

# Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in International Operations

## – Legal Grounds, Strategic Considerations, and Practical Implementation

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Armed conflicts are still a means of resolving disputes in international relations. They have both internal (within the state, although impacting their external environment) and external dimensions. Furthermore, they are initiated for a variety of reasons (including political, territorial, ethnic, religious, economic, and others). This requires the international community to take a number of actions (including military ones) to their overcome and diffuse conflicts. It also requires to take part in the later undertakings of stabilization and reconstruction of post-conflict regions. Poland takes part in these activities. Polish troops have participated continuously in international operations since 1953. However, the nature and type of tasks performed by the Polish military contingents over the years have changed. This article will present the legal bases for the participation of the Polish armed forces in operations outside the country. It will consider the aims and objectives of strategic actions in international operations. Conclusively, it will present the practical dimension of the involvement, including the missions already completed and those currently being conducted.

### Legal grounds

The deployment of Polish armed forces in missions outside the country is governed by the Act dated 17 December 1998, concerning the principles of the use or stay of Polish armed forces outside the country (Journal of Laws No. 162, position 1117, as amended). The legislation specifies two forms of engagement of the Polish Armed Forces outside the country – **use** and **stay**. Article 2 of the Act specifies that the use of armed forces outside

the country means the presence of military units outside its borders to participate in:

- a) Military conflicts or to strengthen the forces of the country and its allies,
- b) Peacekeeping missions,
- c) Action to prevent acts of terrorism and their consequences.

While the stay of armed forces outside the country allows the presence of military units outside its borders to participate in:

- a) Training and military exercises,
- b) Rescue, search or humanitarian issues,
- c) Representative undertakings.

Most importantly, the law outlines and governs the decision making process for the deployment of Polish military contingents participating in missions outside its borders. It takes into account essentially the power of the President of the Republic of Poland, and that of the Council of Ministers. In accordance with Article 3 of the Act, the use of military units outside the country is to be decided upon by the President of the Republic of Poland, at the request of the Council of Ministers – in the case of planned involvement of Polish Armed Forces in armed conflict, to support allies, or in peacekeeping missions. Alternatively, at the request of the Prime Minister – in the case of planned involvement of the Polish Armed Forces in actions to prevent acts of terrorism or their consequences. The decision specifies: the size of the contingency, the duration of its use, and the territory of its operation.

It should be noted that Parliament only has negligible involvement in this process. Article 3 Point 2 of the Act indicates that Marshals of the Sejm (Lower House of Polish Parliament) and Senate should immediately be informed of the President's decision. The Act does not require approval of the Sejm for the engagement of Armed Forces. It even doesn't require the opinion of Parliament in this matter.

The decision-making solutions outlined in the Act have both advantages and disadvantages concerning the participation of armed forces in international operations.

Undoubtedly, the main advantage is the ability to quickly carry out the whole process. Preparation and acceptance of the proposal by the Council of Ministers, and on this basis, the issue of an appropriate decision by the President of the Republic of Poland may be achieved efficiently, in a short time. An example of such action can be seen in the recent process of extending the presence of the Polish Military Contingent in the European Union

mission EUFOR, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The application to the President to extend the use of the Polish Military Contingent in the European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, for the period from 21 November 2010 to 18 November 2011, was passed by the Council of Ministers on 9 November 2010<sup>1</sup>. The relevant decision was signed by the President of Poland on 19 November 2010, and published the same day (the Official Gazette of the Republic of Poland of 2010, No. 87 item 1016). The entire decision making process took 10 days. During that time a number of bureaucratic procedures, required by Polish law, were followed:

1. The Council of Ministers accepts at a meeting (although in some cases it could be in the form of a circular) the application of extension from the National Defence Minister.
2. The acceptance of the application by the Council of Ministers is sent (with the signature of the Prime Minister) to the President.
3. On the basis of the application to the Council of Ministers, the Chancellery of the President agrees and draws up a draft decision. Selected organizational units of the Chancellery of the President (including the Legal and Legislative Office) participate in this process, along with the National Security Bureau.
4. A draft decision is developed and sent to the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, to be submitted to the Prime Minister to countersign.
5. The Prime Minister countersigns the draft decision.
6. The countersigned draft decision is again referred to the President's Chancellery in order for it to be submitted for the signature of the President.
7. The President of the Republic of Poland signs the decision.
8. The signed decision is sent to the Prime Minister's Office in order to have it published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Poland (MP).
9. The decision is published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Poland.

