



**Major General Bruno Kasdorf, Deputy Commander of the German Army Forces Command talks about his visit to the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast and experiences gathered in Afghanistan that help him carry out his current duties.**

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

**Major General Bruno Kasdorf:** I am the next higher superior to the German contingent in Szczecin and I think it is always necessary to look after my soldiers. What topics or areas are you specifically interested in when visiting your soldiers?

For instance, what the soldiers are doing, what is in their interest right now, what is their mood – I am interested in all of these kinds of questions.

**And what are your impressions?**

I think the situation is pretty good for Germans here in Szczecin. There is only one concern about the international school. The soldiers are looking forward to the deployment in 2010, which is the next big challenge they have to prepare for. But I think they are very well placed for this task regarding the Corps experience from Afghanistan in 2007.

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### **Is there anything that surprised you here?**

Not really because I am familiar with this Corps Headquarters. I had pretty good experiences with this staff when I was Chief of Staff in Kabul and this Headquarters was the core element there. I could rely on this Headquarters; the soldiers were well trained, but they were also very good comrades.

### **How do you see the future of this Headquarters?**

I am very optimistic about the future of this Corps. It has a unique perspective because it is the only one that is located that far east in the area of the former Warsaw Pact. I think it is very attractive to join in, in particular to other eastern European countries. That is what I see for the future.

### **What is the importance of involvement of German soldiers in multinational formations, like this one?**

From my perspective, a more basic question is about the importance of multinationality and what it really shows. It is no longer possible for a nation-state not to do business in a multinational environment and that is also reflected by the military. And if the military is multinationalized like this Corps Headquarters here, it means that, for instance, nations providing staff to this multinational organisation are not longer enemies so it is an element of the security policy today.

### **Sir, can you tell me more about your tasks and responsibilities as Deputy Commander of the German Army Forces Command?**

All German elements of multinational corps Germany contributes to are subordinated to me. It is not only the one here in Szczecin, it is also the Corps in Münster, Strasbourg, the Corps in Spain, Italy, Greece and Turkey, it is the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps and the German-French Brigade. I am also responsible for basic training within the German Army Forces Command and the preparation of the forces that are about to deploy. And our biggest concern now is to do everything what is required to be better placed for our today's deployments.

### **What challenges does the German Army currently face?**

The biggest issue is always to have enough good, qualified personnel. I think that is going to be the biggest challenge in the future, especially if you see our declining birth rate and competing with the civilians for the qualified personnel. Then, of course, that is training – to have the time to train the soldiers for their job in a proper way.

### **As you said, you are also responsible for preparing troops for deployments; does your experience as Chief of Staff in Headquarters ISAF help you to complete current duties?**

It helps a lot because with this kind of experience you are much better prepared to do this kind

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of duties. Let me mention only two issues. First of all, the recognition that everything what we do today is multinational is also reflected in Afghanistan. It is not the task of one nation, it is the task of multinational organisation and if you talk about security, it is in particular NATO. But it is not only NATO, there are other actors as well that need to play their roles in order to be successful in Afghanistan. Everybody has to understand that we are talking about comprehensive approach. That is something new for the military to understand but my impression is that in many regards, we are more advanced than other organisations.

The other point is that, for instance, we deal on a regular basis with non-state actors as adversaries. If we only look at the situation in Afghanistan – it is the Taliban and the others that pose the threat.

### **Can you give me some examples of changes you introduced, which resulted from your personal experience from Afghanistan?**

Yes, we are doing exercises with this kind of scenario, for instance. Just two weeks ago we had a big exercise where all the German division and brigade commanders participated, including your Chief of Staff Brigadier General Josef Heinrichs. And in this exercise information operations and strategic communication were big issues. It is not something the military are used to as we normally avoided to talk to media and do this kind of operations but it is very often more important than the fire part.

### **HQ MNC NE is planned to be deployed to Afghanistan in 2010 again. Considering your experience, what kind of advice would you give to soldiers getting ready for the mission?**

Looking back on how you prepared in 2006 and knowing what is intended to be done, I think you are on a very good track with your preparations. There is no additional advice needed.

### **Are you going to be involved in any way in the mission preparation process, I mean, for example, mentoring?**

Right now I do not see it but whenever I can help, I will be there.

### **You have spent some time in Afghanistan, how do you see the progress of the ISAF operation?**

It is very tough and slow. We have to tame our own expectations; nothing happens overnight. Since the military are perceived responsible for what is going on in Afghanistan, in fact we can do only 20 % and we need 80 % from other organisations, so I would rather look at those other organisations doing what is required. Then, I think, we would see more progress in Afghanistan.

### **Do you think that the situation that our soldiers will face in 2010 will be much different from what is now?**

No, it is going to be very challenging again in 2010 and I do not think that there will be a big

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change compared to today.