

POLISH MILITARY POLICE SPECIALIZED UNITS

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IN TODAY'S POLAND, as in most European countries, there is no fear of armed aggression from neighboring states. There is, however, clear and present danger of a terrorist threat. The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are indicative of this threat and point to the changed state of affairs at the turn of the new century. Subsequent terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and other countries reinforce the notion that in today's world no one can feel completely safe. Consequently, many states have readjusted their defense strategies and adopted a new approach towards terrorism. Creation of specialized units for antiterrorist prevention tasks is one of a variety of measures currently underway by many nations to meet the new security exigencies. In 2004-2005, Poland took the lead in this effort by creating three military police specialized units (MPSUs).

MPSU Force Specifics

In creating Poland's MPSUs, planners made the following assumptions based on NATO requirements:

- Units must be equipped and established at relatively low cost.
- All personnel have to be fully trained and professional.
- Training, equipment, and armament must be adequate for anticipated needs (similar to that of special operations forces and civilian special police units).
- Units must be highly mobile and able to deploy rapidly into a theater of operation.
- Unit employment requires proper legal police authority.
- Organizational structure should allow for modularity.

The MPSUs are fitted with standard and special police equipment, light weaponry (to include machine guns), modern emergency vehicles designed for anticipated needs, and basic vehicles (Land Rovers, Polish-made Boar II armored patrol vehicles, all-terrain command vehicles, and others) for transporting the basic six-man modular unit. Some MPSU sub-units are equipped with smooth-bore shotguns, antitank grenade launchers, and sharpshooting rifles. Acquisition of electronic weapons is planned. Possession of nonlethal weapons is one important factor that distinguishes MPSUs from regular military units.

Military police specialized unit modularity gives commanders the flexibility to create smaller units that can be tailored to fit a specific mission or operation. As noted, the basic module is a 6-man section, with a platoon of 30 MPs being comprised of 5 such sections. In task organizing an MPSU force for a particular mission, existing elements (section, platoon, company,

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PHOTO: Military policeman from Warsaw Specialized Unit in Congo.

(All photos courtesy of author)

and battalion) can be used, or several modular components can be mixed together.

Recruitment for these specialized units is accomplished through careful selection of candidates from the territorial MP units, Army units, and the Reserves. Selection criteria are delineated in a separate ministerial decision. All candidates must be at least 175 centimeters in height, in good health, and enjoy a good reputation in their area of residence. Candidates must qualify in English, be physically fit, and have the right psychological profile. Although there are many candidates for the specialized units, frequently dozens for one slot, the demanding criteria results in a low selection rate.

One military police specialized unit is already active—at Gliwice, in southern Poland—and it is the only operational NATO unit of such a type. Two of the units are in the training and development phase. The units currently employ a total of 1,500 well-trained, thoroughly professional military police (MP) personnel, but it is expected that the units will soon reach their target number of 2,000 MPs. Poland, as the “lead nation” working alongside the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Croatia, will create more such units, all of which will meet NATO standards.

MPSU Training

Military police specialized unit training is divided into three consecutive six-month periods. Instruction is intended to prepare Soldiers in a high tempo environment to perform police-related tasks, to include—

- Conduct patrols.
- Escort convoys.
- Control vehicles and persons.
- Participate in pretrial procedures.
- Secure accident sites and crime scenes.
- Conduct prophylactic and preventative activities.
- Capture and seizure of perpetrators (including armed criminals).
- Search for extremely dangerous criminals.
- Provide security at VIP functions.

Special MPs must also be trained to undertake tasks to combat terrorism. To prevent or respond to land-based acts of terrorism, such tasks would include intelligence gathering; securing and cordoning off incident scenes, organizing detours, and similar missions; and securing persons and facili-



Military Police Specialized Unit trainees practice apprehending a criminal.

ties. In the case of airborne acts of terror, MPSUs need to be trained to conduct observation and intelligence gathering, secure aviation-incident sites, perform pretrial processing tasks, and participate in land-sweeping operations and other antiterrorism actions. During epidemic emergencies or the aftermath of biological, radiological, or chemical acts of terrorism, MPSU tasks would be similar, and the three units will train appropriately. To prepare for both such scenarios, training requires MPs to conduct observation and intelligence gathering, secure an endangered facility or area, reorganize and integrate with other forces to deal with threats, and dispatch trial-related responsibilities.