The actual time of the publication of the decision in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Poland is of particular importance. Upon announcement the decision comes into force, which is stated in the last paragraph of each decision.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.premier.gov.pl/rzad/decyzje\\_rzadu/decyzje\\_z\\_dnia/date:20101109/](http://www.premier.gov.pl/rzad/decyzje_rzadu/decyzje_z_dnia/date:20101109/)

Another positive element introduced by the Act of 17 December 1998, concerning the principles of use or stay of the Polish Armed Forces outside the country, was the authorization of the President's decision-making process. This was particularly appropriate as in accordance with Article 126 Point 2 of the Constitution, the President stands guard over the sovereignty and security of the state and the inviolability and integrity of its territory. Also, on the basis of Article 134 Point 1, the President is the Supreme Commander of the Polish Armed Forces. These two points put the President in a special position when it comes to matters related to security of the country and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. As a result of this, it is required and understandable to include the President in the decision-making process. The legal solution should be created to require the President to issue the relevant decisions. It is crucial to determine the mutual interdependence of the President and the Council of Ministers in deciding whether to use the Polish Armed Forces in operations outside the country. The whole process becomes more objective and transparent, yet contains an element of peer review. The President alone cannot issue a decision. The President acts at the request of the Council of Ministers. The latter, on the other hand, must take into account the standpoint of the President in formulating their proposals.

The present Act has replaced the earlier practice of deploying the Polish Armed Forces to participate in missions outside the country, only on the decision of the Council of Ministers<sup>2</sup>. The legal ground when restricted only to the decision of the Council of Ministers was deemed inadequate. It failed to involve other executive and legislative structures.

However, the Act contains a number of shortcomings. A particularly prominent failing is the lack of the need to obtain consent, or even the opinion, of the Sejm for the involvement of Polish armed forces in missions. It could be indicated that the requirement of approval or opinion of the Sejm could lengthen the decision-making process. The process would then also depend, for example, on the parliamentary timetable. One could only imagine a situation in which the decision for the involvement of the Polish

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that in 1998 an episode was enforced, intended solely for the validity of the 1998 Act of 19 February 1998 on the Principles of Using the Armed Forces outside the Republic of Poland in 1998, Polish law, as it was said in the justification was "a result of the special situation caused by the response to Resolution 678 of the Security Council of the United Nations and accepted by representatives of the Council of Ministers of the occurrence of the United States of America on a possible intervention in the Persian Gulf."

Armed Forces would not be taken due to a recess of parliament. In a case where time plays a significant role, there could be a situation where the deployment of forces would not be executed on time. Hypothetically, the situation could arise where there could be a need for the involvement of the EU Battle Group, under which Poland serves as a framework nation (for example the Weimar Battle Group, which will be fully operational from the beginning of 2013). The lack of approval or opinion of the Sejm would make it impossible to carry out the operation. These problems can be solved by including in the Acts the requirement of the Sejm to urgently assemble to gain consent or opinion.

It should be noted that the inclusion of Polish Parliament in the decision making process is especially desirable in the situations where the terms of the involvement of the Polish armed forces are in the operations of war. As pointed out by Stanisław Koziej “for the operation of a direct war, there is even a constitutional duty for Parliament to participate in decision-making”<sup>3</sup>. It would be worth revising current rules for military operations to enable the opinion of the Sejm to be sought prior to the President and government coming to a decision on the issue of war. In practice, this refers to the case where it intends to send the Armed Forces as subordinates to international (allied or coalition) command, without imposing any restriction on the scale, nature, time and place of their use (as is now taking place in Afghanistan)<sup>4</sup>.

