geographic Expansion, Stabilization, Transition and Redeployment;

Geographic expansion was completed when on 5th October 2006 NATO expanded the mission over the East as the last part of Afghanistan, apart from the North, West and South;

MNC NE personnel filled the posts within the tenth rotation of staff, hence the name for the mission ISAF X/1

and other International or Non-governmental Organisations and neighbouring countries. The last area of interest refers to technical and logistic assistance in defence reform, defence institution building and military aspects of security sector reform. This includes trainings of units from the Afghan National Army, supporting the Afghan National Police, the disarmament of illegally armed groups and counter narcotics.

The centre of NATO's operational command for the mission is located in Headquarters ISAF in Kabul. HQ ISAF is not only in charge of subordinate units but also cooperates with the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), International and Non-Governmental Organisations.

MNC NE personnel filled the posts in the Headquarters ISAF in Kabul having been present in almost all branches and contributing to the common goal. Nevertheless, two officers served in Mazar-e-Sharif in Regional Air Operation Coordination Centre (RAOCC).

A direct means of commanding and controlling the country is conducted through so-called Regional Commands.



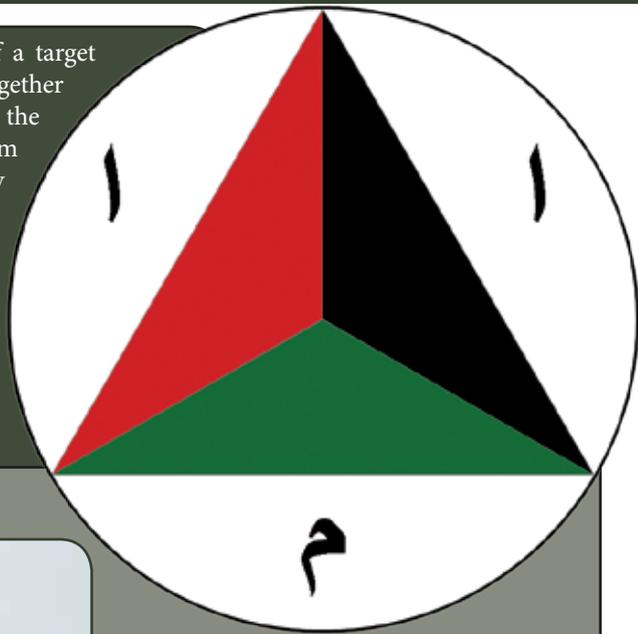
The territory of Afghanistan is divided into five regions: North, West, South, East and Capital where Regional Commands are located. The aim of all Regional Commands is to conduct military operations in the assigned area of operations and ensure security and stability enabling reconstruction and effective governance. The emphasis should be placed on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), which are subordinate to Regional Commands.

Regional Command - Capital, recently having been brought under the Turkish command, covers the multinational brigade, which conducts security patrols and activities. In its area of interest a composite Headquarters ISAF is located along with Kabul International Airport. In terms of projects conducted, since 2002 CIMIC got involved in about 750 undertakings and 1,565 major infrastructure projects.

Regional Command - North with its headquarters in

may look impressive (current data as of May 31st, 2007). NATO attempts to create conditions for stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan and this priority task is realized through the leadership of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). A significant sphere of activity is advancing the political-military cooperation between NATO and the Government of Afghanistan as well as enhancing relations between the Afghan Government

37,000 soldiers of already trained soldiers of ANA are only part of a target number of 70,000. This number was set in the Afghan Compact altogether with 82,000 Afghan National Police as sufficient enough to deal with the internal matters of Afghanistan. Some of the soldiers are trained from scratch while others are already trained to fight. Training series vary depending on the participant – a private, a commander of a squad, company or platoon, and range from several weeks to several months. The training finishes with practical examination of combat readiness and tactical skills. Since the Afghan National Army is voluntary in principle, the process of recruitment is conducted at local level where administrative and military authorities enlist new soldiers. However, some people conscript because they have no other income. The soldiers of Coalition Forces, mostly Americans deal with the training.



Mazar-e-Sharif covers five Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the area of northern Afghanistan. In this region over 1,000 PRT and almost 7,000 infrastructure projects have been initiated since 2002.

The headquarters of Regional Command - West is situated in Herat. In this region there are four PRTs. The construction of the Herat-Farah ring road belongs to the greatest undertakings among about 1,400 PRT and 3,200 infrastructure projects. Similarly to Regional Command - West, also four PRTs remain under the control of Regional Command - South. Kajaki Dam Project is probably the most famous undertaking, the aim of which is providing power to 1.7 million people and irrigation to farmers. Finally, Bagram is the location of headquarters Regional Command - East. With the highest strength of approximately 16,500 personnel, this Command covers the highest number of PRTs, namely twelve. Since 2002 over 1,370 PRT projects have been conducted together with over 14,000 infrastructure projects resulting in for example 200 km of new roads.

Being a kind of logistic centres, Forward Support Bases located in Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Herat and Bagram provide medical evacuation and security enhancement for all PRTs.

ANA WILL FIGHT!



BrigGen Muhammad Amin Wardak talks about training of the Afghan Armed Forces.

Cmdr Artur Bilski: General, what is the training system like in the Afghan Armed Forces?

We train 20 thousand soldiers to man various posts. Our training ranges from the basic one for volunteers hired on the basis of three-year contracts, non-commissioned officer training to officer training of selected candidates.

What is the recruitment process like?

There are 27 recruitment centres in all over Afghanistan. Anybody who considers himself fit for service may report at the centres and sign a three-year contract - provided he successfully passes qualification procedures. Then, recruits come here for a 7-week training. As we have not implemented compulsory

military service system, we rely exclusively on volunteers.

Are there enough volunteers?

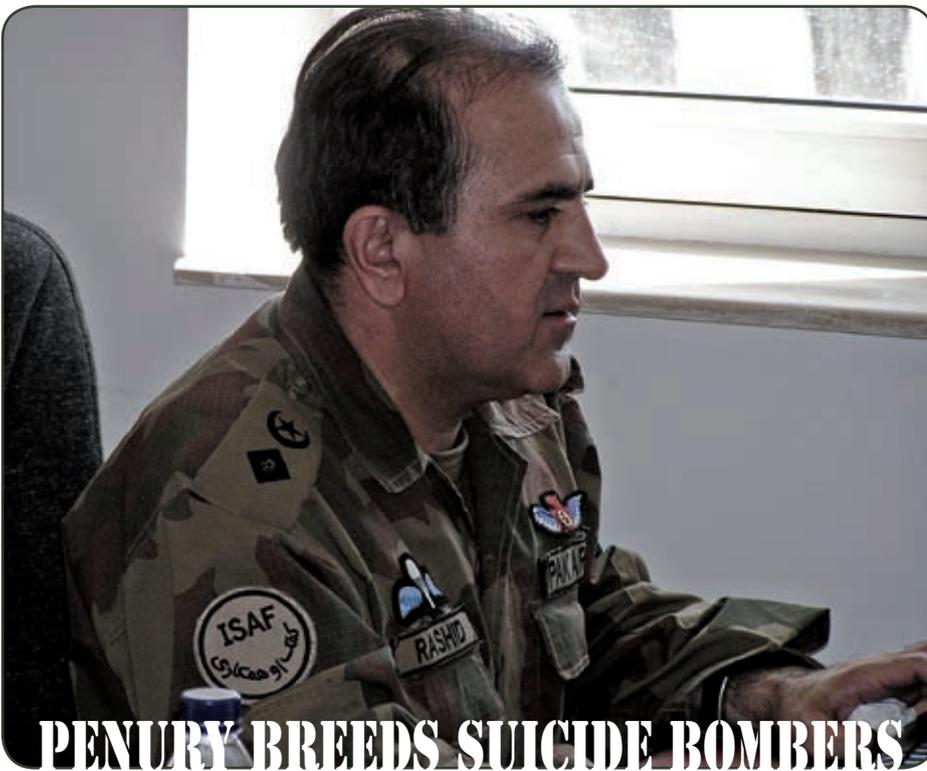
Too many! The men who come to us are not only motivated financially (they are paid 100USD a month) but mainly ideologically. They simply want to serve in ANA because they understand that the country needs peace.

