



Anna Galyga is interviewing Brigadier General Henryk Skarzynski, the outgoing Chief of Staff of Multinational Corps Northeast

- Anna Galyga: As your tour of duty is coming to an end, what are your feelings and impressions about working at the HQ?

BG Henryk Skarzynski: Undoubtedly, it was a privilege for me to be assigned to this post, as I had not served in international structures before. Admittedly, I held an equal post of chief of staff at the 1 Corps but only in the phase of its establishment. So when I took the post of the Chief of Staff at HQ MNC NE it was totally different. The Corps had been well-organised, had successfully passed the Intermediate Operational Capability and all efforts centred on Full Operational Capability certification. I want to stress the fact that I was well received by everyone, with no exception. We should not forget that at that time the personnel was mostly made up of representatives of the Framework Nations (Poles, Danes and Germans) and some few Partnership for Peace representatives (from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia).

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Written by AG

Friday, 15 December 2006 00:00

- What is your assessment of the multinational environment of the Corps?

When discussing multinationalism we must be aware that working in a multinational environment involves numerous challenges. The military education systems of the individual countries may serve as an example. On the one hand, the differences generate creative discussions that may produce really good results. On the other hand, initial discussions and cooperation may be difficult when you realize that you do speak of the same things but with a different approach.

English might have also been another difficulty in the cooperation. I reckon the English currently spoken at the HQ much better than back then. For that matter, the use of English, the official language of the HQ, was one of the criteria applied during the FOC. This ability was even deemed very high by the servicemen who were augmentees.

- As the Chief of Staff, what can you perceive as your biggest success during your tour of duty?

To say it as a joke, it is a success that I have survived here the three years. We have managed to establish a great team which has been able to think creatively, work hard and persistently pursue a defined goal. The credit for this goes to the entire staff. The efforts produced the successful FOC test passed in an excellent manner during the Compact Eagle exercise held in 2005. All the assessed criteria were deemed 'satisfactory without comments'.

Besides, I have been able to find some time to do sport, which was not possible before.

- Do you remember the most difficult situation during your tour of duty?

Certainly, the first couple of briefings and COS/ACOS meeting were most difficult owing to the language difficulties. Fortunately, I was received warmly and with understanding, which helped me to settle in at MNC NE relatively fast so working here has been pleasurable.

- What is your assessment of the preparedness of our HQ for the mission in Afghanistan?

I do not think that any headquarters have prepared for a mission as systematically as we have done. Admittedly, as announced previously, we were to become ISAF XI headquarters and finally we are to become part of ISAF X composite headquarters, which has reduced preparation time by half a year. Nevertheless, all the prescheduled preparations have been properly conducted, starting with team training, staff training and exercises held at the HQ and ending with reconnaissance and exercises such as the one held at Joint Warfare Centre in Stavanger. I am convinced that each regular soldier to deploy to Afghanistan is thoroughly prepared for tasks related to his post.

- Would you also like to deploy with the staff to Afghanistan?

I would like to participate in the mission. However, according to the Corps Convention, the command group is to rotate every third year. Unfortunately, the deployment falls on the final part of my tour of duty which otherwise would last until 27 January 2007. Consequently, the Corps

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Committee has decided to shorten the Corps Commander and Chief of Staff's tours of duty to 15 and 14 December 2006 respectively to allow the successors to get prepared for the mission.

- What is the significance of the mission for the future of the Corps?

The decision on the establishment of a NATO corps in the territory of the Republic of Poland and the many years' preparation process focused upon one goal – the readiness of the Corps HQ to carry out tasks given by NATO. With the presence in Afghanistan, HQ MNC NE will prove its readiness and worth. And the confirmation of the need of the Corps is the fact that it has been assigned to the mission so soon after the FOC. The NATO Headquarters has made a rotation schedule in order to equally employ all the headquarters of this level until the end of the mission, which is the achievement of the defined strategic goals and the establishment of democratic rule in Afghanistan.

- What are you going to miss most after the end of your tour of duty at the Corps?

What I am going to miss? The great people, with whom I have been working here, as well as frequent international meetings that have been very interesting and instructive.

- What are your professional plans for the future?

The Minister of Defence will decide about my professional future.

- What would you like to tell your subordinates in conclusion?

First of all, I wish to thank all for the great co-operation, kindness, patience, understanding and constructive criticism. I have learnt a lot from you, Gentlemen! Treat my successor as kindly as you have treated me. Always be creative and persistent. Anything is achievable, if not now then later. If you are friendly and kind, you will achieve the goal and fulfil any tasks.