A classic example illustrating this problem was the involvement of the Polish Military Contingent in operations of a “coalition of the willing” led by the United States. Its objective was to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. This operation had a purely military character. The legal grounds for the Polish Military Contingent’s participation in this operation was the Decision of the President of Poland, dated 17 March 2003. It concerned the use of the Polish Military Contingent (in the composition of the Joint Multinational Operations Forces of the International Coalition) deployed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of Bahrain and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, State of Qatar, State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq and in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Indian Ocean (MP 2003 No. 14 item 200). In the President’s Decision, justification to undertake

<sup>3</sup> Koziej, S., Wojsko za granicą tylko za zgodą Sejmu (Armed Forces to Go Abroad Only With the Acceptance of the Sejm), in: Rzeczpospolita, 14.09.2009

<sup>4</sup> as above

the operation is shown in the UN Security Council Resolution 1441 and related earlier resolutions. It is worth noting, there is still a dispute, among experts of international law, whether the resolution was sufficient enough to justify the military action in this operation. It remains ambiguous whether the operation against the Saddam Hussein regime had the appropriate international mandate. Therefore, it should have been even more desirable to obtain the consent or opinion of the Sejm concerning the deployment of the Polish Military Contingent for the military operation<sup>5</sup>. On the eve of the commencement of operations in Iraq, the Sejm did hold a debate on the issue. However, the position presented by delegates was not binding.

The problem of financing the participation of Polish military contingents in missions outside the country should also be considered.

Law Article 9 Clause 1 Point 3 – indicates that the Council of Ministers needs to define a detailed set of rules and procedures for the financing of the preparation and operation of military units. This should also include the provisions on public finances.

The Council of Ministers' decision concerning this, dated 8 April 2008, indicates in Clause 2 that the expenses associated with the preparation and operation of military units outside the country are financed from the budget of the Ministry of National Defence (Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 62 item 389). Therefore, when there is a need for a decision on the participation of Polish military contingents in international operations (which was not previously planned or outlined in the annual defense budget), the funds for the implementation of the mission must be generated from savings in other areas of the defense budget. In general, as a result of this, it is at the expense of funding for the technical modernization of the Polish armed forces. This in turn creates a slowdown in the technical modernization process. This factor should be taken into account considering that the Polish armed forces technologically lag behind to NATO's top military forces. It would be a more appropriate solution to create a separate state budget to cover the expenditure related to the involvement of Polish military contingents (and also other contingents – e.g. Police), for operations outside the country. In this case the defense budget, particularly the modernization budget, would be relieved and free from the possibility of the emergence of unexpected

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<sup>5</sup> More information about the legal basis for the involvement of Polish troops in Iraq can be found in the analysis prepared by the Bureau of Research of the Chancellery of the Sejm: Mróz, M., Podstawy prawne obecności polskiego kontyngentu wojskowego w Iraku (The Legal Basis for the Presence of Polish Troops in Iraq), October 2004, No. 1069.

expenses. Additionally, policy makers would need to consider the financial aspect when deciding on the time and scale of involvement.

## **Strategic objectives**

A Strategy for the participation of the Polish armed forces in international operations was adopted by the Council of Ministers at a meeting on 13 January 2009<sup>6</sup>. This was at the request of the Minister of National Defence. The adoption of the Strategy reflects an intention to define clear strategic objectives that Poland should strive to achieve through the forces' participation in such operations.

Accordingly, the Strategy assumes that the top priority when deciding to participate in an international operation will have an institutional factor. The operations conducted by NATO and the European Union explicitly have priority. As a result, Poland will become increasingly important within both organizations. At the same time, the Strategy indicates that the decision to participate in an international operation does not require authorization in the form of a UN Security Council mandate (although this authorization should be desirable).

The optimal level of commitment of Polish armed forces outside the country at any one time is also written in the Strategy. This ranges between 3,200 and 3,800 soldiers and military personnel. This number allows the achievement of specific objectives, yet should have no negative impact on maintaining adequate levels of defense capability for the state.

