

POLAND'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GHAZNI PROVINCE IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN IN THE ASPECT OF TASKS CARRIED OUT BY THE PRT SPECIALISTS TEAM OF THE POLISH MILITARY CONTINGENT PART 1

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Abstract

The operational activities of the PRT specialists Teams were of great importance to the achievement of military and political goals during the operation of the Polish Military Contingents. The author analyses operational tasks conducted by the soldiers and civilians of the PRT Specialists Teams, which indirectly influenced the improvement of the functioning of the Ghazni administration environment. The author emphasises the importance of the operational activity of the PRT Specialists' Teams, which determined the direction of changes resulting from the improvement of the conditions of the administration's activities, which significantly shifted into development.

Key words: PRT, ISAF, Afghanistan, civil-military cooperation

Introduction

The ongoing globalisation process manifests itself in the destabilisation of political systems, internal order and terrorism which has exposed a wide range of threats¹ and challenges². Global terrorism³, which left its mark on September 11, 2001 in

1 Threats - the elements of group of challenges whose impact on the basis, course and /or results of our actions is assessed as negative, obstructing, delaying, obliging, See.: M. Kozub, *Mysleć strategicznie o bezpieczeństwie przyszłości*, Warszawa: Printed by AON, 2013, p. 28.

2 Challenges - elements of a set of forecast events, phenomena, states, processes, etc., which the subject (organisation) should take into account in the course of designing the future. Challenges are subjectified and objectified. They should be seen as threats, but also as opportunities, See: *Ibidem*, p. 28.

3 Terrorism in all its forms poses a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries, and to international stability and prosperity. It is a persistent global threat that knows no border, nationality or religion and is a challenge that the international community must tackle together.

America, provided the impetus for a political and military operation under the code name „Enduring Freedom”⁴, aimed against terrorists in Afghanistan⁵.

Fulfilling the assumptions of Polish security policy as of March 16, 2002⁶, the first Polish component consisting of 300 soldiers⁷ joined the anti-terrorist coalition aimed at the implementation of engineering and sapper tasks. At the same time, under the UN resolution⁸, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF⁹) was set up to assist the Provisional Government in Afghanistan and to help stabilise Kabul. Subsequent years have shown that forces carrying out tasks under two parallel operations are not able to strengthen security in Afghanistan. In February 2004, as ISAF operations were extended to other regions of the country, the Polish Armed Forces started their presence in Afghanistan by separating officers into ISAF Headquarters, and then deploying a contingent of about 1,200 Polish soldiers¹⁰ in the spring of 2007. The following years saw Poland’s significant military involvement¹¹ in the global anti-terrorist campaign under the command of NATO¹² as part of ISAF.

Tasks faced by Polish soldiers under the ISAF operation in Afghanistan in the face of new challenges were closely related to operational lines that defined the objectives of the operation¹³. The country’s destabilisation was caused by the lack of

NATO’s work on counter-terrorism focuses on improving awareness of the threat, developing capabilities to prepare and respond, and enhancing engagement with partner countries and other international actors, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_77646.htm, (access 03.05.2018).

4 Operation Enduring Freedom - an operation launched on October 7, 2001, as a result of attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, against terrorists in Afghanistan. Polish soldiers began their service in Afghanistan on March 16, 2002, see: J. Matuszak, P. Przeździecki, *10 lat Wojska Polskiego w Afganistanie*, Warszawa: Printed by WCEO, 2011, p. 34-36.

5 J.Z. Matuszak, *Wojsko Polskie w Afganistanie*, Warszawa: Print WCEO, 2014, p. 42.

6 H. Królikowski, C. Marcinkowski, *Afganistan 2002*, Warszawa: Printed by Bellona, 2003, p. 35.

7 The following components formed a Polish contingent: engineering, logistic, chemical, epidemiological, special forces and a logistics ship. *Misja w Afganistanie 2007–2012 kalendarium*, Edited by B. Piekut, G. Łyko, A. Wróbel, J. Matuszak, Warszawa 2012, p. 11.