Americans have been helping you ...

Americans send us their instructors but we also are assisted by experts from many other countries. However, it is the Americans that have taken responsibility for training and arming the Afghan Armed Forces.

Do you think that the new Afghan army will be able to win the war against the Taliban in the long run?

Taliban cannot fight openly because they know that they would be crushed. That is why they launch terrorist attacks and intimidate the civilian population. Sooner or later we will defeat them.



PENURY BREEDS SUICIDE BOMBERS

Cmdr Artur Bilski talks to Lieutenant Colonel Rashid Ullah Beg, a Pakistani intelligence officer deployed to ISAF.

- Should the credit for killing the Taliban leader mullah Dadullah go to the Pakistani intelligence?

(laughter) I do not know. I believe it was mostly carried out by Afghan intelligence.

- How do you assess the situation in Afghanistan?

There has been a war here for 30 years. The most difficult are the south and east plagued by Taliban suicide assassinations, which produce an impression that their strength is growing. In fact, they are not capable of launching any large-scale offensives that they have talked about so many times. Battles are primarily fought in spring and autumn when weather conditions permit. Afghan winters are too severe and summers too hot to carry out combat operations. This is why we see increase in combat activities in spring and autumn. This is cyclic and has

always been like that.

- What are the Taliban's chances?

Minimal. They are not able to engage into an open combat. They lack logistic preparation and do not have numerous well-trained forces under their command. Even if they managed to group together, they would soon be destroyed by U.S. Air Force. And so they have to resort to skirmishes and suicide attacks. This is the only way to destabilize the situation.

- The only, but effective ...

Really, one may have an impression that Taliban are launching an offensive while Coalition Forces are losing ground, which is not true. Taliban are condemned to be defeated and their successes are of temporary nature.

- While we are at it, what is the

characterological portrait of a suicide bomber?

There are a few categories of such people. The first group is young people isolated from the outside world and brutally brainwashed since their childhood. These have no awareness about the world in which they live. Another group is made up of religiously and ideologically motivated people. This is nothing new in the history of the world. World War II kamikaze in Japan may serve as an example. Another group is people who live in utter poverty and have nothing to lose. The money for blowing oneself up at a defined place and time is handed over to the suicide's relatives.

- It seems that the Taliban may freely recruit suicide bombers among the Afghan poor and refugees in Pakistan.

This is the basic breeding ground. We see many refugees in Pakistan who do not want to return to Afghanistan because of the lousy living conditions there. Contrary to Pakistan, there are no real refugee camps in Afghanistan. Nobody gives aid to those people while they need it in the first place because suicide bombers are often recruited among them.

- This means that suicide attacks will not cease to happen...

Not for the time being. The refugees who returned to Afghanistan have been living under terrible, inhumane conditions right in the desert and they truly do not have anything to lose. Human life can be bought there for next to nothing.

MNC NE PERSONNEL ABOUT THEIR



WO Peter Tuma, SVK

I am Chief Tactical PsyOps Team (TPT) in ISAF. We go outside the camp almost every day and we disseminate and collect necessary information through face-to-face communication. We have three translators that help us. I have seen much of Afghanistan and I could even stay here or at least come back for the same post in another mission. In fact, I have everything I need here. I have even learned how to drive car in the Afghan way...



LTC Dieter Bohnert, GER

I am Chief Operations in CJ9. Our task is to raise the situation awareness of CIMIC issues among the ISAF personnel as well as deal with natural disasters common in Afghanistan – floods, mudslides or earthquakes. Especially the second task is challenging because nobody can foresee what will actually happen. Unfortunately, I have very few chances to go outside the camp and talk to ordinary Afghan people. Living in a camp is good, in fact, the mission accommodation is the best I have had so far and it is not my first mission.



MAJ Josef Tomšiček, CZE

I am a staff officer plans at Joint Theatre Movement Staff (JTMS) dealing with planning. At the moment I am also planning strategic airlift, PAX and cargo. It is challenging and more operational than my previous experience and I will definitely use it in the future. When the mission is over I think I will miss my colleagues from the office most. We have even created our own crest with the words “clever and friendly”. And I am sure we will keep in touch and I am looking forward to meeting them any time possible.



MAJ Kim D. Matzen, DNK

I am in Information Operations Plans but I have been doing different stuff here, for example counterpropaganda. At the moment I am working for NC3 (National Communication Coordination Centre) supporting the Afghan Government so I go outside the camp every day to attend various meetings. It is very challenging and requires patience to work with the Afghans because they have a different perception of time and things do not work the way we are used to. Besides, we try to influence them to formulate their own opinions instead of telling them what to do and this also takes time. But now I know how they work and think and this is the biggest impression of Afghanistan I have.



MAJ Robert Bae, USA

For ISAF I am working in CJ4; I oversee all the Class III, which is the fuel, into the Afghan theatre. It is logistics but not that kind of field I was working on before so I am learning and it is a good thing. I am honestly happy to represent the MNC NE in Afghanistan. And it is not bad here. I have already been in Iraq so now I have two missions under my bill. And what do I miss most beside my family? I guess a little bit of freedom because we live in a very controlled, confined and relatively small area and all I can do here is go to work, maybe to the gym and to my room. So I am looking forward to going home.



LTC Jacek Rolak, POL

The post that I have in ISAF is communications and command project officer. My responsibility area is the implementation of numerous projects in ISAF. Some of them may be worth up to 10 million euros. Currently, we have been handling 48 projects so we cannot complain about lack of work. Besides I have had opportunity to familiarize myself with the entire NATO operation structure. In a way what I do here is similar to my domain in Szczecin but here more emphasis is put on requirements and communications systems. Thanks trips across Afghanistan I have begun to appreciate the good conditions at HQ ISAF. After redeployment I will remember the people that I have met here.

DUTIES AND AFGHANISTAN ITSELF



MAJ Saulius Paliulis, LIT

In ISAF I am a watchkeeper. I monitor the current situation in ISAF and I use the information gathered to create a JOC Watch, which informs everybody, what is going on in ISAF. This work is interesting and challenging for me because it is the first mission and we are quite busy here working in 12-hour shifts changing with two other watchkeepers. The life in a camp is quite nice but I do not have much time to sit and talk with my colleagues and listen to live music, which sometimes is organized in the camp. I come from Lithuania but my family is currently living in Poland. Although I have just come back from my leave, I did not manage to meet my Lithuanian friends. Apart from my family, I miss them most.



LTC Neeme Kaarna, EST

In ISAF I work in a battle space management. We coordinate movements and areas of operation between regions of Afghanistan. If there is a request sent for an area for operation, I hand it over to all the other nations or units that need it. It is quite important for me that I am gaining experience in the operational theatre, which is not that easy to get. Besides, I find Afghanistan a surprising country even though I have read a lot prior to the mission. Two different groups of people are contrasted – very poor and very rich – and it is really interesting to see how the poor manage to survive here. But still, I miss my family very much. And maybe one more thing – taking into account the weather that is here, it would be nice to swim in the sea or lake...



LTC Poul Tranberg, DNK

I am Chief G-3 Operations at HQ MNC NE and here in ISAF I am doing almost the same job together with a lot of my people from Szczecin. The situation is different but our experience helped us to go directly into the tasks. From the professional perspective, this mission could be the most important achievement of my career. And Afghanistan is a real mission where people may get killed and we have to deal with a completely different culture difficult to understand, the Afghan pride and family connections that we do not know in Europe. What will I remember most? Probably the multinational surroundings of the HQ ISAF but also good cooperation and professionalism of the people I met here.