Indicated in the Strategy the main objectives of the Polish armed forces participation in international operations are:

- Defense of national interests against external threats (through the elimination of sources of crises, and the diffusion of conflicts), which are both near and far from the strategic surroundings of the Republic of Poland;
- Building a stable security environment;
- Reinforcing the institutions and organizations of international security;
- Fulfillment of allied commitments by strengthening bilateral and multilateral military, and non-military cooperation with allies, coalition members, and partners; and

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<sup>6</sup> Strategy text: [www.koziej.pl/files/Strategia\\_misji.doc](http://www.koziej.pl/files/Strategia_misji.doc)

- Prevention of humanitarian disasters and the containment of human rights violations.

Importantly, the Strategy indicates the need for a comprehensive approach to international missions. In order to achieve its objectives, in particular missions, only military involvement is deemed insufficient. It must be supplemented, in parallel, with political, economic or social activities Defence Minister Bogdan Klich, pointed this out on the eve of the document's acceptance, "Strategy is to be a road map, which sets out the course of the Polish commitment"<sup>7</sup>.

The earlier practice of Polish involvement in international operations was not based on clearly defined principles. Often decisions were the result of current policies, and they were ad hoc rather than being based on strategic interests. Stanisław Koziej pointed out that the Strategy of the commitment of Polish armed forces in international operations should not be a one-off document. It should form an important part of a broader military strategy<sup>8</sup>. Although a new National Security Strategy was accepted in 2007, such document has yet to be prepared.

Doubts arise concerning the expressed priority of participation of the Polish armed forces in missions led by NATO and the European Union. The missions of these organizations do not translate directly to the implementation of Polish national interests, and strategic objectives. It is idealistic to presume that other members would match the Polish contribution and participation in NATO and EU missions. Other allied countries are realistic when making decisions concerning their involvement (or lack of involvement) in a given mission, not idealistic.

Subsequently, it can be seen in practice that the principles embodied in the Strategy for the participation of the Polish armed forces in international operations (following just 3 years' existence) have often been overlooked. For example, in this time NATO (March to October 2011) successfully carried out the operation "Unified Protector" in Libya. Poland provided only political support to the mission. It decided against taking direct part, for which it was openly criticized by the U.S. Secretary of Defense, during the meeting

<sup>7</sup> <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/wydarzenia/artykuly/135325,nie-chcemy-byc-tylko-tu-gdzie-pozwala-onz.html>

<sup>8</sup> Koziej, S., Nowa strategia MON – stawianie wozu przed koniem (New Strategy of the Ministry of National Defence – Putting the Cart Before the Horse), <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/kat,1342,title,Nowa-strategia-MON---stawianie-wozu-przed-koniem,wid,10721919,wiadomosc.html>

of NATO Defence Ministers, held on 8-9 June 2011 in Brussels<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, Poland has decided not to participate in the Anti-Piracy Naval Operation off the coast of Somalia, led by the European Union. Even though this takes place in the same waters as the main marine transport route linking Europe and China.

## Practical Implementation

Since 1953 the Polish Armed Forces have been permanently engaged in international operations. Polish soldiers have performed tasks in approximately 70 international missions. Over a period of more than 69 years, almost 100,000 soldiers have served. All along the Polish involvement has evolved significantly. The following section will discuss only a selection of those missions. This is due to the wide variety of roles undertaken. Those missions that are discussed below illustrate the evolution of the Polish approach to its involvement in international operations.

