



Every morning, a river of cars flows through the Berlin and Ottawa gates to enter the military Headquarters of the alliance, a place of work for over two thousand military and civilian experts. For years, they have been busy planning the use of thousands of tanks and nuclear arms to counter a potential strike of the Soviet army. Back then, the war would have resembled a sumo fight. Today, the challenge is all about asymmetric threats, the place and timing of which no one knows. Fighting these threats is like playing basketball: One must be mobile, fast, and fit.

Alliance on Diet

To meet the new challenges, NATO is on a solid diet. It is shedding its heavy military structure, with the number of commands decreasing from 65 to 20 in the 1990s, to be followed by a further reduction to 11 within one year. The division of operational responsibility between two strategic commanders is disappearing. At present, the alliance has one commander responsible for all military operations. He is capable of commanding NATO operations anywhere in the world, not only on our continent as it used to be the case until recently. The other strategic commander is responsible for transforming the alliance and for developing its doctrines, i.e. how expeditionary forces are to be used in the event of crises.

In 2006, for the first time ever, NATO will have at its disposal multinational joint expeditionary forces. It means a silent, but revolutionary, change in the alliance's doctrine from defensive to offensive. And, surprisingly, everyone accepts the change with calm. The formation will be maintained at readiness of five to thirty days. NATO leaders will, thus, receive a formidable tool to combat crises on a global scale. Preparations for the use of the forces are the responsibility of the Allied Command Operations, the most important NATO command located in Mairies in Belgium.



"NATO Response Force will be capable of rapid deployment in any part of the world," says Gen. James Jones, Supreme Allied Commander Europe. It means that Member States have to

Silent Revolutions

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be prepared to conduct multinational joint military operations outside NATO's area of responsibility.

To survive, the alliance is changing, and its transformation will be continuous. Experts think that this will necessitate an enormous transformation in thinking within the organization, as well as investments in technologically sophisticated combat, command, and communications systems and strategic transport in the Member States. Some experts wonder whether we are going to cope in terms of expertise and finances. Today, quite surprisingly, all the Member States without much fuss or great debates agree to these radical changes. However, it was not always like this in the past. Silent revolutions in NATO imposed by the Americans sometimes turned into noisy rows causing serious frictions that led to acute crises.

Return of the French

It is exactly as a result of changes in the alliance's doctrine that in 1966 the French "threw out" the most important NATO strategic command from Paris. The crisis between France and NATO was growing since the beginning of the 1960s. And the pretext for a divorce was none other but a change in NATO's military doctrine from the so-called "concentrated retaliation" to "flexible response", which the French refused to accept. The doctrine of concentrated retaliation entailed the immediate use of nuclear arms to eliminate the conventional superiority of the Soviet Union. The main threat to Western Europe was then the possibility of a sudden incursion of Soviet armored units. Subsequent events proved, however, that below the so-called nuclear retaliation threshold, the entire Eastern Block had freedom of movement, as no instruments existed to counter the escalation of communism in Third World countries. And it was not before the beginning of the 1960s that Prof. Herman Kahn developed the theory of escalation, which resulted in the emergence of the "flexible response" doctrine. Accordingly, the US response to events was to be adjusted to the level of escalation of the conflict. However, General de Gaulle claimed that, in practice, the change in NATO's doctrine meant that the US was not going to use nuclear arms to defend Western Europe in the event of Soviet aggression. In February 1966, de Gaulle demanded NATO's withdrawal from France by April 1967. The Belgian government was quick to take advantage of the opportunity, offering a 200-hectare training center of the Belgian army in Maisieres near Mons to serve as the alliance's most important quarters. A complex of buildings to house the staff of the European Command was constructed soon afterwards.

Thus, the change in NATO's doctrine in the 1960s almost brought about the alliance's collapse and France's withdrawal from the organization. Today, history has turned a circle and, after nearly forty years, French officers are slowly returning to the military structures of the alliance.

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In fact, they are the driving force behind the Response Force, which represents NATO's new offensive doctrine. A French general has become Chief of Training and Exercise Management Office at the Allied Command Operations, a position with considerable influence on setting training standards for NATO's expeditionary forces. This is another silent revolution ...

The Poles Lose 12 %

What do the Poles think of the silent revolution within the alliance? We support the changes, although we are not going to secure top posts. Like the French, we have one post of Chief of Logistics Management Office at NATO's headquarters in Mons. The reasons of our modest presence in the alliance's decision-making military structures are obvious. "Today, out of 3700 troops engaged in international operations, only 17% are engaged in NATO operations," explains Maj Gen. Wlodzimierz Sasiadek, Polish representative with the Allied Command Operations. Our small contribution to NATO's budget makes things even worse.



"This breeds frustration within the alliance itself, whose leaders believe that given Poland's place in European politics and its potential, Poland should increase its contribution to the overall operational effort," comments Gen. Sasiadek. As a result of the situation, we have a smaller number of Polish military experts not only at the Allied Command Operations (where 60 Polish experts are in service), but also at lower levels of command.

Poland will be represented at the Headquarters of the Rapid Deployable Greek Corps, the Rapid Deployable Spanish Corps, the Rapid Deployable Italian Corps, the Rapid Deployable Turkish Corps, and the EUROCORPS, as well as at Air Operations Centers in Norway, Denmark, and Germany. A total of 36 Polish officers (including three generals) are on the staff of those units. Further 34 officers are serving in national military representations and Polish liaison teams with commands at the strategic, operational, and component (land, navy, and air) levels. Is this representation adequate? – "Things can always be better," comments Maj Gen. Wlodzimierz Sasiadek, who supervised the negotiations. One must not forget that the number of posts was determined based on directives accepted by the Member States providing that posts in command structures are divided on the basis of the percentage share in the alliance's