CAPT Edijs Veveris, LAT

I am a staff officer in CJ35 Current Plans. Personally I coordinate different tasks given to CJ35 and control all orders issued by HQ ISAF. The greatest benefit for me is the possibility to use my skills, experience and knowledge to support the real operation and commit myself to the success of the ISAF mission. I also improved my ability to work in a team and multinational environment, met new friends or how I am used to say "Brothers in Arms". I think there is a chance that I will meet them again during another mission or duty station. Talking about Afghanistan, understanding their system of values, culture and patience were real challenges for me.



WO Rafał Romanowski, POL

Currently, I am working at CJ2, targeting branch. Generally speaking, our domain is targeting and this is why I get experience on a different post than I had in Szczecin. Cooperation with American and British soldiers is certainly instructive, not to mention the opportunity to improve language skills. As HQ ISAF is relatively small, I find living here somewhat uncomfortable. You keep meeting the same people. I spend most evenings talking to my family.



MAJ Jozef Štefanča, SVK

I am a lessons learned officer in ISAF. My task is to analyze conducted actions or operations. I am also in charge of a Lessons Learned Working Group that meets monthly and discusses all details concerning lessons learned. The complexity of tasks and working hours make these duties rather different from the ones I had at HQ MNC NE but the experience gained here will definitely produce profit in the future. I meet the colleagues from Szczecin on daily basis so we are like a small family and we simply enjoy the time. Is there anything that I miss apart from my family? Well, maybe breakfast at our AOC Club...

Experience gathered in Afghanistan is an asset to the Corps

Anna Gałyga talks to Lieutenant General Zdzisław Goral, Commander HQ MNC NE

- What significance did your visit to Afghanistan have to you as a Commander of personnel deployed in the country?

The visit was important to me because previously I had had no opportunity to meet some of the Corps' personnel at the HQ, as they were preparing for the mission or having their leaves prior to their deployment to Afghanistan. It was good to meet them. However, the most important aim of the visit

of the Corps, I was told that the personnel carried out their duties in an excellent manner. I find it fully satisfying. This is what I wanted to hear.

- What is importance of the Afghan mission to the Corps?

So far only NATO rapid reaction corps have taken part in the mission. Our Corps is the first lower readiness headquarters to form ISAF Standing HQ. This is why

our participation in the mission is of such importance to us. The training and preparation of the Corps to carry out various tasks

is correct and ISAF mission provides an opportunity to test our capabilities in real conditions. I think we will become a more known corps headquarters in the structure of the Alliance.

- Is our Corps noticeable in ISAF among the other corps and

soldiers from 37 countries?

While in Afghanistan, I noticed that all our personnel were wearing the MNC NE crests on their uniforms, which means that they had not forgotten they were MNC NE personnel deployed to ISAF. Admittedly, the Szczecin-based Corps had been little known previously despite its excellent performance and the achievement of the Full Operational Capability. Now, the personnel are clearly more visible not only displaying their high operational capabilities but also representing certain community, which is seen in the number of events organized by our soldiers.

- How do you think the experience gathered during the mission can be used in the daily operation of the Corps?

The experience gathered during this mission is a valuable asset to our personnel and the Corps. It will primarily depend on the

[We will become a more known corps headquarters in the structure of the Alliance.]...

was to learn how our officers and non-commissioned officers carried out their tasks as a part of the HQ ISAF. I am glad to say that during meetings with Gen Dan McNeill, ISAF Commander, his deputies and the Corps' generals – MajGen Jan Brun Andersen and BrigGen Josef Heinrichs as well as officers

officers and non-commissioned officers how to enrich our training process and its quality not only during military exercises. We will be willing to share the experience

about the progress in the training of the Afghan Security Forces, both military and police and I know the number of the trained personnel and their performance during operations carried out together with NATO and Coalition Forces. In bigger cities such as Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif the progress is really visible, which

growing number of people in the streets contribute to a bigger threat level from terrorist organisations. Anyone who comes to Afghanistan has the feeling of insecurity because of unpredictability of events there. This is why improvement of security is so crucial.

[It would be good to make common front in Afghanistan and “blow into one sail”]...

with other corps and headquarters but primarily with our successors.

- During your stay in Afghanistan you met MajGen Jan Brun Andersen, DCOM HQ MNC NE and BrigGen Josef Heinrichs, COS HQ MNC NE. Did you only talk about the mission or did you also make plans for the time after the deployment in Afghanistan?

Obviously, the problems occurring during the mission and problems faced by our personnel were most important. This was natural, as my deputy and the chief of staff had been in daily contact with the personnel and had seen their work and challenges. We also discussed the situation in Szczecin and our activities after redeployment from Afghanistan. Another important issue was the reestablishment of the HQ's readiness.

- Based on your numerous talks with officials during your stay in Afghanistan, how do you assess ISAF's progress in Afghanistan?

Despite the fact that it already was my fifth visit to Afghanistan I reckon I would have to spend there more time to be able to adequately assess the situation in Afghanistan. However, when I recall my first visit to Afghanistan 2,5 years ago and I compare it to the latest one, I can see a visible progress. I know

may even be seen in the number of children, particularly girls, attending schools. It is clear that there is still much to be done in the area of security and reconstruction of the country. Besides NATO and Coalition Forces, the NGOs have a great role to fulfil in this domain. It

- Which of the places you saw in Afghanistan will become embedded in your memory?

I was mostly impressed by Kabul, as it is a lively capital city. The Afghan authorities are based there as well as HQ ISAF and other organisations. Naturally, there are many NATO and Afghan military and police forces. Other interesting places are Bagram, the



Sniper unit demonstration at Regional Command - Capital

would be good if the involvement in Afghanistan was growing and became coordinated to make common front and “blow into one sail”. This would certainly give Afghanistan a chance to develop.

- As you mentioned, it had already been your fifth visit to Afghanistan. What impression did the country make on you?

Afghanistan produces mixed feelings. As I previously said, the progress is visible but this and a

impressive American base and Mazar-e-Sharif and the Regional Command - North, where I could admire expansion of the base for German soldiers.

- Would you like this visit not to be your last to Afghanistan?

Certainly, but on the condition that military forces under my command are there, too.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS ACHILLES



Interview with Major General Jan Brun Andersen,
Deputy Commander Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast
deployed to ISAF for the post Deputy Chief of Staff Operations



Anna Gatyga: Since you are dealing with ISAF operations, could you tell me something about the progress of Operation Achilles?

MajGen Jan Brun Andersen: Operation Achilles is processing well even though the beginnings were difficult, as it always is. But a couple of days ago we even extended the operation.

- Do you think that there will be a need to launch a similar operation in the north of Afghanistan?

At the moment I do not see any chances for any large-scale operations in the north. The situation in the north is, as we say, calm but not stable. I think most of the problems there are related to criminal activities even though we realize that such problems might be used by Taliban to start operations in those areas.

- And what challenges are related to the mission in Afghanistan?

We have no major challenges but we have a lot of tasks. And having been here for more than 5 months, since mid December, I think we are pretty good at handling the tasks.

- Does it also refer to our MNC NE soldiers? Is their role in HQ ISAF significant?

I think it has been of great importance for the Headquarters ISAF to be able to benefit from the good preparations that we did back home in Szczecin. Our competence definitely sets the scene for many of our colleagues and I should also mention that our training process and all good lessons learned will be used by our successors. We

are quite happy about that. We were also asked to act as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for our colleagues at Fort Bragg, the USA and in Stavanger, Norway, in order to show them how to work at HQ ISAF.

- Does it mean that the process of preparations was a complete success?

