



Interview with Colonel Jacek Rolak, who temporarily is acting commander Command Support Brigade.

Anna Gałyga: **What is Command Support Brigade?**

Command Support Brigade (CSB) of MNC NE is a formation subordinated to commander MNC NE for missions, operations and exercises. It is tasked to ensure and deploy communications and command systems to serve the Corps, as well as deploy command posts and ensure logistic support for HQ MNC NE.

The Brigade is made up of the Polish 100 Signal Battalion and 104 Support Battalion, both

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based in Wałcz, and the German 610 Signal Battalion based in Prenzlau. A part of CSB is also the 102 Force Protection Battalion which is deployed only in wartime.

The Brigade Staff, based in Stargard Szczeciński, is only Polish for now, but we would like it to become multinational.

It is a peculiarity that currently both the National Support Element and HQ Support Company are subordinated to the Brigade, although they used to be under direct command of the Land Forces Commander.

How long has CBS been actually operating?

The Brigade has been operating since 1 July 2007. So this is a new formation, which still needs to learn and train. Presently the manning is completed in 78%, so we are still somewhat undermanned. However, thanks to the Compact Grey exercise which we conducted in November 2007 we have some experience in working together.

What has been achieved in such a short time?

From the beginning of July to the end of November we conducted two staff training programs and the Compact Eagle exercise and we were subject to three inspections whose findings were favourable and this is an optimistic message.

As a commanding officer, what priorities do you have?

Our main aim is to continue the process of improving the performance of the Staff and formations under its command in order to achieve full capability of planning and providing communications and command capabilities as well as supporting logistically MNC NE. This is a very complex task and the formations have to learn it from scratch. Moreover, the Brigade is to take part in all training activities of the Corps, including staff exercises and training with the special emphasis on the Crystal Eagle exercise held in September.

Obviously, with regard to the national obligations we will also have to assign resources and forces for national exercises. To reconcile the two is going to be quite a challenge.

How frequent are contacts among CSB formations?

We sustain permanent cooperation with the formations remaining under our direct command despite the fact that they are in their bases. Next year we are planning to conduct three major exercises with participation of the German battalion. These will be Compact Green and Compact Grey as well as the Corps' Crystal Eagle. Besides, we will commonly take part in the Steadfast Cathode NATO standardization exercise in Spain in April 2008.

And how was the language obstacle between the Polish and German formations overcome?

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You are touching the most serious problem of the brigade's staff. The staff's language skills do not live up to the expected standards. However, the personnel are improving their command of English taking part in numerous language courses. This is important, as soon as the staff have some fluency in English, they will be sent to participate in special courses abroad.

What can you tell us about the Compact Grey exercise?

For the Brigade and its subordinated formations it was their first exercise. The total of 450 personnel from all three battalions and CSB as well as 200 vehicles took part in the exercise. Compact Grey was to verify the preparation of the battalions to deploy and relocate the corps command posts and relocate as a part of a mobile operation of the entire signal system.

The exercise took place in several places: Stargard Szczeciński, Bielkowo, Choszczno and Wałcz and it lasted 10 days including deployment of the battalions to the exercise area. It was mobile exercise based on a certain operation scenario. The deployment was carried out both at day and night. The total number of deployments that encompassed relocating the entire system and command posts in that week was 39, which I consider a significant number.

What is your assessment of the exercise's outcome?

I reckon the exercise a total success because we reached the goals we set for ourselves. The commanders of the subordinated battalions are of the same opinion. Furthermore, the exercise was closely watched by a group of officers from MNC NE from whom we received a report with comments and remarks. The exercise was assessed as a very good one. The thorough preparation of the staff, despite significant undermanning, was a nice surprise. The host nation support worked out very well, too. The Pomeranian Military District provided us with a very good logistic support.