

## Train, Support, Combat: NATO's 2020 harmonic triangle

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What a purpose would a training have if it would not be proved in combat and how effective would combat be without trained and prepared actors of the combat? How could training and even more combat be realized without adequate support in all of its areas? Training, support and combat, three words expressing the essence of capability of every army and every organization, which ambitions are similar to NATO. These words are also expressing the current uneasy situation of armed forces that have problems with fulfilling them according to the joint ambitions and standards. It is indisputable that there is an existential connection between training, support and combat deployment and therefore it is important to devote individual focus to each of them, with the goal of creating functional and effective system that they are jointly creating and that is assuring success and victory.

Long-term development and current forms of application of thinking, training, equipment, combat support in all its forms (full spectrum of operations) and other factors like for example soft power. They are subject of detailed examination with the goal of its improvement and stress on effective use of ever shrinking available resources. A stable scheme is considered to be a constantly mutually influencing relation between combat field, acquired experiences (lessons learned), doctrines, technologies and combat.

In relation to relatively new forms of combat like cyber-attacks, terrorist attacks, threats of use of the WMD or changes in character of the threats – from linear to asymmetric or other threats, it will be more and more necessary to direct the effort of armed forces to adequate response in the area of training, support and combat deployment to their elimination in both individual (every state has its own responsibility for security and defence) and collective form (higher level of responsibility also for the coalition).

The fact, that the recent operations in Lybia and Afghanistan but also the last cyber-attacks had shown vital shortcomings in provision of adequate responses from the side of individual NATO member states as well as

NATO as an international organization, mainly in area of effective support of the members and allies, is a serious reason to study the causes. On the other hand the acquired experiences and knowledge are clearly showing irreplaceable value of NATO in current international crisis management also with connection to tasks of national crisis managements.

These and other factors, mainly for armed forces that are not as well as the Armed Forces of Slovak Republic in the long term devoting the so discussed 2% of GDP neither guarantying a stable amount of finance for its function in the international environment, are forcing us to seek possibilities how to reach balance between missions, structures (capabilities) and given resources. And it is exactly financial resources that lately seem to be one of the decisive factors which are fundamentally influencing capabilities of armed forces to adequately react to current and future threats. It seems to be a generally accepted trend that research and development of new technologies and preparation of personnel for their use are asking constantly more and more financial resources. Put differently, everything that is invested in military equipment is constantly more expensive. Another factor that is affecting effective use of finance are some inadequate requests of armed forces (they are those which it is impossible to produce and deliver in given quality and time). Requests defined like this are frequently created under pressure of defence industry and politicians with imbalance in relation to quality, finance and adequacy of missions. Many of them are, for different reasons, not realized or the supplied products are not complete, have lower quality or the required volume is mismatched. Financial resources are also seriously influencing also the fulfillment of international commitments this way

and besides problems with fulfillment of declared ambitions they have impact also on retaining trust on bilateral and multilateral level but also on the level of international organizations.

Promotion of individual interests of businesses of the defence industry over generally accepted or politically declared interests and orientation to profit only is also a reason why there is no significant success in developing broader international collaboration in defence industry with goal of the effective use of ever shrinking financial resources in creation of desired military capabilities for their use in conditions of the 21th century. Example of insufficient collaboration in the area of defence industry but also joint military projects and this also in spite of its long-term existence is the grouping of the Central European states, the V4. This fact is not going to be changed even by jointly created brigade headquarters without Hungary in 2001, which gradually ended, or small projects mainly in the area of preparation of personnel. More significant cooperation between the whole V4, with possible collaboration with for example Ukraine and other states can be represented by project that is under preparation, the EU BG, that should be operational in the first half of 2016. But also here are many questions from political will through the compliance of the defence industries of these countries to cooperate to unforeseen obstacles in connection to different interests and priorities of the V4 states related to finance. It is clear that by the creation and joint use of financially demanding capabilities mainly projects of air forces and defence of the air space, projects sustainable for longer period like forces and capabilities devoted to NRF of EU BG, logistics, specialized training and preparation of personnel, specialization in capabilities that could be in a case of requests internationally joined and used,

all the way to much broader use of armed forces in cases of mutual help in times of natural catastrophes, threats of great extent, in war against terror or new cyber-attacks and threats. The effort to go to further international cooperation is constrained to some extent by the fact that not only politicians but also professionals are analyzing the real condition of the potential partner and if that partner is not able to offer anything that would be mutually beneficial, the cooperation is then doubted. Precisely expedience of the mutual cooperation is and will be one of the decisive arguments for decision making and realization of the given decisions.