Yes, but things can always be improved and I am sure that we will correct a few things on the basis of our lessons learned. I should also stress that this assessment will be not only for those deployed to Afghanistan but also for those who stayed in Szczecin at the Permanent Headquarters; they are just as important as we are.

- What effect will this mission have on the position of the Multinational Corps Northeast within the NATO family?

We can be taken into consideration for whatever mission even though we are a Corps of lower readiness and a small Headquarters, which in fact gives the advantage of being more like a family. We have been performing as good as any other headquarters or as we normally say "even better" proving that we are exactly at the same level as any other headquarters within the NATO corps structure. And for me personally this mission is what I hoped for and what I believed in when we were doing all the preparations, achieved the Full Operational Capability and took part in all exercises. And it is nice now that after more than three years of hard work we obtained what we really wanted.

- NATO engagement in Afghanistan will probably last for a longer time. Do you think

it is possible that our Corps will be deployed to Afghanistan for a second time?

I am quite sure about that. I have seen the first draft of a rotation plan and we are on the schedule there again in 2010. So probably we will go home when this mission is over and think of the adjustment of our training schedule for the rest of 2007, 2008 and 2009. And if the plans are as we have been told, we are ready to be deployed to Afghanistan again in 2010.

- Talking about Headquarters ISAF, how would you assess the concept of a composite Headquarters that MNC NE soldiers are also part of?

Under the conditions given, we have been successful and I mean not only us coming from HQ MNC NE but also the rest of the people. We have been a composite headquarters since February 4th, 2007. Recently our procedures have been checked and it turned out that our HQ ISAF worked and performed as one HQ in spite of us coming from almost all 37 nations.

- And finally, what connotations does Afghanistan evoke in you?

I am both impressed by and sorry for the Afghans. I am aware of the fact that even though we are making progress, the things down here will not happen overnight. But hopefully we are creating a situation in which young people of Afghanistan realize that there is another world and another way of living than they are used to.



RUSHING THROUGH AFGHANISTAN GENERAL ON THE MISSION

From 26th May to 2nd June 2007, Lieutenant General Zdzisław Goral, Commander Multinational Corps Northeast, paid a visit to Afghanistan. The main reason for this trip was the presence of about 160 MNC NE personnel in Kabul, who served at Headquarters ISAF in Kabul and Regional Air Operations Coordination Centre (RAOCC) in Mazar-e-Sharif.

A 6-month mission in Afghanistan is a long time during which it is relatively easy to get into routine especially if daily duties are carried out in an office. A kind of break and a sign of commotion must have been a visit of Lieutenant General Zdzisław Goral, Commander Multinational Corps Northeast to Afghanistan. The importance of this visit was recognized not only by the Commander himself who intended to support his soldiers serving at ISAF X, but also by the MNC NE personnel and the authorities of ISAF, which resulted in a rich programme of the visit.

In the sands of the north

Mazar-e-Sharif, located closely to the Afghanistan's border with Uzbekistan, was the first destination of the Commander. The capital of the Balkh province of northern Afghanistan, welcomed General with sun, heat and hot wind bringing dust. The place is known for being a destination for pilgrimages and a trading centre for carpets and textiles but also for the Regional Command - North located there.

General was kindly hosted at the Regional Command - North and

briefed on the current situation in the north of Afghanistan as well as ongoing projects operations and finally about the Regional Command - North itself. An interesting attraction was a tour round the camp, which



Chief RAOCC, COL Peter Hauser, GER, together with his predecessor LTC Wolfram Baumann, GER were the only MNC NE officers deployed to Afghanistan who served in Mazar-e-Sharif instead of Kabul. As COL Hauser admitted, even though the basic structure and work were similar to the ones he had in Szczecin-based Air Operation Coordination Centre (AOCC), substantial number of air assets in Afghanistan - aircraft and weapons - made it more challenging.

included for example visiting a field hospital, which definitely meets European standards, and modern Regional Air Operations Coordination Centre (RAOCC) with an airport where impressive flying machines were ready to reach the sky if needed. General observed the work of Swedish Provincial Reconstruction Team MeS (Mazar-e-Sharif), which on daily basis contacts the Afghan people in order to meet their needs and provide aid by for example building a protection fence for a girls' school or support a local hospital. Even though this PRT is



German Tornado in Mazar-e-Sharif



mainly Scandinavian, there was also a group of Poles, with whom General spent some time chatting. Even though visiting Mazar-e-Sharif provided an extraordinary chance to get familiarized with the situation development in the northern parts of Afghanistan, this time was especially unique for Col Peter Hauser, who usually serves at Air Operations Coordination Centre / Multinational Corps Northeast, one of the very few not deployed to Headquarters ISAF in Kabul, but to Regional Air Operations Coordination Centre in Mazar-e-Sharif.

In the centre of Afghanistan

Since most of the MNC NE personnel were deployed to the capital of Afghanistan, the major part of General's visit took place in Kabul. Even the first evening spent in the heart of Afghanistan

was devoted to more or less formal meeting with two other MNC NE top officers – MajGen Jan B. Andersen and BrigGen Josef Heinrichs. The whole MNC NE Command Group seen in Afghanistan was definitely an extraordinary and memorable picture. Whether the ceremonial dinner with all MNC NE Senior

situational awareness and simply strengthen general's contacts. Among the personages there was Gen Dan McNeill, Commander ISAF and MajGen Garry Robison, his Deputy Commander of Stability. Issues concerning training of the Afghan National Army dominated a meeting with



Gen McNeill and LtGen Goral

National Officers was devoted to the Corps' matters or rather Afghan impressions will remain the secret of those who were there.

An important item of the programme was a "tour round the camp". Among the vital aims of the visit was meeting MNC NE personnel directly in their working places. Thus, General visited almost all branches in Headquarters ISAF in which about 160 MNC NE staff saw their duties. Shaking hands and a few good words heard from General is probably what all officers and non-commissioned officers will remember most.

Meetings with those who shape the ISAF policy were both to raise the

LtGen Mieczysław Bieniek, who is a NATO Senior Adviser to Afghan National Army. Our General had also a possibility to focus on Polish interests in Afghanistan while talking to Mr. Jacek Najder, Polish Ambassador to Afghanistan.

Oriental journey

It seems that there is no better place where one can learn more about the situation in Kabul than the Regional Command - Capital. Turkish flags fluttering above the main entrance were the first sign that the command had recently been taken by the Turkish. The Guard of Honour welcomed



General. Original commands issued in Turkish by General must have been a big surprise for the soldiers. However, for those who had acquainted themselves with the Commander's tours of duties and his time in NATO Rapid Deployable Corps – Turkey, it was no surprise at all. After a briefing on the current situation, there was a Sniper Unit demonstration and equipment presentation.



BrigGen Kasim Erdem

The eastern way

Maybe because of the fact that the eastern parts of Afghanistan belong to regions requiring greater attention on the part of NATO and Coalition Forces than for example the North, General visited the Regional Command - East located in Bagram, an American base. This place reminded rather of a small town than a military base. MajGen David Rodriguez, Commander Regional Command - East, kindly





Three-star dress from MajGen Rodriguez

hosted our General. A memento of this meeting will definitely be a specially prepared T-shirt and a cap. General also met BrigGen Marek Tomaszycy who is in charge of the Polish Contingent in Afghanistan, and visited the Polish Compound since it is one of the places where Polish soldiers are located. The last step of the journey was Sharan, which is located relatively close to the border with Pakistan, where Polish troops are stationed, too.



HUMMWVs in Sharan





IT IS WORTH BEING HERE

Interview with Brigadier General Josef Heinrichs, Chief of Staff HQ MNC NE, deployed to ISAF for the post of Chief Operations

Anna Gałyga: What are your main responsibilities in ISAF?