Czesław Marcinkowski highlights 6 consecutive, clearly defined stages of Polish armed forces participation in international missions (operations)<sup>10</sup>:

- Stage One (1953-1975) – Polish Army officers participated in the International Control Commissions (Indochina region);
- Stage Two (1975-1990) – the first compact units of the Polish Army, in particular logistics units, were involved in peacekeeping missions (operations) in the Middle East;
- Stage Three (1991-1992) – for the first time, units of the Polish Army formed part of the peacekeeping operations contingent established on the basis of Chapter VII of the UN Charter;
- Stage Four (since 1992) – the commencement of participation of Polish representatives (including Police) in OSCE and EU peacekeeping missions (operations);
- Stage Five (1995-1999) – participation of operational units of the Polish Army, and Police contingents, in support of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IFOR and SFOR);

<sup>9</sup> Spiegel, P., Gates Criticizes Five Allies over Libya, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/042c1152-91ee-11e0-b8c1-00144feab49a.html#axzz1ldvc7UG7>

<sup>10</sup> Marcinkowski, C., Istota i ewolucja misji pokojowych ONZ (The Nature and Evolution of UN Peacekeeping Missions), in: Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy No. 5 (238), Warsaw 2011, pp. 18-19

- Stage Six (since 2000) – the wide ranging participation of Polish Army units and Police forces in a variety of peacekeeping missions (operations), including counter-terrorism.

Taking into account the criteria of the nature of the tasks and those tasks performed, Krzysztof Gaj and Janusz Zuziak distinguish between three groups in which Polish armed forces have been involved<sup>11</sup>. These groups of missions are:

- a) Observation;
- b) Logistics;
- c) Operational.

It seems that this classification is more reasonable since the strict splitting of the involvement of Polish military contingents into various stages should be treated conventionally. The different stages overlap and merge.

### *Korean Peninsula*

The beginning of Polish involvement in international operations after World War II, dates back to 1953. Poland at that time was invited to form the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea (NNSC). The commission consisted of four countries: two appointed by the Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army – Poland and Czechoslovakia, and two designated by the Force Commander of the United Nations – Switzerland and Sweden<sup>12</sup>. The Commission set up 20 inspection groups, each of which consisted of at least four officers from each country (the number always needed equal). In the period 1953-1955 these groups were the most active. In 1956 their activities were suspended. Initially, the Polish mission included 300 soldiers. However, with the reduction in capability of the inspection groups, and the subsequent suspension of their activities, the number of Polish personnel was reduced. From 1961, the Polish part of the Commission had consisted of about 10 soldiers. Following the democratic changes in Poland at the turn of 1989/1990, North Korea deemed that Poland had lost its neutral status, and forced

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<sup>11</sup> Gaj, K., Zuziak, J., Wojsko Polskie w międzynarodowych misjach pokojowych (1953-2011) (Polish Army in International Peacekeeping Missions (1953-2011)), in: *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* No. 5 (238), Warsaw 2011, p. 21

<sup>12</sup> Gaj, K., Zuziak, J., Wojsko Polskie w międzynarodowych misjach pokojowych (1953-2011) (Polish Army in International Peacekeeping Missions (1953-2011)), in: *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* No. 5 (238), Warsaw 2011, p. 25

the final withdrawal of Polish personnel from the Commission<sup>13</sup>. According to the Veterans Association of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions a total of 1,065 Poles were involved in the activities of the NNSC<sup>14</sup>.

### *Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia*

Further involvement of Polish troops abroad was connected to the operation of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (1954-1975). It should be noted that the ICSC in Vietnam, operated until 1973. Polish soldiers served together with soldiers from India and Canada. On the basis of the 1954 Paris agreements, the ICSC was replaced by the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS), which operated only in South Vietnam. The committee included representatives of Poland, Indonesia, Hungary and Canada. However, Canada in 1973 withdrew its contingent, which was replaced by representatives of Iran.

Saigon was seized on 30 April 1975 as a result of the offensive communist forces. They subsequently took the entire territory of South Vietnam. This resulted in the total defeat of one of the parties and brought an end to the ICCS (the defeat of one of the parties removed the basis of the continuation of the mission). Those who participated in the Commission withdrew its personnel. In total there were 1,928 Polish representatives who participated in the International Commissions for Supervision and Control in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In the International Commission of Control and Supervision in South Vietnam, 650 Polish representatives participated<sup>15</sup>.