These and other problems that are underlined mainly by lack of finance that the armed forces are suffering in last years and these problems are then negatively projected every day mainly in the area of training. Current analyses are showing direct correlation between realistic, demanding training and success in the future combat field. Possible deployment of the armed forces and capabilities out of own territory will be characterized by complexity and multidimensionality in environment difficult for communication where dominance of information will have crucial influence. Strong effect will have factors given by political, economic, cultural, religious but also geographic, climate and other conditions. Moreover it is needed to count with possibility that the deployments can be for long distances and the native population does not have to be friendly towards the offered help. Solutions of situations will require complex approach, where different levels of conflict may overlap with other unpredictable factors. The work of the international military units will be confronted with unpredictable ways of combat, where it will be hard to define the difference

between adversaries and civilians and it is possible that different international governmental and nongovernmental organizations will be operating in the given space, with all that the military organizations need to count and be prepared for.

For armies to successfully fulfill this broad scale of military and nonmilitary operations they need to be prepared in relatively short time after their activation. For this purpose conditions should be prepared (mainly to assure that the training facilities will guarantee complexity of training from combat units, through combat logistics to combat support) with dominant orientation to maneuvers (movement, firing, ...) and information administration including higher modularity of environments all the way to adjustment of terrain which should come as near as possible to future combat field. For the purpose of making the training more real and for flexible response of commanders and units to tactical situation simulators and other technologies that are helping to make the complexity of training more effective from the perspective of finance spent.

Limited financial resources are not only restraining the modernization of training facilities and sites in demanded time and size but also the training itself is suffering. The current situation at least in the area of the fully professionalized Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic is so, that training with its orientation to combat – train like you are fighting for real – is mainly realized just by part of the units. Most of the time, by those units that are selected for example for rotations in ongoing missions of crisis management, for fulfillment of international commitments that are part of NRF or EU BG, or for fulfillment of tasks of uninterrupted protection of airspace. It is not unusual that for the fulfillment of international

commitments often other units are putting together not only personnel but mainly equipment and material for one unit. As a consequence, other military units – that means the majority are then fulfilling only limited training tasks on the level of basic combat skills that are making effort so to speak to employ professional soldiers, but training constrained like this does not far satisfy the design of professional armed forces. Paradoxical is then the fact that even the financially demanding modernization of some of the training facilities and sites are not used enough because there are not enough money to deploy and sustain forces at these training sites. This is expressed also on the international level where for example among the V4 countries a database of training facilities for their common use was created, so the states would not create same training sites when they can use them jointly, which was offered also to other armed forces and could have been used much more efficiently. The problem with training is evident. In addition to the known problems in environment with constantly narrowing priorities n training gradual loss of motivation not only from the side of soldiers but also from the side of the part of the candidates for the military service is adding up.

Demanding service based on contract, with restricted rights and “everything on command”, possible damage to health or loss of life, service far away from home and family and other facts ought to be balanced by attractiveness that impresses. Solution of this issue, without visible modernization (modernization of the combat equipment, improvement of methods and forms of combat based on modern doctrines that are combining superiority of information with quick maneuvers the way that whole combat force would be applied in predestinated decisive

phases in the area of operation ...), sustainment of social security, functional career growth and other system measures could not be found by the command of the armed forces alone and could affect the stability of morale and discipline, mainly in times of peace in the core garrisons.

Experiences from current operations, in addition to requests for combat oriented training with support of information technologies clearly show how to form the systems of combat support on the national as well as international level. Well-armed and trained soldier must be equipped with supplies and materials needed for his sustainment at modern battlefield. Speed, accuracy and flexibility of sustainment systems with goal to offer the right instrument in right time is vital when it comes to success or failure in the combat field. To fulfill this goal it is necessary to continue further with the use of recent analysis from current battlefield in transformation of logistics, which must have capability to provide the sustainment and traffic systems in the way that they would be quickly deployable and configurable in effort to maximize the support and sustainment of soldiers, with leaving “logistic trails” as minimal as possible, regardless of the type of operation and territorial restrictions.

Central capability for this kind of fundamental transformation of logistic and sustainment systems is ability to automatize the key logistic functions including supplies, maintenance, traffic and distribution, medical support and services. Automatized information systems should guarantee perfectly automatized logistical and sustainment planning, modeling, command, control and functionality of information technologies in the armed forces. Fully automatized and functional, highly sophisticated logistic system would be as important as the

armies to have the ability to quickly set up and to transport vital supplies, armament, material and services that are the lifeblood of every combat force. These supplies and material have to be configured the way that they will be in balanced state with speed of their delivery and expenses.