BrigGen Josef Heinrichs: The entire work of this Headquarters is divided into three phases. The first phase is the long term planning and mission policy. The refinement of these policies, which are to be implemented, is the second phase and this is part of my job. The last phase of the entire process - the execution - belongs to my responsibilities as well. Of course, it is not a job for a single person; more than 120 people support me.

- What challenges do you face serving in Afghanistan?

I think it is not only a challenge for me; it is a challenge for everyone who comes from a different region of this world to face the culture and history of this country. When you are planning military

or even civilian operations like reconstruction and development, you cannot use your own mindset but you have to take into account what the people of this country think. A few weeks ago NATO forces took an injured woman to hospital. Afterwards a demonstration was organized because we as foreigners are not allowed to take an Afghan woman anywhere without her being accompanied by her husband or another Afghan woman. Apart from such surprising daily challenges, the ongoing insurgency is hard to deal with.

- What does this mission mean to you personally?

Well, I am a military so being deployed is part of my profession but meeting all challenges of this country makes this mission especially important for me. Every day I can see that it is worth being

here to see the progress, to see that we are successful. When we talk to ordinary people they say that they are happy that we are here because things are better than they used to be before. And I can understand it, especially taking into account that this country has been in the state of war for more than 25 years and most of the people have not experienced anything but war.

- What is the importance of this mission for the Corps?

This is the first mission that our Headquarters performs after it successfully passed Full Operational Capability test in 2005. Our people, who are spread all over different branches in HQ ISAF, are performing very well, showing the public that our Headquarters is able to fulfill this mission and simply to do a good job.



TO SEE THE PROGRESS...

- In what way, if any, would you like to use the experience gained here back at the Headquarters in Szczecin?

In our preparations we fully concentrated on this mission and from my experience I can say that we did everything in a correct way. We did a proper analysis on what the requirements of the mission were and on this basis we developed a good preparation plan. Currently, I cannot say that there is much to be changed at our Headquarters because we are well prepared for any kind of mission and to meet any challenges.

- How do you feel as Chief of Staff HQ MNC NE deployed shortly after the beginning of your tour of duty?

In fact, I was given the opportunity to move to Szczecin five months earlier than it was originally planned as soon as it turned out that the mission for the Corps would start in

the first half instead of the second half of 2007. As a result I had the opportunity to do a proper mission preparation altogether with other soldiers. I think it was a good decision because I managed to take part in all steps of preparations so I feel good in this situation.

- Have you managed to get to know your staff better?

Of course, since most of our Szczecin guys are working in my area - CJOC, CJ35 and in CJ2 - and these are the people I am working with on daily basis. We closely cooperate and we even held a MNC NE barbeque here to foster the coherence of the MNC NE people. Besides, I think we managed to keep the MNC NE identity within HQ ISAF.

- Do you think it would be difficult

to come back to Szczecin and work in the peacetime?

[We have managed to keep the MNC NE identity in HQ ISAF]...

I think that for many people it is the first mission they are proud of but I do not think it will be hard to come back. But we will have to merge with our Permanent Headquarters after we are back and integrate newcomers to our HQ. It is also a challenge but I do not think it will be too difficult.

- What are your impressions of Afghanistan?

I am mostly working at HQ ISAF and this means that I do not see much of the country. But my job is not to go out and have a good time but to make things happen. I have to admit that I sometimes miss it because I cannot see the results of my work on my own.

Military - civilian duality

NATO operation in Afghanistan is naturally associated with military operations conducted in the theatre. Talking to soldiers, reading ISAF publications, watching news or even browsing through the Internet comes down to approaching an intermingled map of military terms and ordinary language. In order to set a common plane for discussion on the mission, there is a need to find balance between both. A real challenge is to make ordinary people comprehend what is actually going on without getting the military dissatisfied

ordinary people, the civilians. Thus the above mentioned linguistic phenomenon may serve well as a metaphor and a guidance for an already famous fighting for the Afghan “minds and hearts”.

This process ought to take into account the extraordinary reality of Afghanistan due to its specific cultural, religious, ethnic and historical background. Only the attempt to understand the Afghans and to take their outlook on life into account guarantees success. Therefore, everything that is done in Afghanistan should have an Afghan face – this is what can be

within 34 provinces, which since October 5th, 2006 have been unified under ISAF as soon as NATO-led operation completed its four-stage geographic expansion throughout Afghanistan. Led by 13 countries and supported for another 27, PRTs conduct difficult missions of assisting “the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to extend its authority, in order to facilitate the development of a stable and secure environment in the identified area of operations, and enable Security Sector Reform (SSR) and reconstruction efforts” (PRT Executive Steering Committee, January 27th, 2006).

Different Ways of Making



while distorting the message of the mission.

Since even talking about the mission sets barriers and mounts challenges, it may only signalize how complex the mutual relations between military and nonmilitary aspects of the mission in Afghanistan are. It is difficult to deny that military presence of NATO and Coalition Forces is the key element of the whole mission. Achieving stability and ensuring security in Afghanistan is only possible via military means. But the concept of the military operation needs to involve the cooperation with the Afghans themselves, the



often heard from those who actually cooperate with the Afghans. To make the work meaningful not only in statistic data but also for the people is an inevitable condition to make them continue the work of NATO when the mission is over.

PRT: People Ready to Try

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are a good example of how balance between military and civilian elements can be achieved. These joint military-civilian organisations approach ordinary people as they operate at provincial level within Afghanistan. Altogether there are 25 PRTs



The advantage of these teams is that they are able to operate within unstable and insecure areas due to its military component, which in turn is enriched by diplomatic and economic components.

The tasks of PRTs are shared between contributing to security, reconstruction and development as well as supporting local authorities within the province. In real there can be for example a police liaison officer mentoring and helping the local police. Projects realized by PRTs seem to be simple as for example building a higher fence and a barbwire around a girls' school to protect it from being

burned, which is a common practice of adversaries of educating girls. But it also could be building wells, providing food or even spreading chemicals to fight locusts. Moreover, PRTs also attempt to facilitate the efforts of Non-Governmental and International Organisations (NGOs) concerned with helping the Afghan people and their cooperation with the Afghan authorities.

However, it is important to state that no projects are conducted without an agreement from the Afghan local authorities. And the problem is not only the lack

Commander Regional Command - East, BrigGen Marek Tomaszewski, last year there were only 14 to 16 districts out of 88 in the region which supported the Government of Afghanistan in comparison to the present situation when there are only 14 districts which refuse to support it. These are the notable effects of NATO activity.

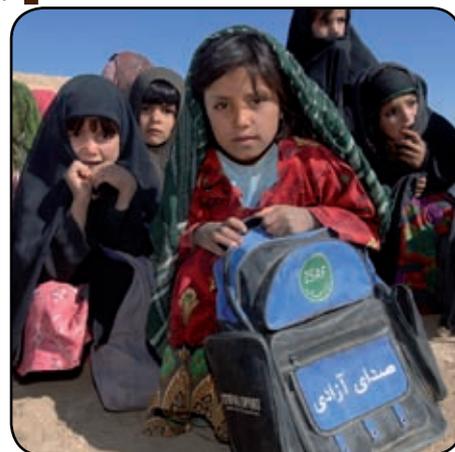
CIMIC "matters"

Within Headquarters ISAF there is a branch called CJ9 Civil Military Cooperation, and, as the name suggests, the cell puts the cooperation between military

acts as a kind of last resort. The fact that sometimes the Afghan authorities contact directly ISAF without making use of all other ways indicates trust in NATO activities. But of course, the message of all actions is to give them the Afghan face first and convince the people about the abilities of their own government. Such deep conviction contributes to lesser impatience of people expecting fast development which as might be expected is not possible.

The idea of joint endeavours between ISAF and the Afghan authorities is also visible

THE MISSION COMPLETE



of typically Afghan sensitivity or the view on the world. It would be simple difficult to meet their expectations without a dialogue and them articulating their own needs. The experiences of PRT Mazar-e-Sharif indicate that the local people really want to cooperate.

