



Interview with Lieutenant Commander Gorazd Bartol, Assistant for Strategic Planning, J-5 General Staff Slovenian Armed Forces, conducted on the occasion of the visit of the Slovenian Delegation to the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast.

Anna Galyga: Sir, why our Headquarters has become an interesting place for you to visit?

The Slovenian Armed Forces are very young. We became a NATO member just a few years ago. Affiliation is an element of the process of integration. We have different military units that are going to be ready in the next few years, and one of them is the NBC Battalion. It is expected it will receive final operational capability till the end of the next year. During developing the capabilities of the NBC Battalion, we started looking for strategic partners. Regarding that this Multinational Corps Northeast needs that type of capabilities, we established the first working contact with the Corps. At the end of the discussion we will find out whether this could be a really good place for us for the future. This is the main reason why we came here. We are here to collect all working information, to see how to establish future cooperation and how to organise the affiliation process from the technical, legal and organisational points of view but

also to see what we still need to develop in terms of our capabilities.

Does it mean that there will be other working visits in the future?

Probably yes – if our leaders decide that we really will affiliate our NBC Battalion with the Corps. If so, we will come here again very soon, for sure in the next few months.

What is the status of the talks concerning the possible affiliation of the NBC Battalion with our Headquarters? Have you already chosen our Corps?

It is a working session and that is the first step in the affiliation process. But we still have to decide that.

What will be the next step then?

The next step will be the decision made by our leaders. When we return back, we will write down the report and then our leaders will decide “yes” or “no”.

Provided that it is decided that you will affiliate your Battalion with our Corps, when can we expect the actual affiliation?

I think we can do it in one year.

It is the second day of visiting our Headquarters. What are your impressions?

First of all, I want to say that we find here a lot of very warm hospitality and we can feel that in your Headquarters people look very happy. This atmosphere is very interesting; it is quite different than in other Corpses, which in general are not so multinational. We got a lot of information here; I can even say we received everything we needed. We were also told that our NBC Battalion was very welcome. That is the most important for the Slovenian Armed Forces.

Was there anything particular that you learnt during the visit?

We learnt that if you want to work in a multinational environment with your units you need a lot of time for integration.

What is the Slovenian experience of serving in similar multinational formations like ours?

We had a lot of our officers and NCOs in the NATO Command Structure but we do not have almost anyone in the NATO Force Structure; we only have one officer in the Milano Corps so in that area we do not have any special experience. Affiliation and cooperating with one of the NATO Headquarters on the Corps level will be new experience for us.

What are the current challenges for the Slovenian Army?

As I told you before the Slovenian Armed Forces are very young. A few years ago we started the process of professionalisation. It means that we do not have conscript service any more. It also means that we have to improve ourselves every day and become better and better from a professional point of view. Another challenge for the Slovenian Forces is to finish integration process of the Slovenian Armed Forces units, NATO declared forces within the NATO Force Structure and NATO Command Structure.