



Interview with Maj. Waldemar Torbicki from the CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) Branch of the HQ MNC NE. The interview was conducted on the occasion of the meeting of CIMIC Concept and Doctrine Working Group, of which Maj. Waldemar Torbicki is a permanent member. Among the participants there were representatives from CIMIC cells from the 1st German/Netherlands Corps, Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, Eurocorps, NATO Deployable Corps – Greece, NATO Rapid Deployable Corps - Italy, Spain, Turkey and Rapid Reaction Corps from France.

Anna Galyga: Let us start with explaining the basic terms. What is CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation)?

Maj. Torbicki: NATO forces performing an operation cannot act without taking into account the complexity of the civil environment around, with all its components such as: local administration, population and all kinds of civil aid organisations present in the area of operation.

CIMIC's role is to provide interface between military units and civilians to make sure that they do not disturb each other but rather perform their activities in a coordinated, efficiency focused way.

What is the idea of CIMIC Concept and Doctrine Working Group?

This group was created on the initiative of the Chiefs from G9 Branches (CIMIC) from all NATO Deployable Corps Headquarters, of both high and low readiness. It is a body supporting decision making, producing some suggestions and solving ongoing problems. The Group is also dealing with updating and revising of all kinds of CIMIC doctrine and concept documents as well as creating new ones if needed.

Was it the first meeting of this Working Group?

It was already the 10th meeting. There are conducted up to three meetings a year so it means that this Group has been already working for three years. For me it was the third meeting. I participated in the 7th meeting just before my deployment to Afghanistan in 2007. Afterwards, taking into account the scope of this group we decided to participate in such a body on regular basis. As the documents we are working on are forwarded to SHAPE J9, the level is quite high and the visibility for our Headquarters coming from this participation is also serious.

Where do the meetings of this Working Group take place?

They are conducted in different places. This time our Headquarters was asked to be the host of this meeting.

Who are the participants of the Working Group?

They are CIMIC staff officers. Chiefs of CIMIC branches also have their meetings twice a year, during which they decide on issues to be taken on agenda for this Working Group. They give us guidance, approve or disapprove suggestions and concepts prepared by our Group.

So what are the tasks of the Working Group?

The primary issue is working on CIMIC documents – Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), which are guidelines for specific parts of our activities. Altogether, there are more than twenty of them and right now we are finishing the updating process. We are also sharing lessons learned from exercises conducted by all Headquarters, exchanging information from our involvement in missions. I contributed to this process after coming back from Afghanistan during our previous meeting, which was conducted at the NDC in Greece. Now the NRDC Turkey is getting ready for the deployment to Afghanistan and I am looking forward to hearing about their experiences. This way we are kept updated on what is going on in the CIMIC world. Another issue is talking about our daily business, for example about CIMIC structures in respective Headquarters, which gives possibility to compare and assess the efficiency of them.

What is the MNC NE contribution to these meetings?

Each corps is working on different issue. Right now I am working on TTP, more specifically on CIMIC involvement in non-combatant evacuation operations.

What kind of operations are they?

Non-combatant evacuation operations are operations conducted to relocate civil personnel in a foreign country, when the situation is tense and dangerous. It is the operation of taking them from a dangerous place to a place of safety.

You are talking mostly about documents; does it mean that you are discussing theory only?

We are talking about the theory, we are preparing documents but all of them are based on real experience from missions. These meetings give us possibility to share different points of view. It is good to have experienced colleagues who have been deployed several times to different places. A draft of a document circulates among group members who express their opinions. This leads to the preparation of a good product, which can finally be accepted by J9 from SHAPE.

So when are those documents used?

They are more mission-oriented but they also serve as a reference documents during preparation to exercises.

Do the documents include any practical advice?

Yes, they do, for example how the CIMIC activities should be organized and conducted, what should be done at each stage of the operation, what the responsibilities of CIMIC components involved in this operation are.

What is the Working Group currently working on?

Right now we are finishing the revision process of CIMIC TTPs. It takes some time to prepare and coordinate it because the group has to agree on certain issues. In addition to those TTPs we are sharing our experiences. For example this time we were talking about CIMIC-related events played during exercises and how such event should be portrayed by the so-called White Cell. This is the component of the exercise, which represents the civil environment like civil organisations, all levels of administration. We were discussing how the White Cell should be structured and manned, what experience is expected from Role Players, and what is the availability of real members of civil organisations and conditions, also financial, on which they participate.

Are there any typically CIMIC exercises or are there just CIMIC parts in other exercises?

Actually, we usually do not have exercises designated specifically for our functional area and if we do, they are limited to for example study periods. Usually we are just a part of the play in bigger exercises containing the whole range of military activities.

Does it mean that CIMIC Branches do not train together?