The region of Afghanistan, in which the intensity of NATO activity is relatively high is the East. The number of operating twelve PRTs is the highest in the whole country covering all provinces. Apart from projects conducted in the region, the results of the fight for the Afghans' "hearts and minds" are worth being noticed. Citing Deputy

and civilians into practice. CJ9 can be also treated as a kind of coordination centre for all PRTs across Afghanistan and a single point of contact. Chief CJ9, LtCol Dieter Bohnert, who originally serves at HQ MNC NE, explained that the plane of cooperation with the Afghan authorities is related to dealing with natural disasters such as flooding, mudslides or earthquakes. The natural procedure in such cases is that first the Afghan authorities try to cope with unexpected events, then International or Non-Governmental Organisations are addressed and, if needed, the request is presented to ISAF which

during numerous visits across Afghanistan. Maj Wojciech Wiśniewski from Information Operations, a member of HQ MNC NE, is among others concerned with so-called exploitation sites aiming at appropriate exposing visits of for example DCOM Stability and some Afghan representatives in places where numerous projects are conducted. In order to show the Afghan Government's concern about the fate of the country, schools, hospitals, ceremonies when new buildings are opened or graduation ceremonies are visited. For such events the internal ISAF media from Public Information Office or Combined

Joint Psychological Operation Task Force are invited as well as national or international media representatives, if possible. The idea behind is, as mentioned before, to show that the Government of Afghanistan is effective even though the progress is clearly visible for example in the area of education where the number of girls going to school exceeds the overall number of pupils for the last years.

Various ways of acting

Military presence in Afghanistan aims at ensuring security which is a necessary driving force for the International Community to get involved into the reconstruction and rebuilding the country. A bunch of International and Non-



governmental Organisations have decided to allocate their interests in Afghanistan. Among more than 1600 organisations probably the most famous is UNAMA – United Nations Mission to Afghanistan assisting the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people through various commissions. Among others there are for example the Afghan Red Crescent, Islamic Coordination Council and many other.

It is important to state that also different embassies on behalf of their home countries get involved in helping Afghanistan. A good example can be the Polish Embassy

newly opened after the turmoil of history, which devotes some financial outlays on development in the sphere of medical issues, help for farmers or securing access to drinking water.

Nevertheless, there is something more about winning the Afghan “minds and hearts” than providing help, devoting money to necessary projects, coping with natural disasters and visiting place where the progress is visible. This time referring to linguistic metaphor in a more down-to-earth way, the need to address the Afghan people in their own language should be noticed. This can be done in an explicit and implicit way. First of all, there is a radio, a television and a newspaper operating under



the auspices of ISAF in which the Afghans address their countrymen in Dari or Pashto. In a more implicit way, taking into account the importance of the tribal system or the positions of Ulemas, Islamic clerics, an efficient way of spreading important messages is passing it to the Afghan Government which sends it through the Ulema Council to low level Ulemas until they are incorporated into sermons directly reaching the local people. Maj Kim D. Matzen explained that even though this channel seems to be long, it is very effective because the ideas are presented by the Afghans in their own words influenced by their own way of thinking.

Written by Anna Galyga

AFGHAN VOICE



Photo by SSgt. M. Chhon

Sona Sahar coming from Kabul is a reporter/editor at Radio Sada-e-Azadi that remains under ISAF auspices

- Where did you learn English?

I learned English in Pakistan. I went there when the Taliban came to Afghanistan. I completed my higher education at a university in Pakistan and I attended my English courses there. To Afghanistan I came back in 2004.

- What do you actually do at Radio Sada-e-Azadi?

I am a reporter and also an editor; my task is to prepare reports in Dari and run with one of my friends the “Noon Show” – a daily three-hour show. There are different topics that change according to a fixed timetable, such as health, culture, info topic, women show, sports and vox pop.

- Where do you take your topics from?

We take them from the Internet and then we try to find good people for interviews. And for example when we look for interviews on sports, we may visit gyms that are located around here in Kabul or the Olympic Department. Sometimes we have topics related to agriculture so we conduct interviews in our provinces or we interview people asking about their culture. Our programme is often a kind of direction for the people.

- Do you like your job?

I enjoy working here very much. All my friends, both from Afghanistan and other countries, are very friendly so I feel very comfortable here. Before coming here I was a bit nervous how it would be like to work in a military section but it turned out to be really nice.

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...the things we need.

Anna Galyga interviewed General Dan McNeill,
Commander International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), on May 28th, 2007

- How would you assess the progress of Operation Achilles?

I think that Operation Achilles is a great tactical success. It also had some success in the line of governments helping the governor in Helmand province and in terms of reconstruction because Operation Achilles was all about rebuilding the Kajaki hydroelectric plant.

- Has it already ended?

No, it is still ongoing and, of course, the Kajaki Project will go on for probably several years.

- The operation in Afghanistan is not only about reaching military goals but also reaching the Afghans' "hearts and minds". Are NATO and Coalition Forces also successful in terms of this aim?

I think we are doing pretty well. According to the Asian Foundation Pole, the proponents may be over 80% of the Afghan people knowing they need the contributions and the work of the Force to help them back on their own feet.

- Taking into account the growing violence in the north, what do you think about the situation there?

There have been some spectacular events over the last week or two in the north, one that very tragically killed three German soldiers, but we do not see the same level of insurgency in the north as we see in the south or east.

- There are about 36 000 of troops in ISAF. Do you think that this number should be raised?

I think that statements of the Secretary General and SACEUR are pretty clear that the nations should fill the requirements of the Combined Joint Statement of operational requirements.

- And what number are we talking about?

Well, I think it is less about numbers; we need more helicopters, manoeuvre units, armours, operation mentor liaison teams to enhance the Afghan Security Forces, and those are the things we need.

- And the last question concerns the narcotics issue. There has been growing pressure on ISAF that it should counteract narcotics more actively. Do you agree with that?

I think that the NATO mandate says within capability that we will assist the Afghan people in counter narcotics, not in eradication; we are not trained or equipped to be an eradication force. There are 8 pillars in their strategy in counter narcotics and where we can, we are trying to help the Afghans.



MCNEILL

U.S. ARMY

ISAF

Media WAR in Afghanistan

by Cmdr Artur Bilski

The NATO-led mission in Afghanistan arouses great interest of the media. The soldiers find themselves in the very centre of the media matrix where the truth and search for sensation melt in one whereas lies and propaganda of the Taliban and al-Qaeda occur on a daily basis. A brutal media war is waged to win not only “the minds and hearts” of the Afghans, but also of the public opinion of the world, says Chief of Staff HQ ISAF MajGen Bruno Kasdorf.

Public relations (PR), generally speaking, is

a number of marketing and promoting techniques used to influence media to produce a public picture of a product or an idea that is desired by a client. Today, these clients are both terrorists from al-Qaeda and Taliban. The threat posed by Muslim terrorists is so serious the then UK prime minister Tony Blair announced the establishment of a new government unit to combat al-Qaeda and Taliban propaganda. In order to wage a successful war against terrorists, one has to defeat their propaganda, ideas as well as their methods, said Tony Blair recently. Al-Qaeda proficiently exploits mass media such as the

Internet to publish videos of executions and attacks against the coalition forces in Iraq or to provide guidance on how to make a bomb or poison. At the end of last year a group linked to al-Qaeda declared that it was necessary to wage “simultaneously” both a media war and a military war, as it was possible to see the influence media had on nations.

