



**Lieutenant Colonel Jarosław Przybyła, Chief of Operations Centre (OPSCEN) at the Garrison Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast explains how the centre of information works and how lessons learnt in 2007 proved to be useful in the current organisation and work of OPSCEN.**

*Sir, what is the role of the Operations Centre known as OPSCEN?*

OPSCEN is a special cell organised within the Garrison Headquarters\* structure, the aim of which is to operate as the centre of information. We are the point of contact between the Garrison Headquarters in Szczecin and our servicemen deployed to ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

The second purpose of OPSCEN is to monitor the situation in Afghanistan with a special focus on Kabul and its surrounding area. We collect the information, analyze it and disseminate it among the respective key personnel. We also monitor the situation here in Szczecin and report it back to our staff in Afghanistan.

*How do you keep this contact between the GHQ and servicemen in Afghanistan?*

There are procedures for that; we have a direct contact with the respective personnel in Kabul,

especially Brigadier General Josef Heinrichs, the highest ranking officer from Multinational Corps Northeast deployed to the mission area. We inform him about what is going on here in Szczecin and he informs us about the situation in Afghanistan so that we could spread the information out to the Command Group and Assistants Chief of Staff (ACOSes). Additionally, twice a month, General Heinrichs receives reports on our activities within the Garrison Headquarters and Family Care Centre, the training & exercise area etc. Of course, we can contact all people deployed to Afghanistan directly via telephone, NATO Secret LAN or e-mail when it is needed.

*What exactly is your role as Chief OPSCEN?*

My team consists of six persons: three officers, two non-commissioned officers and myself as a leader. Among other duties my role is to organise and monitor the work of my team. They are responsible for collecting information from different sources including the NATO Secret LAN, the Internet and media. The whole package of information is submitted to me so that I can decide which information should be spread out. In our normal working business from Monday till Friday, we organise daily OPSCEN morning updates. Informing key personnel at the HQ about the operational, social or political situation in Afghanistan on every day basis constitutes one of our main efforts. Once a week, we organise an extended briefing for our Commander, his Deputy and Chief of Staff during which I present a wide spectrum of sensitive information and assessment related to the operation in Afghanistan.

*Can you give us some examples of more exceptional situations OPSCEN had to manage?*

Fortunately not, but no news is good news in our case. We are not the team for achieving success; our focus is to be operational 24/7. We are the tool that can be used if something happens to organise a proper system of support, prepare briefings, provide assessment and analysis of the situation and inform the respective personnel.

*Sir, you have already been Chief OPSCEN in 2007 during the Corps' first deployment to Afghanistan, how would you compare OPSCEN of 2007 and OPSCEN now?*

The functions of OPSCEN and procedures we follow are the same; the difference refers to small details. For instance, we did not have so much extended Commander's update or detailed morning briefings. We have improved the organisation a little bit and incorporated more personnel into OPSCEN. We have also developed our workstations and equipment. One of the amendments to the standing operating procedures is the resignation from duties held at OPSCEN after working hours and making duty officers operational via mobile phone.

Thanks to that experience as Chief OPSCEN in 2007, I find it rather easy to perform this job now. And I do hope my superiors will also assess my performance as well as they did last time.

*Talking about the assessment, how do you assess the up-to-now performance of your cell?*

Our mission is being fulfilled and the whole team works properly following the procedures. Fortunately we have had no emergency cases so far because nothing serious happened in

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Kabul in relation to our personnel. But the challenge is to manage any information and disseminate it in a proper and timely manner so that the Commander and other HQ personnel are aware of and understand the situation in Afghanistan. For that reason we need to be operational all the time.

*How do you keep OPSCEN operational 24/7?*

During normal working hours from Monday to Friday permanent members of OPSCEN are available. After working hours, at weekends and days off, a duty officer is performing the OPSCEN job. He is obliged to be on call and keep the war diary. If needed, he is also responsible for initiating proper actions and informing me, Chief of Staff, Senior National Representatives (SNR) or ACOSes about the situation. If required, the OPSCEN can be fully operational on a very short notice.

*One of key issues for the Garrison Headquarters is to take care of families of the personnel deployed to Afghanistan, how does your cooperation and exchange of information with Family Care Centre or National Support Elements look like?*

The Family Care Centre is prepared to support families, National Support Elements are also performing a similar task following the national line of communication. OPSCEN is not obliged to contact families directly but if needed, we inform them via Family Care or SNRs and National Support Elements.

*\*Note: The Garrison Headquarters is a temporary structure which provides the minimum capabilities to tackle all tasks and missions of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast while around 130 Corps personnel have gone on the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission to Afghanistan.*