Our intent is to support other CIMIC Branches during exercises. For example next month one officer and non-commissioned officer from our branch is going to Greece to support the Greek exercise, next month I am also attending a CIMIC seminar in Turkey, being a preparation step for the NRDC Turkey's deployment to Afghanistan. Many important civil players will be present there to share their vision of civil-military coexistence in the area of operation. At the end of this month we will also have the final planning conference for the exercise Crystal Eagle, during which we will work on events to be played during the exercise. For that purpose I invited a representative from the International Committee of Red Cross. He will present a civilian approach to operations and check if the events we have prepared are realistic and whether the way we see the cooperation is not just a military wish. Sometimes what we think about the cooperation is not exactly what the civilian counterparts expect so it is important to have them not only during exercises but also during the preparation stage to get their feedback.

Does the situation for CIMIC change so often that you have to revise the documents three times a year?

The environment in which military operations are conducted is constantly changing and we have to adapt our procedures to new challenges but as I already said we are dealing with other, more current issues too.

What are the changes within the CIMIC area?

For example the structures of CIMIC components are changing. Structures of CIMIC support units from different countries do not look the same because of approaches their countries have to CIMIC operations. Some of them follow the CIMIC NATO doctrine, which is more focused on coordination of efforts, situational awareness and capability to advise along the chain of command. Others are focused on development, reconstruction and improvement of the living conditions of civil population in the area of operation. It contributes to the security of troops and creates a positive picture of the forces. We are trying to combine those two approaches to suggest structures that will be able to face those challenges.

How about the CIMIC Branch at the HQ MNC NE?

In comparison to other Headquarters, we have very small staff but I do not think we suffer because of that. Forces contributing to ongoing operations are usually composite, like the composite International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan. The possibility of being deployed as the whole branch is decreasing. So instead of complaining on a small structure we have to learn how to cooperate with people from other Headquarters, with people who received other education or training. For me it is just another challenge and possibility to get additional experience.

What is the role of CIMIC in the peacetime?

Now our main effort is preparation for the exercise Crystal Eagle 2008. We are preparing events to be played by the training audience. We are trying to invent new events based on our experiences from ISAF to make this exercise more realistic and interesting.

And if there is no exercise?

Then we contribute to the development of documents. We revise not only TTPs but also our Headquarters CIMIC Standard Operations Procedures; we take part in seminars and exercises conducted by other Headquarters. However, I have to admit that the real work for CIMIC starts after deployment. This is the most exciting part of our life when the real challenges are faced.

You were deployed to Afghanistan last year, what was your post there?

I was Chief Liaison Section for Combined Joint 9 – CJ9 (CIMIC) interfacing with the major players of the civil environment in the ISAF area of operation.

Did all those concepts and doctrines work in practice?

Yes, in most cases they worked very well. In other, some ISAF mission, specific procedures had to be developed. TTPs are directed to those who do not have a clear picture on a given type of operation but while supplemented with Standard Operations Procedures, they give quite strong theoretical support to the conducted activities. It is not a prescription how it should be done but a kind of guidance, which can be modified depending on the mission area and specifications.

What were your main challenges in Afghanistan?

Getting used to the culture, the other way of thinking, the other way of doing business. We as the military are used to rather quick solutions, direct questions and short answers without providing broad background. It does not work in relationships between military and civil environment. The Afghan culture is more complex than an average civil environment in Europe. They do not do business on the phone or use emails for this purpose. To achieve the aim, you have to meet people and talk to them. Sometimes talking once is not enough; actually, in many cases achieving the aim is possible only after creating a personal relationship. When they know you and trust you, they will talk to you and will be honest. But it requires time and patience.

Who did you cooperate with?

One liaison group was working for CJ9 and I was Chief of this group, the other one was the main Liaison Section working for the ISAF Headquarters as the whole. They were dealing with the President, Prime Minister, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defence. More than twenty other Ministries like Ministry of Education, Health, Rural Development, Industry or Economy were in our portfolio. The second area of our responsibilities were UN Organisations starting with the head organisation UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) and the smaller ones as well as all Non-Governmental Organisations.

This was quite challenging because we had up to 5 liaison officers. Taking into consideration that we had more than 30 organisations as counterparts, it meant that each officer had to visit around 6 organisations. Sometimes I was also conducting liaison job myself because at the worst time (rotation of personnel) we had only 3 liaison officers and we could not suspend establishing relations. We usually conducted two visits per one liaison officer a day to be able to

maintain good relationship and response to liaison needs of the Headquarters when required. Routine visits and meetings establishing good relations were especially important in developing a liaison structure so that when we received a task, thanks to this network we were able to arrange a meeting on really short notice and it was going much faster.