In Iraq, the war against “general PR” is nearly lost, whereas in Afghanistan it just about

to break out. The first symptoms are the growing number of suicide attacks, abductions of western journalists and employees of International Organisations, beheading Afghans supporting ISAF and increased activities in the media. The Taliban, through their spokesman Jusufa Ahmadi, repeatedly announce new plans of an offensive. This time they want to extend their attacks over entire Afghanistan, particularly over the calm northern part of the country. This causes anxiety among western societies that until now have been convinced (by the media) of the victory in Afghanistan.

Undoubtedly, routine patrols of NATO peace-keeping forces set against a background of suicide attackers blast into pieces among crowds, seem to be negligible or even boring incidents. As a way to obtain political aims terrorism is in a sense a media matrix, an artificial and untruthful reality and so it has to be spectacular to produce desired effects and draw media’s attention. The Taliban are fully aware of that and are preparing a media

and propaganda show similar to the one in Iraq. In the past months Afghanistan has been the scene of several dozens suicide attacks compared to 16 attacks in the entire 2006.

Certainly, media do enhance democracy, but their commercialisation triggers off search for sensation and always requires a spectacle. Spectacles, in turn, need actors and fighting. Now, we have all these ingredients in Afghanistan. Therefore,

individuals such as Taliban or Osama bin Laden enjoy so much popularity. Searching for truth about them or seeking a well-balanced picture of peace-keeping missions in media is mixing with brainwashing where single acts of terrorism assume the proportions of news that overwhelm other positive reports from real world. Jokingly, one may say that besides mine fields or suicide attacks of Taliban, military personnel deployed on stabilisation missions are facing another threat: journalists.

In Afghanistan, Taliban have waged a large-scale propaganda war against NATO. The first part of it was an attempt to portray the Afghan conflict as a war between Christianity and Islam, and involve in it local communities and other Muslim countries. This campaign turned into a fiasco after involvement of Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Mussa who said that when calling for a holy war, Osama bin Laden was acting on his own and not on behalf of all Arabs. Taliban played marked cards when they tried to manipulate the media, showing journalists the places where American bombs missed their targets and killed innocent people during the 2001 air raids. Also now, when the Alliance's aircraft or soldiers mistakenly launch attacks against civilian targets, it stirs up the civilians' anger and dislike, which

is efficiently used and publicized by Taliban. An example of the fight for "the hearts and minds" of the Afghans are the declarations about preparations for a massive offensive of ten thousand Taliban against NATO forces. In the south, Taliban put up leaflets at mosques announcing the offensive and urging civilians to keep away from barracks and foreign patrols.

The Taliban try to influence the public on local and international levels. What they are saying here is clear and loud: we are back, we are stronger than ever and the local communities support us. However, the truth is different. Taliban do not have any military capabilities to carry out any operation of that size, says MajGen Jan Brun Andersen, Chief of Staff Operations in ISAF. They do not enjoy support of the local communities either, says the general. This means, however, that using all means they will try to influence the three-dimensional public through a propaganda war. Does that mean that they move round more easily in this Afghan media matrix? Certainly, they can more. The most effective way to reach the public is through suicide attacks. Thus, their number is expected to be growing in the whole country. This is truly a media act. It has a great impact on the local, national and international public. It conveys a clear and obvious picture: locally NATO does not fully control the situation, which may weaken the Afghans' support for the international forces. Secondly, casualties among ISAF personnel weaken support in given country and thirdly, internationally, each successful suicide attack undermines trust in NATO. That is why education of the public is of vital importance, emphasizes Chief of Staff ISAF MajGen Bruno Kasdorf.

MEDIA IN AFGHANISTAN



From 6th to 17th May, Public Information Office of Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast organized a media trip to Afghanistan. The journalists were informed about the situation in Afghanistan and met MNC NE personnel deployed to HQ ISAF. Denmark was represented by Heidi Robdrup – a foreign Desk Editor at the Danish national newspaper Nyhedsavisen and Kim Hundevadt from Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten. Monika Wilczyńska and Jan Kuczera from regional Szczecin TVP3 were representatives of Polish media. There were also two German journalists: Andreas Flocken from Nord Deutscher Rundfunk and Hans-Joachim Guth from Nordkurier. The journalists were accompanied by Chief Public Information of the MNC NE Cmdr Artur Bilski and Maj Sławomir Jędrzejowski from JFC Brunssum.





Cmdr Artur Bilski talks to General Egon Ramms, Chief NATO Joint Force Command Brunssum

- Who is going to win the war in Afghanistan?

The Coalition's success will depend on three factors: political, military and economic. However, the international forces led by NATO can only ensure 25 percent of the success. Most depends on the political and economic factors. If peace is maintained in Afghanistan, International Organisations will work on the reconstruction of the country. Political stability in turn will ensure economic progress, which can be seen in areas where the international forces managed to stabilize the situation and support the local governments. It is hoped that Afghans will take the matters into their own hands there. The precondition, however, is defeating Taliban.

- However, Taliban are proficient at using media in this war...

Taliban use radio, television and the Internet proficiently. They gain advantage in the media and are able

to create an impression that they prevail, which is not true. Still, their actions attract a lot of publicity for their spectacular and media-oriented nature, for instance suicide attacks. If Taliban seize a village in the south for a while, all media blazon about it proclaiming ISAF's defeat, but when NATO swiftly recaptures the same village journalists pass over that in silence.

- This is going to be difficult, as innocent people get killed when ISAF air forces bomb villages that give shelter to Taliban.

Unfortunately, it has happened before and such events have an adverse impact on our work in Afghanistan. It is very sad when casual civilians die, because it has a very disadvantageous impact on the image of the international forces in Afghanistan. However, it should be stressed that a bigger number of Afghans die from the hands of Taliban than as result of mistaken NATO aircraft raids. The truth is that we need better reconnaissance and better information

acquisition from the local population in order to avoid such situations. A good solution is handing most power over to the Afghan armed forces and local police.

- As we are talking about reconnaissance and information acquisition processes, have they improved?

Absolutely. We receive increasingly more valuable information from so-called personal sources and thanks to technical means, including the ISAF-deployed Tornados. The aircraft are also employed for patrols over the Afghan and Pakistani borderland where the infrared light is used to monitor movement of people. This is important, as Taliban train their fighters in Pakistan.

- Taliban are financing their activities through growth of opium poppies in Afghanistan. How can it be prevented?

Afghans themselves should deal with it on a larger scale. I support the idea that some of the produce should be grown under control and be purchased from Afghan peasants in order to be processed into pain killers by international pharmaceutical industry. It is discussed at NATO. This will bring opium poppies production under control and provide income to Afghan peasants for whom it is the only income source. At the same time, it will deprive Taliban of financing for their military campaigns.

- What is your opinion about the national limitations imposed by individual countries on their military contingents in Afghanistan?

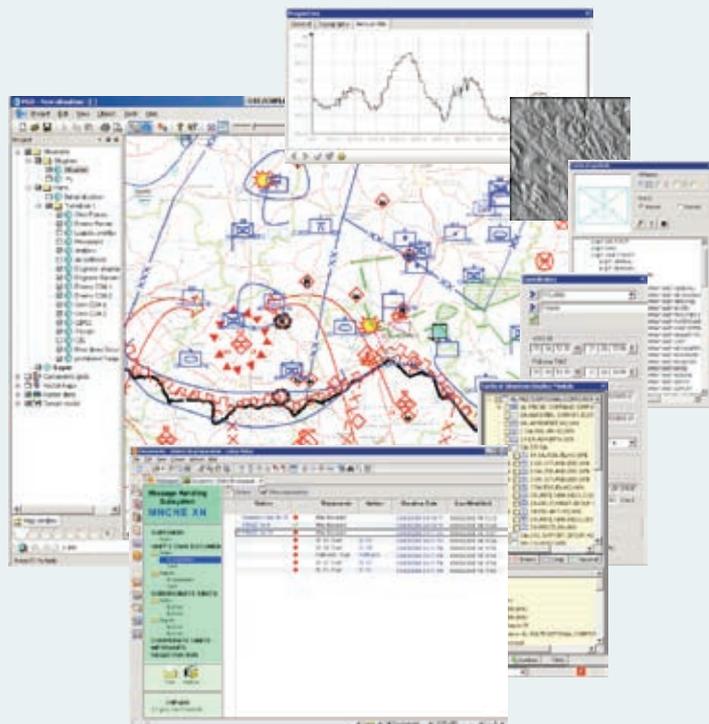
I am worried when the Alliance's solidarity is breached due to such limitations. We are working as one team and there should be no such limitations. As a German general in NATO structure, I will try to convince our politicians in Berlin to lift the limitations. However, this will be difficult, as these are political issues.