Military police specialized unit members also take skill enhancement courses in administering premedical and paramedic aid, parachuting, and scuba diving. They are prepared to enter buildings and other facilities as part of hostage rescue operations, and they are trained to deal with civil unrest and to conduct riot control.

Finally, all MPSU Soldiers undergo English language training. The intention is to familiarize the soldiers with the language so that on short notice an MPSU module can be included in a larger multinational element and function there with minimal impediment. This training is heavily emphasized, and all officers are expected to have very good command of English.

MPSU Employment

Given this training, equipment, and force structure, the MPSUs are ready to carry out the following duties—

- Conduct public law and order functions, such as preventive actions (which could involve the use of non-lethal weapons) that produce immediate results in the area of public safety and general order.

- Perform area of operations control tasks characterized by continuous MP presence in crucial locations. This presence requires them to monitor and verify security conditions, ensure compliance with signed agreements, and maintain and update databases dedicated to security and law-and-order issues.

- Direct counter-terrorism actions.

- Search for persons suspected of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, terrorist acts, and other persons who constitute a threat to a given operation or to their own forces.

- Gather information (intelligence) based on contacts with local population and law and order institutions and collect information concerning security, local conditions, and crime levels.

In the performance of these duties, military police specialized units can be activated under the following five configurations:

- As a full or scaled-down force (with appropriate equipment) with its own command and control element when needed to independently perform a designated task.

- As scaled-down elements or units when needed to execute peacekeeping and stabilization missions under UN, NATO, or EU aegis, or within the Polish military contingent of a given operation. In this

case, missions must be specific to enable proper tailoring of units and elements. Independent formation of military police contingents is possible under this rubric.

- As sub-elements of a predetermined size (in similar fashion as above) to execute tasks when needed within the framework of national tactical forces or as a component of multinational MP units (in accordance with NATO's directives for the armed forces) and other international obligations.

- As operational modular formations when required to organically support regional MP units.

- As sub-elements (again, in similar fashion to the above configuration) when needed to support police forces in a crisis or other emergency.

In accord with NATO standards, the MPSU concept in Poland entailed creating mobile units with state-of-the-art training and equipment. Such units could not only support foreign missions, but also augment police activities within Poland when conditions required a greater crisis response than domestic police forces could muster. According to Article 18 of the Police Act, the prime minister has the authority to use military police within Poland if regular police forces cannot accomplish a given task. In other words, the military police have authority to intervene not only where military personnel are concerned, but also when civilians are implicated. Operational command, however, would always rest with the civilian police.

In summary, how the MPSUs will eventually be used will depend on the actual mandate of each mission. Entire units could be deployed, or the force could be structured in a modular form to fit the particular conditions.

MPSUs Used as Contingents in Crisis Areas

Besides their role in domestic and multinational anti-terrorism, MPSUs can also meet the increased need to deploy police-type military forces into crisis-torn areas throughout the world for peace enforcement and stability operations.

Experience in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, and the Middle East has shown beyond dispute that operations conducted in those areas can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase includes massed deployment of all available forces, particularly heavy fighting equipment, to overcome any



MPSU anti-terrorist training in NATO environment.

resistance. Labeled “forcing the peace,” this phase may involve armed combat reminiscent of war. As fighting trails off, a stabilization phase ensues, and the number of monitoring and control-type activities increases. This phase, “peace-building,” is characterized by initial cooperation with local authorities, the police, and elements of the indigenous armed forces. It is dominated by efforts to identify and reinforce governmental institutions and other structures responsible for security and to neutralize any threats to the new order. The third phase, “keeping the peace,” is generally the longest in duration. It is characterized by the presence of multinational forces in the conflict region monitoring peace agreements, delivering humanitarian aid, and training host-nation police, military, and border guards. Other tasks involve securing persons and property and maintaining law and order in the event of civil unrest.