8 Resolution of the UN Security Council Resolution No 1386 as of 20 of December 2001.

9 International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan.

10 3 dislocations: 1. Polish Military Contingent Headquarter, National Support Element, maneuver battalion, Task Force - Bagram, Paktika, Gardez, Sharana, Ghazni; 2. Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT), Mobile Observation Team (MOT), a branch of the National Support Element - Mazar-E-Sharif; 3. Personnel of the ISAF Command, Regional Command „Capital”, Joint Command of Special Forces - Kabul, Kandahar.

11 Poland increased the contingent from 1200 to 1600 soldiers and military personnel before accepting responsibility for the province of Ghazni as part of the 4th Polish Military Contingent Rotation.

12 NATO formally took over command from the United Nations on August 11, 2003.

13 Security: the ability of Afghan Security Forces to independently operate in the province, preparing security forces to transfer responsibility for security, ensuring the safety of the local population, ensuring free communication on the main „economic routes”; Administration: development of powers of administration officials at provincial and district level, strengthening the ability of local authorities to improve the standard of living of the provincial population,

basic forms of administration identified with the rule of law and built the conviction of ubiquitous chaos in the structures of power, which were in a decomposed condition. It has become obvious that in order to stabilise the situation in Afghanistan, and consequently throughout the region, a comprehensive reconstruction of the state in all aspects of its functioning has become indispensable - from security, through state infrastructure, administration, to development of the economy and infrastructure. Coalition combat units carrying out the tasks of restoring security in particular regions of Afghanistan were not prepared in terms of the nature of their activities to move to the next phase of reconstruction of basic state capabilities and functions.

The administration, management of proper levels of local government and the creation of appropriate conditions for infrastructure development required the formation and implementation in all provinces of civil-military elements that, in cooperation with local authorities, had the task of rebuilding the distant provinces of Afghanistan named Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT).

The US PRT Ghazni also included, apart from the organic national elements of the US Army, Polish PRT Specialist Teams. These were subject to the implementation of specific tasks of civil-military cooperation in the field of administration and development, by the commander of PRT Ghazni. Tasks implemented during the operation in Afghanistan, which was Poland's commitment to the development process of Ghazni province, will be the subject of the research described in this article.

The aim of the undertaken research is to identify and describe the impact of the activities of Polish Teams of PRT Specialists on the objectives of the operation.

The article will be divided into two parts. The first part according to the author's intention is to find an answer to the question: *How did the tasks implemented by the PRT Team of Specialists Team influence the objectives of operations in the operating line: administration?* The second part of the article, included in one of the following issues of the magazine, will include an analysis of the impact of tasks carried out by the PRT Ghazni Specialists Team (including design activities) on achieving the objectives of the operation by Polish Military Contingent in Afghanistan on the operational line: development.

The theses contained in both parts of the article are supported by personal experiences and insights of the author who was the commander of the PRT Specialists Team fulfilling tasks in the Ghazni province as part of the 10th rotation of the Polish Military Contingent in Afghanistan.

preparing the administration to take responsibility for administrative management of the province and districts, convincing local people to positive relations with the authorities; Development: support of the authorities in creating conditions for socio-economic development, improvement of infrastructure within projects, increasing the level of development at the level of provinces and districts, preparation of administration for accepting responsibility for social and economic development of the province and districts.

Structure and tasks of the prt specialists team in the Ghazni Province

The International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, extending its responsibility to the next provinces, not only used combat subunits, but also organisational structures, called Provincial Reconstruction Teams¹⁴. These „military consortiums” were to strengthen and support the three pillars of stabilising the situation in Afghanistan: security, governance and economic development, with particular emphasis on reconstruction and development of the country¹⁵. Similarly, the Polish Armed Forces optimised functional structures in order to meet the requirements of civil-military cooperation¹⁶, creating a Team of PRT Specialists in their structures. It was a substitute for the Provincial Reconstruction Team with tasks focused on the areas of administration and development.

The PRT Specialists Team began their activities on June 28, 2008. These ended on November 26, 2013. It was part of the Polish Military Contingent, which was directly subordinated to the commander of the American PRT Ghazni.

The team was a civil-military element consisting of: a military component constituting a command group and a security team (securing the operation of specialists) as well as a civilian element (engineers, experts and specialists) bringing together representatives from various fields, including infrastructure, administration, small entrepreneurship, construction of roads and bridges, social issues, health or media¹⁷.

The operational purpose of the Team was to support the Ghazni province in the field of improving the efficiency of management and reconstruction of local administration structures, as well as infrastructure reconstruction.

The Polish PRT tasks depended on political goals aimed at helping local authorities and implementing development projects.

The main task areas of the PRT Specialists Team in the field of operational activity, were:

- monitoring the tasks implementation by the local administration and support in taking action to improve the efficiency of its operation;

¹⁴ In March 2008, the number of PRTs reached 26 under the command of 14 different nations. *Provincial Reconstruction Team Handbook, Edition: 4*, NATO, 2010, <https://info.publicintelligence.net/ISAF-PRThandbook.pdf>, p. 1 [26.06.2017].

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Civil-military cooperation is a set of undertakings involving coordination and cooperation between the military commander and civilian actors, which are understood as civilians, local authorities and international, governmental and non-governmental organisations, acting in their areas of competence and responsibility. *Doktryna współpracy cywilno-wojskowe*, Elaboration mentioned, p. 8.

¹⁷ This topic see in P.Chabielski, *Przygotowanie personelu Zespołu Specjalistów PRT*, „Przegląd Wojsk Lądowych” No 02(059) Sep 2012, p. 87-93.

- support for local authorities in achieving the ability to take full responsibility for the Ghazni province¹⁸;
- supporting local administration in effective budget planning and administration;
- support of provincial and district administrative authorities in gaining the ability to meet the basic needs of the local community;
- supporting local authorities in building their authority among the population of the province;
- complicity and coordination of activities in the process of transfer of responsibility in accordance with the “*Transition Concept*” plan by monitoring the situation in districts and meetings with representatives of the authorities¹⁹.

Operating activities

Knowledge of the broad spectrum of the functioning of the civil environment played a huge role in fulfilling the tasks. Taking under consideration the multidimensional area of the civil environment and normative documents²⁰, the operational activity included meetings, conferences, and humanitarian aid.

Meetings with local authorities were very important for building trust and a bridge between the civil and military environments, as well as for mutual reinforcement of common goals. They were implemented as part of:

- *Security Meetings* - meetings with representatives of local administration, including the governor, sub-governors, representatives of the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF²¹), and the National Department of Security (NDS²²) organised on security matters. Their aim was to assess the activities of security officials and become familiar with the situation in the province, as well as coordinating efforts to mitigate the threats in Ghazni;

¹⁸ The basis for functioning in this area was the NATO Summit in Lisbon (November 2010).

¹⁹ More on this topic see in B. Górka-Winter, B. Wiśniewski, *Afghanistan in transition: crafting a strategy for enduring stability*, Printed by PISM, Warsaw 2012.

²⁰ These are non-classified (NC) and classified (C) documents that define areas, tasks, success criteria, priority support sectors and civil-military cooperation functions. The NC e.g.: SACEUR OPLAN (Supreme Allied Commander Europe Operational Plan), COMISAF OPLAN (Commander of ISAF Operational Plan), RC-E OPORD (Regional Central-East Operational Order), the concept of Polish military contingents in Afghanistan participation in the operation of International Security Assistance Forces. The C documents e.g.: The directions of Polish involvement in Afghanistan in 2011-2014, Printed by MND, Warsaw 2011.

²¹ Afghan National Security Forces: Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), Auxiliary Police (AUP), Afghan Border Police (ABP).

²² National Department of Security.

- *Provincial Council Meetings* - meetings with representatives of local people from particular districts, during which social issues were discussed;
- *Administration Meetings* - meetings conducted with representatives of individual departments, in issues and problems concerning administration in the province;
- *University Meetings* - meetings with representatives of the agricultural university, mayor of the city of Ghazni, and director of the agriculture department, which were aimed at addressing the issues related to the functioning of the agricultural area in the province of Ghazni;
- *Shuras* - meetings with representatives of various levels of authority, elders' villages, security services and ordinary representatives of the lowest social class, in order to provide information on the safety of individual districts and to obtain information about the needs for strengthening the infrastructure²³;
- *Ad hoc meetings* with the Governor of Ghazni and city engineers concerned current affairs in the field of Ghazni province and activities creating the surface for a wider development spectrum in the entire province.

Meetings with the local administration took place in which the representatives of the PRT Specialists Team were able to identify the needs, problems and, above all, generate the conclusions necessary to create support strategies and strengthen the administration in various areas of its activity. In a short time, the results of the meetings often brought the expected results; however, due to the attitude of the representatives of the administration or security forces, they sometimes caused spontaneous disintegration of the germs of the creation of efficient structures. Lack of cohesion in the thinking of district communities with local authorities did not allow for unified and consistent pursuit of development and administrative objectives.

Meaningful results during, e.g. the University meetings, caused the reduction of Specialists Team representatives activities. Shuras were allowed not only to obtain information, thanks to which it was possible to identify the area of needs. They were often organised in order to obtain or reconstruct the trust of the population. Above all, they achieved the intended psychological effect necessary to build a common operating environment. Ad hoc meetings with the provincial governor were the most effective, supporting the whole process of planning activities of the PRT Specialists Team. On the other hand, they were the most difficult, due to the administrative, national (Polish) and international representatives and organizations - supporting the *transition* process²⁴.

²³ One such undertaking was shura with subgovernors of 9 districts organised on March 22, 2010, http://www.isaf.wp.mil.pl/pl/1_901.html (access 03.05.2018).

²⁴ The needs of the local administration and the governor were often contrary to the Polish, Afghan and international normative documents that had to be taken into account during the project implementation process. At the same time, it was not possible to plan activities without the consent of the governor. Variable decisions of the administration concerning projects often led to hard negotiations and no concessions, in the aspect of provisions of the financial law limited by time, costs and procedures.

Despite good relations with the administration of Ghazni province, the existing information gap caused by ignorance or the government's unwillingness to present the actual state budget resulted in the need to **meet representatives of the Afghan government**.

They allowed the verification of the financial activities of the administration, the governor and the mayor of Ghazni, and much easier planning of projects based on a wider group of donors²⁵. Meetings with representatives at the ministerial level took place during the 10th rotation, for instance, when close to 10 meetings were organised in close cooperation with the American part of the PRT and the US embassy, including meetings with:

- the Minister for Education, discussing budget issues and its distribution for a given year in the province of Ghazni;
- the Minister of Finance discussing the budget of Ghazni Governor and other means of co-financing the province through foundations and donors;
- the Minister of Economics, primarily addressing economic factors of economic growth in the province .

These meetings became the foundation for “creating a structure of finance flow” from the national to the local level. On the other hand, they revealed the weak point of managing funds for development, administration and security forces. Another unexpected effect was the contacts between representatives at the ministerial level with the provincial level, which accelerated the process of transferring money to individual projects from the local to the lower level and their proper use.

Representatives of the PRT Specialists' Team, planning to implement their tasks, had to take into account the areas of political involvement of elements affecting the strategic level - the *transition* process. Meetings with **representatives of diplomatic missions**, which were held directly with ambassadors or representatives of diplomatic missions, consolidated the convergence of the Team's activities with political goals, as well as directed the tasks in areas of special interest.

Examples are:

- meeting with the US ambassador in Ghazni (January 30, 2012) - the areas of the Polish Military Contingent and PRT Ghazni were presented;
- meeting with a representative of the Japanese embassy (29 February 2012) - the activities of the PRT Specialists' Team were presented and cooperation was proposed;
- meeting with the Polish ambassador in Kabul (02 March 2012) - the issues of the future of PRT and development directions in the aspect of the transition process were discussed.

Meetings with ambassadors were courteous visits rather than task-oriented visits. Conclusions after the meetings only confirmed the belief in the rightness of

²⁵ It turned out that the administration had money for a given project, the costs of which the administration wanted to impose on PRT.

the actions undertaken and their purposefulness. They were a very good example of substantive cooperation, different levels of management and command.

Meetings with non-governmental organizations operating in the region of Ghazni with the forces and means that permitted free access to reliable information²⁶, allowed for a better implementation of tasks by the PRT Specialists Team. These relationships were important because the training required very detailed data on the level of knowledge, skills and the specificity of the needs of potential beneficiaries²⁷.

One of many were:

- meeting with SADA²⁸, an organisation dealing with training in the area of alth and hygiene on January 12, 2012;
- meeting with a representative of the ACSI²⁹ organisation (02 March 2012) aimed at organising free training for the administration of the Ghazni province in the area of skilful use of the budget.

These meetings were difficult because the nature of the organisation's activities very often excluded cooperation with the army. However, common goals, often supporting the organisation in terms of ensuring security, allowed mutual benefits resulting from mutual willingness to fill gaps in the activities of each party.

Humanitarian aid in accordance with its idea³⁰ should only be provided in situations of special natural disasters, when the local government administration is not able to cope with the crisis.

However, due to the insignificant activity of such organisations in the Ghazni province and guided by the need to help people exposed to a long-term crisis, non-kinetic elements³¹, including the PRT Specialists Team, provided a total of 114 tons of medical supplies, medical equipment, hygiene products, clothing, footwear, blankets, school supplies and office supplies, as well as wheelchairs, firefighting equipment and accessories, and construction articles³².

²⁶ Among others for the sake of hiring employees from the province.

²⁷ These also allowed for the implementation of this type of training, precisely by employing organisations dealing with this in the province.

²⁸ Social Association for Development of Afghanistan

²⁹ Afghanistan Civil Service Institute

³⁰ Humanitarian aid is above all a rescue and protection of life during disasters caused by natural or human conditions, as well as (...) providing necessary assistance and support to people exposed to long-term crises and (...) overcoming difficulties related to the consequences of migration (refugees, displaced persons, repatriates) ..., www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Pomoc,humanitarna,170.html (access 03.05.2018).

³¹ Civil-Military Cooperation Support Group, S-5 of Polish Military Contingent Staff.

³² The most active social partners supporting this undertaking were: Association „Schools for Peace; Redemptoris Missio Foundation; CARITAS of the Military Ordinariate of the Polish Army; Foundation „Safety for Patients”.

A joint coalition operation named „Roxana” was also carried out to provide food transport to Malistan. In addition to helping the local population, it helped support the position of the governor of Ghazni province³³.

The conferences were another task for the Polish PRT Specialists Team. Their goals were not only to obtain information, but also to establish cooperation with representatives of governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and administration level officials.

One of the most important were:

- 25 February 2011 - *Ind Conference of local Industrial*³⁴, conducted by PRT Specialists Team aimed at contractors introducing the process of project implementation according to the expected standards of PRT engineers;
- 10 January 2012 - *Budget Summit Conference*³⁵, run by the Provincial Governor, which addressed the problems and budget issues for 2013.

The conferences, often in spite of a large commitment of forces and logistical and protective safeguards, were of great psychological, media and diplomatic success. The local media were invited to this type of undertaking that performs the „propaganda” functions, strengthening the administrative structures and security forces, which also affected the *transition* process.

The implementation of civil-military cooperation tasks by the Team of PRT Specialists in the aspect of achieving the objectives of operations in the area of administration was characterised by the systematic acquisition of “hearts and minds” of the administration and the local population. The various stages of covering the subsequent areas of local administration activities allowed three CIMIC functions to be fulfilled that focused on developing the competences of officials, strengthening local authorities’ ability to improve the local people’s living standards, convincing local people to have positive relations with the authorities and preparing the administration to take responsibility. The soldiers and civilian employees, striving to achieve the above objectives, maintained contacts with civil entities, monitored the local civil environment to detect areas not covered by cooperation, and carried out joint meetings and projects that allowed the position of the administration to be strengthened. However, the most important element of the CIMIC tasks was the analysis, based on the principles of civilian-military contacts: awareness of cultural diversity, common goals and obligations, mutual agreement and maintaining disclosure of information and effective communication.

³³ The „Roxana” operation was carried out in cooperation with the World Food Program (WFP) providing food facilities for several thousand families from 18 to 24 of November 2008. This operation turned out to be a huge media success. It showed the ability to reconcile the system of joint civilian-military operations and the possibilities of cooperation between various elements of assistance – Polish Military Contingent, administration, ANA, ANP and WFP.

³⁴ The conference of contractors. About 150 contractors from all over Afghanistan participated. The second such conference took place in February 2012. About 300 contractors participated.

³⁵ The finance conference.

The compilation of the use of all civil-military cooperation elements to achieve the objectives of operations in a multidimensional mission environment allowed a unique, constantly improved system of operations in the area of operations to be created. However, mistakes were not avoided as part of the involvement of the PRT Specialists Team in the changing mission environment.

During the 5 years of the PRT Specialist Team's operation, the most common constraints were³⁶:

- lack of sufficient knowledge about the functioning of provincial and districts administration, in particular on budget issues, which did not allow for a wide range of action planning in the aspect of preparing the administration;
- lack of sufficient knowledge about a different culture and religion, which sometimes caused dangerous reactions in the Afghan party;
- ubiquitous corruption limiting the possibilities of using a wide spectrum of administration properties for democratic governance;
- lack of trust on the part of the administration, especially in the first Polish contingent rotations, where Poles were often identified with Russians;
- lack of understanding by the Afghan authorities of the need to take financial responsibility, especially for the administered area;
- lack of particular ministries representatives responsible for synchronising activities in the areas of: administration and development, which were sometimes translated into uncoordinated activities;
- humanitarian aid provided by the PRT Specialists Team was insufficient in terms of the needs of the civil environment. The lack of humanitarian organisations increased ubiquitous poverty;
- in the absence of humanitarian organisations, anti-coalition groups connected with the Taliban were maintained, which made it impossible to maneuver and change the attitude of the local population to the representatives of the administration.

These and other limitations, errors and remarks that appeared during the tasks carried out did not, however, hamper the achievement of operational objectives in the operational line: the administration that faced all PRT Specialists Teams.

Summary

The goals to which the Team of PRT Specialists aimed for the next rotations of the Polish Military Contingents were achieved at various levels of advancement. Taking into account the development of competence of administration officials at provincial

36 This topic see in R.Reczkowski, *Doświadczenia z zaangażowania Polski w operacje wojskowe w Islamskiej Republice Afganistanu w latach 2002-2004*, Printed by Center of Doctrines and Training of Armed Forces, Bydgoszcz 2016.

and district level, it became clear that through training, courses, consultations, conferences, meetings and purchase projects, a sufficient range of knowledge and skills was achieved.

This allowed the raising of qualifications, and at the same time preparing them for accepting responsibility for administrative management of the provinces and districts. Another goal was to strengthen the ability of local authorities to improve the standard of living of the province's population, and at the same time convincing the local people to have positive relations with the authorities was difficult to measure, but the Polish Contingent did not have the tools necessary for proper evaluation of the activities aimed at achieving this goal. However, the visible improvement of the standard of living mainly concerned the larger conurbations, and above all their centres, as well as the development of services along larger communication routes. The conviction of the local population in the local authorities was dependent on the frequency of jointly carried out tasks by the authorities with the coalition forces. It was also noticeably visible in places where larger groups of people were located. On the other hand, it was largely dependent on the profits that the local population could gain in a given place thanks to joint activities of the administration and ISAF troops. At the same time, the negative effects of the activities of the Polish Contingents forces were always given votes of dissatisfaction and disapproval that made common actions useless.

Operational tasks aimed at achieving the objectives of the operation in the operating line: administration, significantly influenced the achievement of goals in the next line, which was the development that will be discussed in more detail in the next part of the article. Without a well-functioning administration, it was not possible to obtain reliable knowledge on the most important needs to support authorities in creating conditions for socio-economic development, improving infrastructure in projects, increasing the level of development at provincial and district level, and preparing the administration for accepting responsibility for social development in economic provinces and districts.