### *Nigeria*

In the years 1968-1970 five Polish observers took part in the activities of the International Observer Group in Nigeria. The activities of this international commission differed from the previous missions in that the Nigerian government requested the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, as well as the governments (of Poland, Canada, Sweden and the UK)

<sup>13</sup> Gaj, K., Zuziak, J., Wojsko Polskie w międzynarodowych misjach pokojowych (1953-2011) (Polish Army in International Peacekeeping Missions (1953-2011)), in: Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy No. 5 (238), Warsaw 2011, p. 29

<sup>14</sup> Stowarzyszenie Kombatantów Misji Pokojowych ONZ, Polacy w służbie pokoju 1953-2003 (Veterans Association of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions, Poles in Peacekeeping 1953-2003), p. 6

<sup>15</sup> Stowarzyszenie Kombatantów Misji Pokojowych ONZ, Polacy w służbie pokoju 1953-2003 (Veterans Association of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions, Poles in Peacekeeping 1953-2003), p. 6

to direct the observers to investigate allegations of Nigerian secessionists, in the Republic of Biafra. The secessionists accused the government of genocide and mass murder. Inspections by the observers did not confirm the accusations. The Commission helped to restore stability and peace in Nigeria<sup>16</sup>.

### *Middle East*

A new stage of Polish operations outside the country was the engagement in the Middle East. Contingents of Polish troops were sent to the region. In 1973, the Polish Contingent co-founded the United Nations Emergency Force II (UNEF II). It was established under UN Security Council Resolution No. 340, with the task of monitoring the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel<sup>17</sup>. The mission of UNEF II was implemented between 1973 and 1979 and 11,699 soldiers served within the framework<sup>18</sup>. A peace agreement was signed at Camp David between Israel and Egypt on 18 September 1978, and finalized on 26 March 1979 in Washington. This peace treaty settled relations between the two countries. This allowed the possibility for the elimination of the mandate of UNEF II, which took place in 1979. An important point in the context of Polish involvement in the frameworks of UNEF II, was that the Polish Contingent (together with Canada) was asked by the UN to take over the logistical tasks. This over time has become the Polish specialty in military activities in the Middle East. The Polish contingent took on the responsibility for carrying out engineering tasks, transportation and tasks related to medical protection<sup>19</sup>.

Similar logistic tasks (and also operational tasks) have been fulfilled by Polish troops under successive United Nations missions conducted in the Middle East. Since 1974 the tasks of observation, patrol, and logistics have been carried out by the Polish Military Contingent in the Golan Heights working within the frameworks of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Forces (UNDOF). These forces were established by Resolution No.

<sup>16</sup> Gaj, K., Zuziak, J., Wojsko Polskie w międzynarodowych misjach pokojowych (1953-2011) (Polish Army in International Peacekeeping Missions (1953-2011)), in: *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* No. 5 (238), Warsaw 2011, pp. 41-44

<sup>17</sup> Wider information on the mandate of UNEF II operations, its background and statistics are on the UN website: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/uneffi.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Veterans Association of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions, Poles in Peacekeeping 1953-2003, p. 6

<sup>19</sup> Gaj, K., Zuziak, J., Wojsko Polskie w międzynarodowych misjach pokojowych (1953-2011) (Polish Army in International Peacekeeping Missions (1953-2011)), in: *Przegląd Historyczno-Wojskowy* No. 5 (238), Warsaw 2011, p. 45

350 of the UN Security Council with the task of supervising the observance of the ceasefire between Syria and Israel<sup>20</sup>. The mission of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established in March 1978, following Resolutions 425 and 426 of the UN Security Council<sup>21</sup>. Since 1992 Polish soldiers have performed the roles of medical support, logistical support and engineering missions. The UNDOF mission from 1974 to 2009 was served by almost 13,000 Polish soldiers. In the UNIFIL mission from 1992 to 2009, over 10,000 Polish soldiers participated. Based upon the previously discussed Strategy for the participation of the Polish Armed Forces in international operations, Poland decided in 2009 to withdraw its military contingents from both missions.

