



An interview with Commander Piotr Klepka, Senior Specialist of the Strategic Planning Directorate-P5, Polish General Staff.

Anna Gałyga: What is the aim of your visits to HQ MNC NE?

As part of a series of Professional Development Lectures held for officers of HQ MNC NE, BrigGen Josef Heinrichs Chief of Staff has suggested that a representative of the General Staff's Strategic Planning Directorate P-5, should make a speech on the experiences of the Polish Armed Forces from operations abroad and present how the experiences influence the development of the Polish Armed Forces.

What are the experiences?

The experiences have already been implemented in the process of development of the Armed Forces and they primarily address the professionalization of the Armed Forces; as of 2010 the Polish Armed Forces are to become fully professional, which means that the personnel will only consist of regular servicemen or contract servicemen. Another experience is the necessity to reform the peace missions and crisis reaction command structures both in Poland and abroad. As an example can serve the operational command that took over the command of the forces deployed to missions abroad as of January 1 2007. Another example of experiences that have

already been implemented is the technical modernization of the Armed Forces whose direction is based on experiences from missions. It defines what equipment is needed and where in the structure it should be introduced. We have to take into consideration that two new divisions, P7 and P8, division were established in the structure of the General Staff in 2007. One of them is responsible for training whereas the other for financial planning and development of the Armed Forces.

What does the modernization of the Polish Armed Forces really consist in?

We take our wheeled armoured personnel carrier Rosomak as an example. Its basic version with the turret has been rearmed and prepared for the conditions of Afghanistan. The forces based in Afghanistan have already been equipped with the carriers. Another example is the adaptation of the helicopters to the climatic conditions of Afghanistan and fitting them with additional armour plates and night-vision devices to provide the troops of the Polish Military Contingent in Afghanistan with proper protection, transportation and support. We should not forget another of our mission experiences related to protection of our soldiers. I am referring to the project dubbed the 21st century soldier as a part of which we have introduced new types of helmets and are working on new types of bullet-proof vests and new communication systems. These novelties are going to increase servicemen efficiency in the process of professionalization of the Armed Forces.

Does the professionalization of the Polish Armed Forces progress? And what has triggered off such direction of development of the Armed Forces?

Professionalization of the military results primarily from the necessity to provide the Armed Forces with highly qualified specialists able to handle modern equipment. We also strive to increase servicemen's operational efficiency irrespective of whether they are deployed in Poland or abroad. We are in the process of transformation of the Armed Forces from heavy equipped forces into light, mobile and deployable forces capable to carry out tasks both in Poland and abroad. This is what P7 Directorate of the General Staff is responsible for. Our efforts aim at working out training and preparation programmes designed for servicemen of individual formations to be deployed to certain missions. This reflects the differences in conditions and requirements to be met by servicemen deployed on missions in Iraq or Afghanistan or Congo.

Until now each of the services had its own training programmes meeting requirements of a heavy army equipped with tanks and mechanized battalions. Presently the spectrum of threats and future operations is changing. Of course, we have to keep in mind that the Polish Armed Forces are first and foremost designed to defend Poland. However, our increasing involvement abroad clearly necessitates some transformation. We have to act faster, remain flexible, effective and deployable to use our forces in various parts of the world.

What kind of planning does the Directorate do?

The Strategic Planning Directorate P5 is a part of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Polish Armed Forces. To some extent it is the Armed Forces' a converging point for all ideas or

challenges. The Directorate works among others on the Armed Forces' development programme. Currently, a program of development of the Armed Forces 2009-2018 is being worked out. This programme enables us to implement NATO defence procedures which define the planning process as looking some 10 years ahead with planning cycles every 4 years. This means that the 2009 programme will cover the years up to 2018 and the next programme will include the years from 2012 and the following 10 years. Besides the programming and development planning, we are also responsible for the preparedness of the Armed Forces and partly for directions of technical modernization. The complexity of the entire project is great that the generation of the 2009-2018 development program will produce over 30 field, functional or specialist.

For some years we have been shifting our focus on the planning and development of deployment capabilities of the Armed Forces. We are working on a global approach to the Armed Forces and not about building up some technical devices or equipment. We are talking about building capabilities such as the capability to carry out imagery intelligence, capability to provide strategic air transportation and capability to identify formations in battlefield. In fact, these are the elements that result in the Department of Arming Policy and Department of Armed Forces Supply's introduction of certain types of arms and equipment to the Armed Forces and we are the point that links all elements into one entirety, preparing documents for the entire Armed Forces.

Summing up, what are the challenges the Polish Armed Forces are to face?

First of all, it is the professionalization of the Armed Forces, maintaining the same rate of technical modernization, including the carrying out of the long-term projects which influence the whole transformation process of the Armed Forces. Among the issues discussed by the General Staff are also our bigger involvement in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, withdrawal of the troops from Iraq or something that seems to be the least discussed subject- keeping the budget discipline.

And finally, what are you impressions of your visit to HQ MNC NE?

This has been my first visit to the HQ and frankly speaking I am pleasantly surprised at the reception and the organization of the visit. It has been my first encounter with a multinational headquarters. The discussion that has followed the presentation has revolved around the issues most connected with our operational experiences: how we process the experiences in our programme, how P7 works and how it gathers information and to whom the information is forwarded. This means that the HQ staff members show great interest in these issues.