



Anna Galyga is interviewing Brigadier General Josef Heinrichs, the new Chief of Staff of Multinational Corps Northeast.

Anna Galyga: What are your expectations related to your new post?

BG Josef Heinrichs: In March this year, when my national authorities decided that I would be selected to become Chief of Staff, Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast, there was no talking about an ISAF mission in early 2007. I knew a little bit about this HQ, but not that much. The first thing I did was to search the Internet for MNC NE. The homepage made me a little bit more familiar with the HQ and the city of Szczecin.

Afterwards I contacted Lieutenant General Ramms, the Commander of HQ MNC NE – he welcomed me to become a member of this great organisation and to live in this great city with my wife.

When the decision was made that HQ MNC NE will be deployed to Kabul/Afghanistan as part of HQ ISAF in early 2007, the German Ministry of Defence decided that I should move to Szczecin prior to the planned date to be able to participate in the mission preparation training. So, I

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arrived five months before the official rotation date. That gave me the unique opportunity to get to know the HQ and its members without having a PE post – as a guest rather than as a member of the HQ.

The people working within an organisation are its key element. And I could learn that there are great people working within the HQ – military and civilian, from eight different nations, all of them very open-minded and supportive to me as the newcomer.

- What are the challenges you will be confronted with as COS?

In the current situation, with the HQ getting ready for its first deployment to a mission in an unfriendly and dangerous environment, there are two big challenges: on the one hand, we, the military personnel of HQ MNC NE, must do a good job over there in Afghanistan to help the Afghan people and to support their government. On the other hand, as Chief of Staff of HQ MNC NE, it is my biggest concern to make sure that all our people will return healthy to Szczecin next summer when our mission will be over.

In HQ ISAF, we will provide nearly 20 % of the entire headquarters only. Our people will be spread all over the HQ, and I will not be Chief of Staff over there, but Director Combined Joint Operations Centre. Only few members of our personnel will work directly for me. As Chief of Staff HQ MNC NE, I will try to keep our community together.

As you know, we will have a new Commander. The future priorities, the points of main effort, the future training schedule, and – above all – the HQ MNC NE's further development will depend on his decisions. And it will be my job as Chief of Staff to make it happen.

- What will be your priorities as COS?

First of all, I want to thank my predecessor, Brigadier General Henryk Skarzynski, Polish Army, for handing a very well working staff over to me.

As a standing HQ in the NATO force structure, HQ MNC NE must be operationally effective. In 2005, our HQ could prove that it meets NATO-standards when it was certified as a Graduated Readiness Forces (Land) HQ. To keep this standard and improve the HQ's capabilities will be my first priority. With the deployment to Afghanistan, we are given the chance to show our ability to lead a big mission – we must succeed in this mission to remain relevant.

The other big priority will be the implementation of the new Permanent Headquarters and Field Headquarters structure. And not to forget the integration of all the newcomers from new and "old" nations who will show up between late 2007 and early 2008.

- What is the idea of your role at the HQ?

All general officers in the Command Group of Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast always have a twofold role to play, i.e. a multinational and a national one.

As far as the function of the HQ is concerned, my role has been described in the job description. As Chief of Staff of HQ MNC NE, I have to co-ordinate all staff work to make the HQ an effective and efficient organisation available to the Commander. That means as well that the Chief of Staff has to be the spider in the net. Next to this, the Chief of Staff is the first adviser to the Commander. This role has to cover all areas, not just the staff work. The adviser role in particular can be touchy – there must be a climate of trust between the Commander and his

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Chief of Staff.

The general officers of HQ MNC NE are also the highest-ranking representatives of their countries. When wearing this hat, I have to support German positions. Sometimes, it might be difficult to balance national positions against multinational requirements as well.

- What do you think about the multinational environment of the HQ? Have you got an experience in working in a similar environment? What kind of advantages and disadvantages can you identify?

I know the rumours about multinational HQ very well. In most cases, people, who never worked in an international environment, claim multinationalism to be an ineffective way of doing jobs. Some years ago, for example, there was a long version for the abbreviation "NATO" – "No Action, Talks Only". Several years ago, I worked in the United States with officers from 43 different nations from all over the world. It was not always easy, but in the end the results of the work were better than from only one nation. I am convinced that the advantages of multinationalism outnumber the disadvantages by far. In a specific situation, the influence of different educations, experiences and cultures leads to more appropriate assessments of this situation and, as a consequence, to more suitable decisions. The only disadvantage that I see refers to the language capabilities of the people working together. This can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. In a standing multinational HQ like HQ MNC NE, however, where people from different nations work together on a daily basis, there is no big chance for misunderstandings.

Altogether: MNC NE can stand for "Many Nations Co-operate – Naturally Effectively!"