It has become apparent that this decision was not fully thought out. The withdrawal of Polish military contingents of UNIFIL and UNDOF operations did not lead to substantial savings for the defense budget. The participation of Polish troops in UN missions was financed primarily from the UN budget. The withdrawal weakened the prominent position of Polish troops in the Middle East and as a result, weakened Poland's influence within the structures of the UN<sup>22</sup>. It should be noted that 10 years earlier, in 1999 (data as at 31 January 1999) Poland maintained the biggest contingent (1,039 men) of all countries participating in UN missions<sup>23</sup>.

UNIFIL and UNDOF missions provided an important platform to gain experience for Polish soldiers and officers. Polish officers, in the framework of these missions, for the first time in history served as commanders of international missions. General Franciszek Gągor was the Commander of UNDOF from 2003-2004 and in 1995-1997 the UNIFIL mission was commanded by General Stanisław Woźniak.

### *The Balkans*

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc contributed to the evolution of international operations. Consequently this changed

<sup>20</sup> Wider information on the mandate of UNDOF operations, can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/undof/index.shtml>

<sup>21</sup> Wider information on the mandate of UNIFIL operations, can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unifil/index.shtml>

<sup>22</sup> Koziej, S., Przykrye skutki braku strategii wojskowej (Unpleasant consequences of non-military strategy), <http://wiadomosci.wp.pl/title,S-Koziej-przykrye-skutki-braku-strategii-wojskowej,wid,11074569,wiadomosc.html>

<sup>23</sup> A summary of numbers of soldiers involved in UN missions, broken down by country is available at [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors\\_archive.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml)

the nature of the Polish involvement within them. Irena Popiuk-Rysinska indicates that the operations of the Cold War period (so-called first-generation operations) were passive, mono-functional (focused on observing and monitoring ceasefires), military, and consensual. In the post-Cold War period a new generation of peacekeeping operations emerged. They actively pursued mandates which are multi-functional (combining elements of prevention, monitoring, controlling or diffusion of conflicts and the creation of conditions for sustainable peace), non-consensual and with civil-military relations<sup>24</sup>.

At the turn of 1989/1990 an important region in the involvement of Polish military contingents became the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Polish military contingents were involved in the many missions in the Balkans and began to take on typical operational measures associated with peacemaking, the guarantee of stability and security, and later in supporting the post-conflict reconstruction process. The contingents were involved in the mission of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), between 1992 and 1995 in the former Yugoslavia. Similar activities were associated to the activities of the Polish Military Contingent in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the IFOR mission (later renamed SFOR), and after the transfer of command by NATO to the European Union – in the mission EUFOR ALTHEA. Currently, according to the decision of the President, up to 50 soldiers and military personnel serve in this mission. Following a significant improvement in the security of the region Operation ALTHEA is slowly winding down. Similarly, active operational involvement of Polish troops took place in the KFOR mission in Kosovo. It is important to note, as part of the KFOR mission, Polish and Ukrainian soldiers conduct the activities. In the framework of the mission a joint military unit along with the Polish-Ukrainian peacekeeping battalion (POLUKRBAT) was formed to lead the mission from 2000 to 2010. Currently, in Kosovo in the operations of KFOR the Polish military contingent makes up a force of 300 soldiers and military personnel.

### *Iraq*

A particularly important moment in the activities of Polish Military Contingents in international missions was the military operation in Iraq. Poland took part in the volatile phase of the conflict, which had the objective to

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<sup>24</sup> Popiuk-Rysinska, I., Ewolucja operacji pokojowych Narodów Zjednoczonych po zimnej wojnie ('The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations after the Cold War) in Sprawy Międzynarodowe, No. 1-2/2003, pp. 10-15

overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime (previously mentioned). Later, following the cessation of military hostilities, Poland accepted the proposal from the United States to become part of the multinational stabilization force in Iraq. It took over command of the Multinational Division responsible for maintaining the stability of one of the four zones (central-south) of which Iraq was divided into. Under Polish command on 3 September 2003 the Multinational Division Center-South, took over responsibility for protecting five of Iraq's provinces: Babil, Wasit, Najaf, Al-Qadisiyah and Karbala. The division was made up of 8,500 soldiers from 22 different countries. Poland had the largest contingent of 2,500 troops, along with Ukraine and Spain. When the Multinational Division Central-South was formed, this was the first time in which such a large group of soldiers of other countries served under Polish command. As pointed out by Stanisław Koziej, thanks to its involvement, "Poland decided to be in the group of countries that have the will to take on new challenges. Undoubtedly, the military has gained many benefits. It has learned how to command a large group of multinational troops in practice, under difficult operating conditions. Poland is now in the top league of world countries with such experience and operational values."<sup>25</sup> The stabilized character of the mission evolved over time from stabilization training. Then training and advisory (although due to the deterioration of the operational situation, during the ninth and tenth changeover, it returned to the stabilization character of the mission, while maintaining the involvement of training and advice). The region of responsibility was reduced. The number of countries participating in the activities of the multinational division decreased. Also, the number of personnel involved in the Polish contingent decreased. Finally, on 4 October 2008 the formal termination of the Polish Military Contingent in Iraq took place and the last soldiers returned to the country on 28 October 2008. Only a small number remained in Iraq (approx. 20 people) to form the Polish Military Contingent in the composition of the NATO training mission – Iraq (NTM-I). At the end of 2011, NATO decided to finish conducting the training mission. The Polish soldiers who were involved were withdrawn, and returned to Poland.

### *Afghanistan*

Currently the main focus of involvement of Polish military contingents is the in mission of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in

<sup>25</sup> Koziej, S., Iracka lekcja (Lessons of Iraq), Polska Zbrojna, No. 48/2008, p. 28

Afghanistan. Poland initially did not participate in the ISAF operation (established in December 2001), it focusing on the activities carried out in parallel as part of the Operation Enduring Freedom (launched in October 2001, after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon). Poland joined the operation in March 2002, with a force of about 120 soldiers. This situation lasted until 2007 when, under the pressure of NATO allies, Poland increased its quota of soldiers to 1,200 under the entire command of ISAF. In subsequent years, the quota increased to the 2,600 troops (in 2010 and 2011).

By 2008, the Polish Military Contingent forces in Afghanistan were spread over several provinces. To maximize the effect of its involvement Poland decided to concentrate all its forces in the Ghazni province. In parallel it was decided to take over the responsibility for security of the province which is located in a difficult area of eastern Afghanistan (assuming such responsibility took place on 30 October 2008).

It is worth pointing out that three Ukrainian Doctors served in the Polish military contingents in Afghanistan, which complemented the latter due to the Poles' shortcomings in medical service.

The process of transfer of responsibility to local authorities has commenced due to the commitments made during the NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010, together with the decision for the termination of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan until 2014. In adapting to these decisions, Poland has its own strategy for its engagement in the Afghanistan operation. The gradual reduction of the quota of Polish troops commenced late 2011. Currently, in accordance with the applicable decision of the President, 2,500 troops and military personnel are present in Afghanistan. There will also be change to the nature of the mission, from stabilization to training and advisory. The complete termination of the Polish Military Contingent in Afghanistan is scheduled for the end of 2014.

## Conclusion

The involvement of Polish military contingents in missions outside the country is the expression of responsibility and accountability of Poland in the international arena. Poland has become a "provider" rather than "consumer" of security. This commitment brings with it particular benefits in the military sphere. It allows gaining experience in conducting real

operations. It directs the process of technical modernization of armament and military equipment, and on the basis of experience it perfects processes and training programs. However, in particular it has created a change in mentality of Polish soldiers and officers.

The involvement of Polish military contingents should be used for the benefit in other areas, particularly in political and economic life. The first involves a shift in the thinking about international operations. They are currently perceived through a prism of purely military operations. A new comprehensive approach is needed which takes into account non-military factors and components of operations.

The Polish Armed Forces have paid for their deployments in missions abroad with the blood of its soldiers. Together, these operations have claimed the lives of 112 Polish soldiers and military personnel.

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