

# THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ARMED FORCES TRANSFORMATION MANAGEMENT POLICY

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**Abstract:** This article presents the Bulgaria's Ministry of Defense view on the process of transformation. Transformation's many facets and dimensions are considered – as a philosophy, challenge and process. The article lists concrete manifestations of the intentions of the Ministry of Defense in the field of transformation. Existing shortfalls are discussed and future steps are roadmapped. The focus is however on the main features of the transformation process management policy.

**Keywords:** Armed Forces transformation, management policy, modern security.

At the beginning of this century, the transformation of the Armed Forces—viewed as philosophy, challenge and process—is faced by all countries members of NATO, including the Republic of Bulgaria. It has many dimensions and requires the application of a complex, systematic approach to the solution of modern security problems. The Ministry of Defense views transformation as a process involving permanent, continuous and dynamic adaptation of the security and defense policy to an ever-changing environment, aiming at the support and improvement of the operational capabilities of the Armed Forces.

When shaping its policy, the Ministry of Defense takes into consideration the fact that the altered security environment requires adaptation and reconsideration of the main role and tasks of the military factor as one of the basic guarantees of security at the current stage. The military participation in the multidimensional character of the collective defense system has outgrown the framework of traditional allied and territorial defense and has redirected its focus to conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict reconstruction, peacemaking, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance.

As we have already passed certain stages, it is not necessary to turn back to issues like “What calls for transformation, what is needed and how to achieve transformation goals.” The first stage of the incessant transformation process and more precisely, its four fundamental directions—modernization, structures, human resources,

research and development—have already faced the impact of factors like the alteration of security environment, the requirements for development as a country member of NATO and now the EU, however inessential they may seem, as well as the very experience we have augmented and are able to apply to our further transformation process management policy.

This means that the time is ripe to strike a balance and roadmap future steps. The above mentioned factors have already brought to life the elaboration of a new National Security Strategy, the amendments to Plan 2015 which the Ministry of Defense considers and reports to the Council of Ministers and the Defense Committee of the National Assembly, the development toward professionalisation of the Bulgarian Army as a permanent, profound process, the implementation of the better part of the Human Resources Management Concept, etc.

Concrete manifestation of the intentions of the Ministry of Defense in the field of transformation is Plan 2015 for Organizational Development and Modernization of the BAF where are stated the capabilities, required for the implementation of the missions and tasks of the BAF, the levels of achievement and application of NATO standardization and certification procedures and documentation, the intentions for modernization and rearmament of the BAF, the necessary level of personnel and units preparation to meet the new requirements.

After the preliminary stage of implementation, at the point of recapitulation, we have come to the conclusion that the activities envisaged in Plan 2015 do not lead to timely bridging over the existing short-falls of capabilities of our Armed Forces and do not allow for the implementation of the politically endorsed by the state commitments.

Besides, we are facing discrepancies within the tasks, defense spending and number of the Armed Forces. At present, we occupy the fifth place among the countries members of NATO with 0.69 percent of the population engaged in defense – an index that is about twice as big as the average for NATO. With a budget of 2.3 percent of the GDP keeping the above index means that it will be impossible to implement the transformation and modernization of the Armed Forces in compliance with the scale and priorities envisaged in Plan 2015.

Practice has promptly brought us to the conclusion that we have to prioritize the building up of capabilities relevant to the highly probable risks and threats, i.e. to build up expeditionary forces capable to be deployed in joint multinational expeditionary operations. This calls for the elaboration of a balanced structure of the Armed Forces involving combat units and combat support and logistics units.

Part of the in-system spared resource is to be immediately directed to the promotion of the combat training of our Armed Forces on which so far impermissibly low means

has been allocated, the result being a state below the critical minimum – about 1.6 to 2.12 percent whereas in NATO the aim is to reach about 10 percent. And combat training is arguably the most significant indicator of the BAF level of preparation.