International standard for transportation of supplies is containerization. Whether on land, water or in air, containers are used to move vital commercial goods and materials needed by people throughout the world. Precisely this way should the development of logistics go. It should dispose with broad spectrum of containerization means and methods for quick deployment of supplies, armament and material needed to support and sustain the combat forces. Part of the modernization of the logistic and sustainment systems is also consolidation of the supply and material bases, storage facilities and other components that will allow concentrating the main part of supplies and materials of modern multifunctional logistic bases and bases of other material harmonized with five classes of supplies by NATO. This should support the current requirements on logistics.

In the effort to ensure smooth, quick and effective transports and tracking of containerized supplies and material it is needed to further built reliable, cost effective and efficient system for tracking the movement during the transfer. For example in the private business sector, success of internationally recognized companies like FEDEX, DHL and UPS is based on quick, reliable and accurate tracking of movement and deliveries of mail (supplier as well as the client have the possibility to see in real time where the given commodity is), parcels and related materials and goods in almost real time. In conditions of combat activity of armed forces the need for this kind of speed, accuracy and reliability is even

more important. Information about what was shipped, where the shipment is in the distribution system, in which container and when, where and by who these shipments will be delivered is a must for functioning of the whole system. This way the pressure on keeping oversupplies and in some cases by the in future not needed commodities will be lowered.

Success of more operations was dependent and is still depending on abilities of commanders and their soldiers to know where and when they can expect supplies and material, which is needed for the fulfillment of their missions. Therefore also other technologies that allow for example the use of production identification badges on items, material and armaments are important. These have inbuilt miniature radios with transmitting capabilities that allow to track the material as a part of integrated system tracking transfers and that are offering the ability to manage the movement of supplies and material to the logistic and transport suppliers everywhere in the supply and distribution system. Matter of course must be the stability and protection of this information system.

Facts mentioned above are showing how important it is at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to have armed forces that are gradually adapting to changing conditions of warfare and to have the ability of quick deployment in given space for fulfillment of national security and defence strategies. This ongoing trend needs to be captured, because it definitely shows how important part of building up the demanded capabilities is not only modernization of systems for soldiers, modernization of weapons and weapons systems, logistics, intelligence and other, but also the inclusion of modern communication and information systems including automatized systems of command and

control through which the armies will be able to safely and multi-functionally communicate in international environment. Interoperability and compatibility are terms that will be also very current in the long term.

These and other facts in light of complicated problems of reaching demanded capabilities in conditions of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic are directly leading to many questions which cannot be adequately answered, as for example:

- do we realize what it means to fulfill terms like security and defence of state at national as well as at the level of international organizations and are we really responsible for their realization? Or it's our feeling of safety making us not to pay enough attention that we are forgetting the Latin proverb (Flavius Vegetius): "If you want peace, prepare for war," or are we still going to rely on our "big brother"?
- why there were and still are commitments accepted on international level by our politicians that are not fulfilled in given time and quality, for what even the declared ambition of the Alliance is not being fulfilled to great extent, which then leads to discussions about fulfillment of what was agreed.
- how were the financial resources for modernization and development of the armed forces used before the officially announced international financial crisis which is today the main argument used by politicians for the lack of finance
- if we consider army as one of the pillars of state, why we are not taking care of it accordingly, including adequate social acceptance
- and other.

It is evident that the armed forces, that did not caught these trends enough before the economic crisis and have not started to modernize, lived from the past stocks and hassled in never-ending reforms that meant only reduction and outflow of good quality personnel, abandonment of facilities that were modernized beforehand and winding-up of other parts, have and will continue to have big problems to catch up. It is not possible to rely on strong countries that will not compensate capabilities like transport aircrafts, reconnaissance and intelligence systems, anti-ballistic systems, artillery shells and other parts that appeared as important for example in Afghanistan, for long. Given the constant development, it is possible that for many armed forces it would be impossible to keep up with the current trend, which is asking for balance between the current and future missions, capabilities (interoperability and compatibility) and financial resources. To rely on reasoning only with economic crisis and showing that there are more acute problems to be solved like education or health system or finding solutions in international projects like Smart Defence or Pooling and Sharing, is and will be insufficient. Defence and security is inseparable part of the life of current states and must be solved by the individual states themselves in long-term perspective, adequately to the state of armed forces as one of the main pillar of the statehood in the way they can trustfully fulfill defence of state and integrity of the land and responsibly fulfill international commitments and demands.

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## **CENAA Policy Papers**

No. 13/2013, Vol. 2

Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs

Tolstého 9, 811 06 Bratislava

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