During the first phase, military police forces are present in small numbers and provide only tactical police support functions. During the second and third phases, however, the military police role increases rapidly. In phase two, MP units perform their tasks independently or alongside military forces. They coordinate with and complement the activities of local police and other international MP elements. In phase three, the MPSUs execute standard law-enforcement tasks. During this phase, and especially after authority is transferred to local governments, the challenges point explicitly toward greater deployment of military police forces.

Since operational deployment of MPSUs in phase three-type peacekeeping and stabilization operations entails their involvement in actions outside of Poland, they would function as formations specifically configured to provide the force commander with police support in the theater. As such, their organizational structure, training, and general preparedness, in combination with their operational capabilities, would be in accord with NATO’s military police doctrine.

With respect to allied forces, NATO doctrine assumes that the national forces will include military police elements that remain under the command of their units. It also gives the overall force commander the responsibility for assigning multinational units a task on behalf of the entire force. In other words, it is up to the force commander to request specialized

units to meet anticipated and materializing needs for MPSUs. Such units will deploy as integral elements not diluted by augmentation from other units. The inherent teamwork capabilities of the fully trained MPSU would be degraded if the unit structure were to be violated.

In the region where a NATO-led multinational operation is underway, MP activities are based on standards defined by STANAG 2226 (Standard Agreement NATO), APP 12—Military Police Doctrine and Procedures. Otherwise, generally accepted guidelines established by the UN or the EU are followed.

Current potential of MPSUs allows for the following forms of operational usage on foreign missions—

- As an independent unit performing tasks at the behest of the commander of allied or coalition forces. The unit, at the same time, comprises the Polish military contingent. Such was the case in 2006 in Congo, where the MPSU comprised an independent contingent in Kinshasa, under the command of an MP officer. The contingent was under the authority of the French commander of multinational forces in Congo.

- As a separate force within the Polish military contingent, as a national MP component. The best example is the MP contribution (15 per cent of the force) in the Polish contingent of the Operation Enduring Freedom mission in Afghanistan.

- As a component within a multinational MP unit, present on every mission. A small number of MP soldiers would be present as a modular formation in multinational platoons and companies.



Polish military policeman talking with children in Afghanistan.

- As an MPSU performing control tasks in the area of operation, under direct oversight of the force commander. A good example is the EUFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since 2006, the operational MPSU has taken over the mandate from a land forces unit.

Conclusion

I am the author of the military police specialized unit concept in Poland, and the creator of the units themselves. Working formerly as the commander-in-chief of the military police, I spent numerous hours in discussions with commanders of various military formations from different countries. I have observed the activities of military contingents in

most missions across the world, and I am convinced that in the years to come, the necessity to deploy units such as Poland's MPSUs will increase.

As the experience from various conflicts has shown, wherever conditions permit, it is better to persuade, stabilize, and reinforce, than to overcome. Employment of non-lethal weapons and forms of conduct typical for military police are the way of the future.

Bloodshed always leads to retaliation, and death leads to more death. Therefore, it is better to detain, to arrest, to control, to negotiate and to mediate, than it is to shoot, providing that conditions allow for such an approach. The military police specialized units are ideally suited for this role. **MR**

TALK VERSUS DO

Operational theories of design translated into practical applications, or not.

The journey versus the destination.

Which is more important you ask?

Well, how much time do you have?

Balancing the task,

talk versus do.

and do versus talk.

Please, don't concern yourself with time,

until you see you have no time.

Of course, by then it may prove too late.

So discourse and inquire

as if you have nothing to lose.

Deliberate and dialogue

to your very hearts desire.

Peer through that Clausewitzian fog

and examine that infinite potential.

See? There's really not that much to lose.

Explore fully that which may be inconsequential.

and ignore the tendency to do.

See? There's not so much to lose.

Only,

maybe, just maybe

that small difference,

that small sum,

inconsequential really,

which may be measured

twixt failure and victory

and quite often occurs

when the talk overtakes the do.

—Major Edward Lee Bryan, School for Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS