



Rear admiral Piotr Stocki commenting on the cooperation between Territorial Defence Force and non-military state security units

On June 19, 2017 Warsaw Institute for Strategic Initiatives hosted a conference entitled “The Form of Territorial Defence Force - Programme for Development of Polish Defence Capabilities”. The discussion encompassed the tasks, training, organisational structure and equipment for the Territorial Defence (TDF). The representatives of TDF (including gen Wieslaw Kukula) devoted most of their speeches to the creation of TDF and anticipated military operations. Currently, such arrangement of the priorities is understandable, as the Force is at an early stage in its service. TDF units will serve, most importantly, as a military force, thus the military aspect of its duty is the most important. Nonetheless, it worthwhile to look onto the other, significant duties awaiting the Force.

One of TDF’s future objectives is the cooperation with non-military institutions, mainly to assist in case of natural disasters and other events involving crisis management, including hostile actions of hybrid character. Taking that into account, TDF appears to be a valuable partner for the Polish Border Guard (PBG) in various border protection assignments. During the events in Ukraine in 2014, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine had lost the control over selected border parts, namely the sea region of Crimea, the Kerch Strait, the Sea of Azov, and the land border in Donbass. In that situation, the state of Ukraine was unable to control the movement across the border, including the transport of people, armaments and explosives. The conflict was analysed by PBG with the aim of preventing similar issues in Poland, and if not prevented, solving them. PBG was created in 1991 to perform police and administrative tasks, which is why it was equipped primarily with personal weapons. Automatic guns were assigned to border guard security departments and border guard watercraft units (Heavy Machine Gun 12,7 mm and PK 7,62 mm). The training scheme was also adjusted to the specific unit model and

its duties. That is why, facing new threats, the BG command ordered to supply border posts with automatic weapons, carry out shooting practice and coordinate action with local Polish Army units. Some elements of the coordination were integrated into the scenario of last year’s Anaconda-16 Exercises. Nevertheless, PBG was aware that, should hybrid action on a scale known from Ukraine occur, border guard resources would not be enough to counter the threat. Assistance from regular army units could be limited due to occupation with other tasks in distant locations. Hence, TDF units deployed on a county level (similarly as the PBG) are likely to be of significant value to PBG, particularly in the first stages of the conflict. The key parameter will be the operational readiness of TDF in comparison to regular army. The army, discharged from border duties, would be able to fully devote to its main responsibilities and, if possible, assist the border guard in later operations.

The second significant objective of TDF that appeared during the conference was assistance in crisis events, such as natural disasters. One could notice that relevant governmental institutions perceive TDF to be a valuable support in large scale and long term rescue missions. An example of such operation could be the 2010 Central European floods, when a number of uniformed services were deployed to help. One of them was Maritime Border Guards Branch, which managed to provide 5 inflatable boats with full crew and off-road vehicles within 4 hours from the delivery of the order. This kind of action requires numerous crew that can rotate and rest when necessary. Hence, according to Ryszard Jakubczak’s (Police Academy in Szczytno) definition, TDF could be an important “military input in a non-military service”. The American National Guard is a natural example to follow.

In my opinion, to ensure TDF effectively participates in similar actions, it is crucial to establish regulations allowing the use of means and personnel as quickly as

possible. Moreover, the training of TDF's command (on company, battalion and brigade level) will be essential to successful cooperation with non-military forces (State Fire Service, Police Force, municipality and county crisis management centres). Although the operations described in the first part of the article require combat training of an individual TDF soldier and a military training of the regular command, complex rescue missions will demand cooperation skills from the top leadership of TDF. The command is aware of that, and col. Kocanowski, the commander of Podlasie TDF Brigade, noted that comparing his previous service in mechanised brigade, in TDF much more focus is put on broader contact with non-military institutions.

Concluding the conference, the discussions encompassed mainly organisational and strictly military issues. Despite that, non-military cooperation should not be ignored. Given the last 20 years, Poland has experienced considerably more natural disasters, than direct military operations. One should be aware, that not all of TDF's functions can be prepared within the next few weeks. The preliminary period before the certification, planned by the command for 3 years, is a challenge. We have not yet found out whether it's going to be a success as well.