

## I feel a self-fulfilled soldier

Written by AG

Monday, 30 January 2012 11:30

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**Interview with Major General Richard Sorokosz, Deputy Commander Multinational Corps Northeast who will leave the service in the Corps and retire on 31 January 2012.**

- *Anna Gałyga: Is a departure from the position of Deputy Commander of Multinational Corps Northeast a good moment to end a military career?*

*Major General Ryszard Sorokosz:* As a soldier I have always made decisions guided by an analysis of the situation, and partly also my intuition. It was the same now. There was an analysis of the task, meaning 37 years of military service. I assessed this period and made a decision. It is an independent decision fully expressing my own will. Is this a good time to leave? I think my person has no more to offer to the armed forces. I am satisfied with those 37 years in the army but now it is simply time to leave.

- *You have spent the last two years of your military career in Szczecin. Do you see this as an important time in your career?*

The two-year period of service in the Corps has been something entirely new for me. This post has differed from my previous assignments in absolutely every way. It has definitely complemented my service in the Polish Armed Forces. It has been a source of lavish experience and a good atmosphere. It has also provided interesting tasks allowing me to meet

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many people whose paths I had not yet crossed. I am talking about service members of other armed forces, especially Germans and Danes but also soldiers from other nations working in the Corps. I am really pleased that this period of my military service has taken place.

*- You mention that the service in the Corps has been different in every respect; do you just mean the international environment of the Corps?*

There is much more to it than that. The working time is different here and a slightly different atmosphere; we follow NATO procedures which have not yet been fully implemented in Polish formations. Besides, I have enjoyed cooperating with the Polish soldiers. I am really very pleased with the mutual support regardless of the rank – a private or general, major or captain...

*- Do you remember the moment you learned that you would be Deputy Commander of the Corps? What did you feel?*

There was a turning point in my military career when I was transferred to the reserve. I, the man who had always embraced challenges, suddenly came to a standstill. I was not told what I would do next and I felt lost at that time. Then I learned that I would most likely be assigned to the Corps. I did not expect such a development but the service in Szczecin led to very interesting challenges.

*- Did you rejoice that you were to work at the Corps Headquarters?*

I think there was more curiosity than joy.

*- What expectations did you have in regard to your new assignment?*

Before I came to the Corps, I knew little about it. Of course I knew of the Corps' existence, that it was based in Szczecin, and who worked there. However, the way the personnel work here and how they carry out tasks appeared completely new to me. I mean NATO procedures which I knew only from theory and had not previously had the opportunity to experience directly. It was a very valuable experience for me.

*- What are you likely to remember most after the two years you have spent here?*

The two years is not a long time when I look back over the 37-year career. I want to remember absolutely everything. I do know that time will gradually erase these memories. I will certainly remember that every day has brought something new and good.

I will remember the Baltic Barracks themselves which fully live up to NATO standards and differ somewhat in appearance and functionality from facilities housing traditional Polish formations. Operation rules are really simple here, but they are also very efficient. Moreover, it is probably the only place now in Szczecin with a mess the service members are allowed to visit wearing a uniform. Perhaps this may seem trivial but I consider it very important.

Yet another issue is the daily work and atmosphere in the organization. Staff members do not

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both each other and everyone has, which is really important, proper time to carry out their tasks.

I will also remember celebrations of Polish national holidays. Nobody has had to encourage anyone to get involved themselves in social events. This unique atmosphere could be sensed. Besides, all national holidays are celebrated together with families at the Corps Headquarters. I think this is exactly what we should be going for.

*- Speaking of a family, your departure coincides with an enlargement of the Corps community by Croatia. Do you think the Corps family has a chance to continue to grow?*

The Corps' fate is development. Croatia is certainly not the last country to be admitted as member of the Corps. Other countries have already been knocking on its door. Yet other states have decided to increase their quotas. The credit for this goes to the Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Rainer Korff. His commitment and the Corps development vision is perhaps just the right way to be followed by his successors.

*- The service in the Corps has lasted just 2 years out of the total of 37 years of your active military service; what moments in your career are you most proud of?*

In every professional soldier's life the periods of commanding and leading men are the most valuable sources of experience. There were a few such moments- as platoon leader, tank company commander, as battalion, brigade and division commander. At times I found this direct involvement in the command process most expressive and most satisfying and pleasant. Anyway, staff management, training and exercises in training grounds are perhaps what appeal most to every soldier. My career path also led me to the appointment to the rank of brigadier general, then major general and the 6- month deployment to Iraq. I feel that I am a fully self-fulfilled soldier. I am glad that my military service has developed this way.

*- Have you managed to realize the ideals that once attracted you to military service?*

It seems to me that the ideals are born with new assignments and the desire to achieve something new and face challenges. What ideals may a warrant officer struggle for? To become general? Probably yes, but it works differently in practice.

My first ideal was to become a good platoon commander. Only later was I able to think and dream of becoming company commander. As company commander I thought about becoming battalion, then regiment and brigade commander. I remember saying that once I become colonel I will not expect anything else from my life. Indeed, I became colonel and I commanded a "first wave brigade" in Braniewo. It was an incredible challenge, building a unit from scratch. I managed to meet this challenge and started to think bigger.

*- Will these rich experiences help you in your civilian life?*

I realize that the military environment is special. But if we look at other environments - medical or acting - each is unique. It is therefore a matter of finding of your true self where it fits and

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making contact with people you have next to you. Surely, I would like to find such a place in my civilian life but I do not think of another career. I would just love to pass my knowledge of defence and management on to others.

*- Does that mean that your most immediate plan is to rest?*

Relax above anything else. These 37 years of service has been a long time that my family has given me. I think that it is high time that I paid the time back to my family.

*- Finally, is there anything you would like to tell the staff of the Corps?*

I wish all staff members of Multinational Corps Northeast members a good working atmosphere, prosperity and success in your professional and private lives. I wish to thank Corps Commander General Rainer Korff arms for his support, partnership and honest cooperation.

*Photo by: Marian Cihon, SVK CIV*