



Interview with Brigadier General Markus Kneip from the German Ministry of Defence, Army Staff III.

Anna Galyga: Sir, what is the aim of your visit to the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast?

BrigGen Kneip: It is always good to travel to the relevant places and people and it is worthwhile to be at the place and to learn directly from the soldiers instead of reading. We are one of the Framework Nation here at the Multinational Corps Northeast. This year Germany has the chairmanship of the Corps Committee, which is the guiding Committee. My staff are working in this Corps Committee, and therefore I wanted to see the developments personally.

Is it a national visit then?

It is always a little bit national but the primary aim is of course to see international topics.

What was already discussed during your visit?

We already discussed topics like the Corps' experience from the ISAF mission or what to learn for the next possible mission, which is foreseen for the Corps. We also talked about the next

exercise, which is very important. It will take place in Germany; we are the host nation for this exercise and we have a lot of professional interest in it. Then, of course, welfare topics; I learnt about the international school for example. I will take some topics back home for staffing in order to support the Corps.

But your relations to the Corps go a bit further; you were also German Representative for the Corps Committee, is that right?

Yes, as a Colonel I worked in the Corps Committee with the Polish Corps Commander General Sadowski, and later with his successor General Ramms, German Army.

When was it exactly?

It started 2001 and it ended 2004. At that time frame I was involved in daily business of the Corps with respect to the Ministerial level. But I actually never worked personally in the Corps, I mean I was never stationed here.

From the perspective of your previous experience concerning the Corps, have you noticed any developments?

I have seen a lot of very good developments. It all started with the German-Danish LANDJUT Corps that was a predecessor of the HQ MNC NE. So we were just two nations. Then Poland became the third framework-nation. At that time we talked about the Baltic countries, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the US or Romania. Today, they are integrated into the Corps or approaching. This is a completely different picture – three flags compared to eight, nine or ten flags.

Now we can talk about professional exercises and good experiences from the ISAF mission. In the old days there was no real mission. I can see a good progress although you never finish your work of course; you always have to keep in touch with the new topics. Infrastructure got better, manning got better and the computer network system – now I am talking about SZAFRAN, which is a good IT system. In the old days we had plans and it is good to see that some of them have been put into effect. So I am quite satisfied. But there are still a lot of topics to be put forward in the future, of course.

Such as?

To make the computer system, which we believe it should be SZAFRAN, workable, to go on with a good multinational structure and to get in countries in support of the Corps, to take care of the preparation for the next mission. Then, with respect to national topics, to focus on the German community in Szczecin, which feels a great hospitality in Poland – these are some topics for the future.

Are there any changes concerning the Corps in the nearest future from the German side?

No, we are committed to the Corps; we are one of the three Framework Nations. I always

explain that the German-Polish cooperation together with the Danish partners is not just business. The Corps creates its own history and I feel it is a good history with a solid future. We have to continue and this is not just about the military, this is a question of culture.

Secondly, the Corps is not only a political tool but also a military useful tool and it should be used for UN and for NATO politically agreed missions and we have to work on this. I can say these are solid pillars for Germany, with an historic dimension, a political one but also military, professional dimension. And as one of the Framework Nations we will have officers, NCOs and enlisted here as well as civilians.

Sir, you work in the Army Staff III, what is it?

I am a director within the Ministry of Defence, located in Bonn. I work within this Ministry of Defence for Army Staff matters – I am working on Land Forces Operations, Plans and Policy and development with respect to Army matters.

Can you give me some examples of things you are dealing with?

NATO policy, Land Forces operations, multinational commitments like this here or the German Army commitment in Strasbourg in the Eurocorps for example. I work for the Chief of the German Army Staff.

You are a supervisor of the German Representative for the Corps Committee. Are you dealing with the Corps matters on daily business?

Of course, when it comes on the table; sometimes it is event-driven, sometimes it is routine-driven. One branch of my Army Staff division is dealing with all Corps-related matters – finance, equipment, manning, operations, etc.

I am responsible on the German side also for the Corps in Rheindalen, which is the ARRC, for the German-Dutch Corps stationed in Münster in Germany or the German Element of the Eurocorps in Strasbourg.

Have you got staff that is responsible only for our Corps?

I have a desk officer who is designated to this Corps, and a small staff who are experts in such multinational structures in terms of multinational relations, plans and policy. They work on separate corps structures, which is good for them because they can compare and transfer experience from one corps to other.

What is the importance of German participation in the Corps like ours?

This is a NATO Corps that is certified. We are a member of NATO and therefore it is a burden sharing between us and our partners with NATO. We support the NATO Corps structure together with our partners. This means we support and expect to be supported – so we are i.e. very happy about the planned Polish participation in the Eurocorps in Strasbourg, where we are

also heavily involved. We support NATO by this and our bilateral cooperation as well, of course.

Is there anything more than burden sharing?

It is a privilege and a challenge to share a task with other partners. In NATO burden sharing means that you take the burden of manning, finance but also you take the burden when you go on a mission and send your people under command of a commander of another nation. I feel this is a huge responsibility and level of trust. Here at the Corps there is a Polish General who has command over Germans and he does a good job – as far as I am concerned and asked to comment, and in Strasbourg there is a Spanish General now who has command over Germans and other nations, too. This might be a small first start of a future European Army.

So to sum it up, what are your impressions concerning your visit to the Corps?

As I said, it is really useful to go abroad although it takes some time – it is quite a distance from Bonn to Szczecin but it is better to see, to listen to the people. My intention is also to show our support to the Corps – that Germany is willing to go on with the support and to put an effort on that, treating this Corps not just like day-to-day business. Therefore, I was quite happy that the Corps Commander found some time for discussion, I got some excellent briefings by the very professional staff, I had a chance to talk to the staff members, also with the German part of the community on national business – housing, taxes, school system. All in all, it was an important visit for me.