In general, the policy of the Ministry of Defense concerning the BAF transformation is a component of the transformation process which NATO is undergoing. That is why the assessment of our NATO partners both of the positive and negative aspects of our efforts and results is very true. NATO assessment of the Bulgarian contribution to various operations in different parts of the world is high. Also positively are assessed our efforts to enlarge our contribution to NATO Response Forces and especially the mechanized battalion (700 servicemen strong) to NRF 2009/2. At the same time we cannot but agree with the remarks that:

- Too many structures, inherited from the static territorial defense of the past, are being preserved while their release could spare considerable resources;
- The relationships among the Ministry of Defense, the General Staff and the types of Armed Forces need coordinated approach and optimization, which implies lack of integrated model;
- Our financial system does not clearly state how long-term modernization projects will be financed. This is the basis for the recommendation that all plans be reconsidered and re-prioritized to specify realistic terms for the implementation of the programs of vital importance to the development of the Bulgarian Armed Forces.

## **Main Features of the Bulgarian Armed Forces Transformation Policy**

The policy of the Ministry of Defense in the field of BAF transformation management is directed towards the increase in defense efficiency, the development of forces and capabilities, and modernization of the BAF. The improvement of defense management effectiveness, the building of the required capabilities is achieved through perfecting the managerial system of the AF development and it becoming the basic tool of transformation acceleration. In their quality of auxiliary but no less important means of promotion the transformation of the BAF, the Ministry of Defense relies on the timely acquisition, implementation and provision of the necessary information, the broad community support, the perfection of the strategic, doctrine and conceptual documentation, the elaboration of legislative and normative basis, the effective, efficient and economical management of defense resources and application of the forms of public-private partnership and private financial initiatives to the interest of the community, providing public products and services, which is in the core of defense and security.

Bulgarian lessons learned from missions support the general understanding within the Alliance that not only the military but also the civilian capabilities are of vital importance. Our Military Police and medical teams, the engineer units have won the respect of our partners. Practice shows that we have to shake off national caveats of the contingents to facilitate the management of the main forces where we participate, which in itself implies acquisition of new capabilities.

On the other hand, the above mentioned issue of information and civilian approach has brought us to the conclusion that without the support of the community there cannot be politically supported defense budget from which follows that transformation cannot proceed smoothly. Our community is still in the process of synchronization of the Bulgarian cultural idea of collective defense systems with the ideas of the other member states. Mentality change is necessary to transform the inherited from the time of two-pole opposition capabilities of defending the territory into capabilities of defending an area or areas, of defending values.

These facts pose additional challenges which oblige us as politicians and military to seek ways and approaches to open and educated debate as in the environment of democratic governance only the transparent, supported by the community decisions can be of duration.

In compliance with the policy of the Ministry of Defense, the transformation of the BAF is directed toward the development of the necessary operational capabilities and interoperability with focus on deployability and interoperability. The efforts in this area concentrate on the continuous and balanced development and improvement of combat capabilities, combat support and logistics to guarantee the effective participation of BA units and structures directly subordinated to the Minister of Defense in operations, missions and tasks of the AF to the fullest. In the process of transformation of the AF, the political leadership of the Ministry of Defense has prioritized the commitments of the country as an ally to NATO and the EU as Goals of the AF and declared units for participation in the full range of operations of both Alliances. Supplementary but of vital importance are the transformation priorities of full professionalisation of the BA by the end of 2007, updating the number of personnel and declared forces, improvement of the quality of officers, headquarters and troops training to achieve interoperability, further reform of the military educational system, promotion of the effectiveness of the development and research aiding the process of transformation of the AF.

The modernization of the AF as a component of their transformation has set its main goal in the overcoming of the existing technological lag through acceleration of the process of acquisition, adoption and implementation of modern armament, equipment and technology. The policy of the Ministry of Defense in modernization emphasizes

on the realization of priority projects, maintenance of permanent high quality level of defense products through effective management of their life cycle, provision of favorable environment for optimum return of investments from the defense budget through appropriate offset agreements.

