



Interview with Major General Ernst H. Lutz (DEU A), Deputy Commander of the German Army Forces Command, conducted during his visit to the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast.

Anna Gałyga: **Sir, what is actually GARFCOM?**

Major General Lutz: GARFCOM is an acronym that stands for the German Army Forces Command. The German Army is organised into two parts. One part is where all the administration is made, where training is planned for the entire Army and organisational and structural things are worked out. The other part of the Army is what we are responsible for – the training of troops in divisions, the provision of trained and well-prepared troops for deployments and the responsibility for the German Elements in multinational headquarters, for instance in the German-French Brigade. So we have a sort of division of labour along organisational lines: administration on one hand and practical service, training and deployment on the other hand, and I am on that side which is responsible for training and deployment.

Is GARFCOM responsible for all arms and services within the German Army?

If you talk about the Army you mean all services and I only speak about the Land Forces.

How have you become Deputy Commander of the German Army Forces Command?

I was Commander of the Army Troops Command until December 2007 but this command was disbanded. As the Deputy Commander of GARFCOM is still in Afghanistan and will come back in May 2008, and my residual duty period will end in May 2008 – I was asked to do this job.

What are your main priorities and challenges as Deputy Commander GARFCOM during that time?

This is a number of things. First of all, I try to have a close look at the deployment preparations of various German troops, at the development of the German-French Brigade and their training efforts in order to be available for missions of the European Union. They form the European Union Battle Group; this is quite a challenging task. If the European Union wants to have its own military option, this will be the force of first choice. I also bear responsibility for German Elements in multinational corpses like here – so I have a look at training, duty, social issues or personnel management. I also try to be in contact with multinational commanders and talk to them about the integration of German Elements – what can be improved in order to optimize the efficiency and to do the utmost we can to prepare these headquarters for deployments.

Is this your first visit to this Headquarters?

No, in the second half of the 1990s I was Brigade Commander a few kilometres from here, in Eggesin in Germany. I had very close contacts with the Corps, the 12th Division in Szczecin and the 6th Brigade in Stargard Szczecinski. I also had a number of private contacts with people here in Szczecin. So I had the opportunity to see the development of this corps headquarters from the very beginning. Then I was in Karup in Denmark and we had close cooperation in operational training and a very lively exchange of personnel.

I have not been here for a few years now so it was interesting for me to see what has been changed and I am happy to state that there has been a tremendous progress, a remarkable improvement. The deployment to Afghanistan had a very positive effect on this Headquarters. This Headquarters has attained Full Operational Capability, which was certified by NATO and it is now the Headquarters that is in the first line of qualification at this level in NATO, and this is a big step forward.

At the same time I also had the opportunity to see the acceptance of this Headquarters here in Szczecin; roughly 50% of the Germans live here with their families – it is a marked difference from what you can experience elsewhere. It is exceptional that soldiers move abroad with their families because if they go on deployment – their families are left alone. But if they are in the environment where they are welcome, where the social climate is positive – which I realize is the fact here – there is a positive motivation to accept this challenge and to come here. I had the discussions with elected representatives of soldiers and civilians of the German part of this Headquarters and this is exactly what I got from them.

Would you say that your impressions concerning this Headquarters are positive?

Yes, absolutely. But there is always something to do. There was a lot of effort put into getting Full Operational Capability. It was achieved but after that there was personnel rotation, new people came in, experienced people went out. So you went through a valley and you had to climb up again. The highest level of proficiency was achieved again when the team in Afghanistan was at the end of the mission and those few who remained here in the Headquarters were able to handle all the challenges without the others being present. Then the

team from Afghanistan came back and was reintegrated but some people were posted elsewhere, new people came in – so there is the next valley. Then you have the next challenge – the exercise CRYSTAL EAGLE in the end of the year...You move from one highlight to the next one knowing you have to climb up and come to very high level of proficiency but due to personnel rotation you will probably not be able to hold it. This is a challenge but I am confident that the substance, which is at this Headquarters, is good enough in order to be successful with all these things, which come up in the future.

Can you see any other challenges for this Headquarters apart from the rotation of personnel?

Well, this is a series of exercises in the multinational environment, this is the possible next deployment to Afghanistan or to other places, in the end it is the political leaders who decide where to go. It is also part of the challenge to be available for whatever may be decided.

What is the importance of German participation in such formations like our Headquarters?

This is a bunch of things. First of all, it is a German lesson of life in NATO to be multinational. The German Armed Forces have been multinational since the very beginning. For instance we have never had our own General Staff doing operational planning and things like that. SHAPE has been our General Staff for the German Armed Forces for practical and political reasons.

We were integrated into multinational headquarters from the very beginning of our existence. The German Bundeswehr was planned, structured and trained as a force available for multinational operations. Therefore there was never a question since the early 1990s when we had the process of European unification that there would be multinational headquarters. It was a strong German desire to have something together with our immediate neighbours, with Poland and this Headquarters is the result of it. It is a symbol of the new Europe, in a way, and at the same time carries a high priority for us. It is an epitome of the close cooperation between the Polish and German Armies.

Since one of the aims of your visit was to evaluate several officers, how do you think service at such Headquarters influences military career?

We have a requirement to get as much experience as possible according to the individual development concept of officers. For instance it can be the experience in normal troop training job, in working in a headquarters or in staff functions. It is the experience in going on deployments and working in multinational headquarters to get competence to be able to accomplish tasks in a multinational environment, to have certain language proficiency and to achieve success. Therefore for these people it is important to be here and to present good results. We have a close look at that, and it definitely helps to shape careers.

Can you tell me more about these evaluations?

These evaluations are normally made every two to three years. The basic rule is that no

assignment shall be forgotten. On specific periodical dates or if somebody from here is posted to a headquarters or staff elsewhere, the identified German officer – in this case Colonel Baierl as the Senior National Officer or the Chief of Staff BrigGen. Heinrichs – will have to write a report, which goes into the personnel file. The central military personnel office will take this report into consideration – so nothing is forgotten or dropped. The evaluated officer will have full transparency of this process. He will also have the opportunity to add his personal aspirations and interests to this evaluation for consideration by the central personnel office and they will be duly recorded. It is a very fair system; it encourages people to do their best.

What do you actually evaluate?

It is a number of things. It is for instance intellectual capacity, degree of success, social awareness, and capability to command people – not just to give orders but to command in a very comprehensive sense. It is capacity to take individual decisions, not just to obey them, and to work in a team – there are people who may be very strong in taking decisions but cannot work in a team. It is also individual capacity to plan and organise, to achieve efficiency in handling resources and individual skills to implement the substance of manuals into planning. There are a number of aspects that are to be noted and evaluated. All this results in a summary with recommendations whether the evaluated individual is good for command functions or whether his strength is more in staff functions, whether this individual is well-suited for conceptual work or has high presentational skills etc. I come here, read these reports and to talk to people who are evaluated. Then I make a written statement whether I agree with the grade and recommendations or not.

Do you meet each single German officer from this Headquarters?

I do. There are specific dates arranged for the evaluation of given ranks. By the end of March we need to have Captains evaluated. This is why during this visit I look on and talk with those but I definitely will not close my eyes and ears if other relevant insights emerge or if anyone has a personal issue to be dealt with.