Command and Control Information System SZAFRAN

The SZAFRAN is a Polish tactical level C2IS aimed at Land Forces. It has been designed to support all phases of command and control cycle, speed-up planning and decision making processes, provide battlefield situation monitoring capabilities, introduce automation, standardization as well as integration and interoperability with other systems in joint and combined operations.

Operational capabilities

- Safe and secure multi-user access to the system,
- Visualization of current and planning battlefield situation on top of digital maps,
- Tactical symbols compatible with APP-6A,
- Estimation and assessment of terrain conditions (e.g. visibility & flooding zones, 3D),
- Support for plans creation and situation modelling,
- Common staff calculations (e.g. force ratio, resource aggregation),
- Simultaneous work on complex tasks like planning or command document preparation,
- Command post's work-flow organization, document management and distribution,
- Document templates in accordance with STANAG 2014 and ADatP-3 B11 and B12,
- Compliance with MIP Block 2 standards.



Surface-to-Air Missile Operations Centre (SAM OC)

SAM OC is a command and control object of the tactical level. It provides controlling of ground-based air defence units of different types (rocket squadrons). It is possible to apply the object in national and coalition systems.



Main functions of SAM OC

- Supports cluster planning by terrain analysis and prediction of radar coverage, automatic generation of order documents,
- Monitors weapon status (position, availability, hot and cold inventory),
- Provides tools for threat evaluation and automatic target-weapon pairing,
- Supports combat management by issuing commands,
- Monitors status of engagements.



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PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS

The fact that the majority of officers and non-commissioned officers serving at HQ MNC NE on a regular basis were deployed to Afghanistan must have had an impact on the structure of the Szczecin-based Corps. In order to provide for the effective functioning of a Corps, a Permanent Headquarters (PHQ) was created out of remaining military and civilians in the Baltic Barracks.

The role of PHQ was to run the current business of the Corps and, as Col (GS) Peter M. Baierl acting as Commander PHQ said, “to support the soldiers being deployed to ISAF in any possible way, but here in Szczecin our main task was to take care of the soldiers’ families, to keep them informed and to help them if necessary”. Apart from that, the remaining staff was responsible for preparing re-deployment and making the preparations for the time after the mission.

Centre of Situation

An extraordinary element of the Corps’ structure was Operations Centre (OPSCEN), which had direct links to the Commander PHQ, the Chief of Staff, National Support Elements, all other Branch Divisions and Family Care Centre.

LtCol Jarosław Przybyła, Chief OPSCEN, explained the essence of OPSCEN: “It was a point of contact between the Permanent Headquarters

in Szczecin and the deployed Field Headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan. (...) The main function of OPSCEN was to keep the PHQ and the families informed about the situation in the Headquarters ISAF in Kabul and vice versa. That was why OPSCEN monitored and analyzed the situation



in Afghanistan with a special focus on Kabul and the HQ ISAF in order to create a common situational picture. (...) On the other hand, OPSCEN collected information concerning the situation in the PHQ and the families”.

Families not left alone

Keeping in mind that temporary absence of a husband and father at home might cause not only spiritual

dithers but also rather down-to-earth problems, the Corps offered a helping hand in the form of Family Care Centre. The Centre, as its Chairman Capt Wolfgang Philippi explained, was responsible for taking care of the families of those soldiers who went on the mission. The range of support varied substantially and assumed different forms becoming a sort of centre of social life within the Corps not only for the families of deployed soldiers but also for any members of Permanent Headquarters.

Family Care Centre provided families with facilities such as a chatting room for women who wanted to talk and drink a cup of coffee while their children were playing in a children’s room full of toys.

There was also a place for using computers for games and surfing the Internet. Apart from that, Family Care Centre offered help in case of any problems at home and assisted with finding specialists to overcome obstacles. A nanny taking care of children once a week appeared to be an excellent idea. It was not only an opportunity to deal with all outstanding matters but also a kind of rest for those mothers who did not have anybody to help with taking care of their children.

Family brunches, which were traditionally organized once a month, may serve as a fine example of a social event organized under Family Care Centre auspices. It was an excellent opportunity for the families to meet, talk and exchange experience. However, Family Care Center organized a number of other events as well, such as trips to the zoo or swimming pools, which seemed to be a good way of adding variety to children’s free time and a chance for parents to relax.



Flippant guide to Permanent Headquarters:

Brunch – a traditional monthly meeting of women fed up with cooking. Hungry creatures are left in hands of excellent Corps’ cooks while their mothers enjoy chatting. Unfortunately, family brunches last only a few hours.

Beer call – a meeting apparently encouraging participants to drink alcoholic beverages. There are always many contenders to win the “how much can you drink in half an hour?” competition. Sponsors are still being looked for. Winners of the contest are no longer happy to play this role.

Coffee & Cake Tuesday – additional meeting for women not only fed up with cooking but also baking...

Duty – a fixed time spent at the OPSCEN, during which a soldier is surrounded by sophisticated computer equipment issuing unidentified sounds. The soldier is responsible for analyzing the situation in Afghanistan

but if something happens – he calls Senior National Officer anyway.

Fitness & sauna rooms regulations – the key concern is the key. No information available whether fitness and sauna rooms should also be locked for safety reasons while they are used.

Line-up – an extraordinary gathering of all PHQ members at the Pomeranian Square. Everybody always takes a deep breath in order to occupy more space so that the number of personnel seems higher.

Nanny’s corner – an apparently children-loving and risk-liking child minder full of ideas how to attract children’s attention. For women – rescue in emergency cases such as unpaid bills, outstanding shopping or visit at the beautician’s.

Parking policy – detailed description of places where it is allowed to park. Apparently reduced manning

somehow caused heavy traffic at the Baltic Barracks.

Roller-skaters – unidentified creatures usually rushing across the Baltic Barracks with cosmic speed, potential danger for those who do not know that roller-skaters have right of way according to the Corps’ regulations.

Special events – educational and entertainment events created with the idea of satisfying children’s craving for knowledge resulting in wh-questions such as What? Why? When? Who? Where? Unfortunately none of the questions have been answered correctly so far.

Weekly update – a regular meeting arranged in order to keep everybody informed about major weather changes in Kabul and to be consumed by envy that some people enjoy their holidays while others are forced to listen about it.



REDEPLOYMENT

WELCOME

BYE, BYE

The families gathered on the observation desk start to wave and scream.

August 5, 2007. Goleniow Airport. Temperature of the air – above 25 degrees Celsius. Temperature of emotions – high above the scale. At 15:00 sharp the Airbus A310 Luftwaffe touches the ground. 123 MNC NE personnel dressed in desert uniforms get out of the plane one by one and go down the stairs.

Commander MNC NE LtGen Zdzisław Goral welcomes his staff and expresses his gratitude for the soldiers' hard work and determination. He puts an emphasis on significant tasks performed in ISAF and a growing role of MNC NE within NATO family. As he says, it is not only a

day of joy and happiness for the soldiers and their families but also a day of success for the whole Corps.

Moreover, four MNC NE officers are awarded the Corps Medals for their outstanding service during the mission.





M. D. RAKHOV
19.02.01



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