The defense programs of the Ministry of Defense and the BA for 2007 have planned funds for the implementation of 18 out of the total of 35 modernization projects specified in Plan 2015. The Government of the country defined twelve out of these 35 projects as priorities for the modernization of the AF and the Program Decisions Memorandum for the period 2007 – 2012 allocates financial resources to launch eight of them. The tangible result of the BAF modernization project management policy in 2006 is the acquisition of 20 high-roadability motor vehicles after the BA motor vehicle rearmament project and 3 Cougar helicopters for the needs of the Bulgarian Air Forces after the new transport helicopters acquisition project.

The model applied in defense and AF modernization project management is based on the implementation of such effective techniques as:

- Defining the requirements to modernization projects in stern compliance with the necessary capabilities of the AF supporting their transformation. The continuing lack of a Council whose function is to set the necessary operational capabilities has taught us a poignant lesson which we could share with our partners following our steps to NATO;
- Manning of integrated project teams of highly qualified experts and managers authorized to manage the execution of the projects. The obstacles on the road to creating the appropriate environment for their functioning will make us pay high price as shows the experience of other countries where the issue had been underestimated;
- Rigid application of the procedures and requirements of institutional and national documents for implementation of investment projects like the Law on Public Tenders, the Regulation on its application, the Ordinance on the terms and procedures for awarding special purpose public tenders. Our inability to find the most appropriate decisions when formulating such laws and ordinances and the necessity of constant changes in some cases shows how we ourselves create obstacles and doom transformation effectiveness;
- Long-term, clear and strict finance planning is a prerequisite that guarantees modernization projects. If the budget be allocated but not managed, we will not have successful transformation. If we do not have the vision how to invest in the future, for example through research and development, we also will not have basis for optimism in the long run;

- Building and maintenance of long term, mutually beneficial business relationships involving offset agreements with defense industry companies in national and international aspect which prove reliable not only as potential executives of the modernization projects but also as parties in the overall process of defense products life cycle management. The Ministry of Defense has the unprecedented chance to contribute, through its strategic partners, to considerable, long standing changes in the field of research and development and the economic strengthening of the country if only it did not waste it due to Balkan mentality and conditions offered to foreign investors.

An essential element of the policy of the Ministry of Defense in the field of the BAF modernization is the application of the model of defense products life cycle management. The effectiveness and efficiency of the model can be proved through the following example. As a result of the practical application of one of defense products life cycle management procedures, namely, the extension of their exploitation term, in 2006 were extended the exploitation terms of various defense products: aircraft, aircraft engines, air-launched missiles, anti-aircraft missile systems. The effect of the extended exploitation terms of the above mentioned defense products is measured in a variety of indices.

First of all, we can point out the effects, measured in financial indices. The application of the procedure and the extension of the exploitation terms of the above mentioned defense products have provided savings of financial resource in the 2006 defense budget amounting to tens of millions of levs which represents sizeable percentage in relation to the planned in that very budget capital expenses.

The second place is occupied by the effects measured in qualitative indices. The extension of the exploitation terms of the defense products and their restoration to standard are an expression of the transformation of personnel's knowledge and experience, of the potential of the information systems and functional processes of the Defense Acquisition system into a resource of tangible assets, which the very defense products are. The fact itself is an indicative example how the intangible assets of the Ministry of Defense and the Bulgarian Army could effectively contribute to the addition of value through the application of the defense products life cycle management model to the interests of the transformation of the AF.

Then, we should touch on the effects measurable in indices, representing the contribution to the readiness of units and preparation of crews. With the extension of the exploitation terms and restoration of defense products serviceability, the units of the BA have at their disposal a greater percentage of serviceable equipment which provides the necessary resource volume for the combat preparation of crews, teams and units.

Last but not least are the effects measured in defense policy indicators. The procedure for extension of defense products exploitation terms provides additional resource, invested in the implementation of the missions, goals and tasks of the BAF, specified in the framework of the defense policy of the Ministry of Defense.

## **Conclusion**

One of the specific features of the transformation of the AF is that the latter is being planned and implemented in an environment of obscurity, i.e. with lack of exhaustive information both on the parameters of the transformation itself and the necessity to apply effective techniques like modeling and simulation and derive maximum benefit from their specific characteristics and advantages. In this context I believe that publications like this offer a nice opportunity to share the experience of the application of both recognized and innovative models in support of the transformation of the AF.

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