



It has been more than four months since approximately 130 personnel of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) deployed to Afghanistan for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission.

It has not been that easy. First, they needed to get accustomed to the ISAF way of life and mission reality which can be much different from what they experienced back home. They had to learn their new jobs and responsibilities, and find themselves in a new environment. They even had to adapt to high temperatures, merciless sun and dust. But they all did it and by their dedication to work they contribute to moving the ISAF operation forward, one step after another.

“It has been very hectic because the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) is very new. When I arrived here with the transition team, we had a big task getting our guys into their positions. It is very dynamic here, what we decide today might be too old to work with tomorrow but at least you learn to be flexible,” says Danish Sergeant Major Michael F., who is working at IJC. Polish Lieutenant Colonel Maciej G. often compares the ongoing deployment with the mission he took part in 2007 with the MNC NE. “I have served within the same branch so I can see the difference. I think the community was more multinational so the working style has slightly changed. We work longer than before but that probably results from the intensity of tasks assigned to IJC,” he explains.

The MNC NE staff serving at IJC as well as at the ISAF Headquarters eagerly point out things

MNC NE team still on mission

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they have learned. "You should always examine two categories: individual and group development. You gain lots of experiences as an individual that you and the headquarters you are coming from will profit from in the future. Besides, I have never cooperated with such large American community and patterns we have worked out here will definitely pay off later on during subsequent missions or other common undertakings," says Lieutenant Colonel G. "I have learnt a lot", admits German Lieutenant Colonel Claus J. who is serving at the ISAF Headquarters. "I am a logistician in Szczecin whereas here I am a military police officer. The most interesting experience is that you cooperate with so many partners, not only with servicemen at ISAF Headquarters but also Afghan partners. I already knew that the Afghans follow a different decision making process. They take so-called "shura" to give everyone the opportunity to express their point of view. This is actually quite interesting; you gather all the relevant people and it can take even days before they come up with the conclusion. It does not necessarily mean that they vote; they would rather share opinions," he explains.

Obviously, extended working hours, even up to 16 hours, are an inevitable element of the mission. It is difficult to find time to relax; most servicemen are keen sportsmen so they train a lot. The rest of their free time is devoted to contacting the families. They also miss things they usually have back home: "Just to be back in Szczecin and see how the grass and trees are green," says Sergeant Major F. explaining that he can only see mountains or sand in Kabul. And if there is a sand storm, it is only sand. No wonder that he dreams about putting on some civilian clothes and going barefoot into the garden just to feel the grass. Lieutenant Colonel J. admits he would also eagerly go for a walk with his wife and have a glass of wine since there is a no-alcohol policy at the camp.

But all these dreams must wait until important mission tasks are completed. "I do not think there will be much different," says about the next two mission months Lieutenant Colonel J. Also Sergeant Major F. thinks the remaining months will be similar. A lot of servicemen scrupulously count days till the end of the mission. "But this way the time passes slower," laughs Lieutenant Colonel G. and goes back to work. After all, there is still much to do.