

Writing task – level 4

TO: International Military Research Group

FROM: YOUR NAME

SUBJECT: How the lessons learned from the Polish Mission in Iraq changed the Polish Armed Forces.

1. Engagement of the Polish Armed Forces (PAF) in the operation.

Poland joined the US-led multinational coalition in May 2004 and deployed 2500 soldiers in Iraq. The Polish troops, supported by several nations, formed a *Multinational Division* and held responsibility for the so-called *Central-South Zone* in Iraq.

The number of soldiers and the area of responsibility were continuously decreasing during the following four years, and eventually Poland withdrew their soldiers in 2008. In total, PAF withstood ten tours in the theatre proving their ability to play an important role in a coalition operation.

2. Major deficiencies.

Undoubtedly, many problems appeared during the mission, especially at the beginning of the operation. Numerous discrepancies between the plans devised in Poland, and the real capabilities of the troops in the real battleground were discovered.

2.1 First of all, the soldiers didn't confirm their **language proficiency**. In particular, the US co-workers complained about how the lack of this particular skill diminished interoperability.

2.2 Also, there was room for improvement in the training that had been delivered prior to the deployment.

2.3 Another critical issue was the unit's equipment and outdated concept of commanding, fitted rather into the Cold-War strategy than to **modern asymmetric warfare**.

3. How the operation could have been better devised.

As the above section proves, the major deficiencies were related to long term planning and training processes within the PAF. Obviously, proper training for the soldiers, especially in terms of **foreign language skills**, could not be conducted shortly before the deployment. **Efficient language training** takes more time than it was assumed in the beginning.

Proper commissioning of the equipment, including tests and legal constraints for procurement processes, is time consuming as well.

If proper generic planning processes in PAF had been introduced several years in advance the troops would have been better prepared to this particular operation.

4. Profits to the PAF

Beside the analysis regarding the political aspects of the involvement, there are obvious positive consequences of the mission to the PAF.

The **Lessons Identified** from the operation were thoroughly analysed and resulted in many improvements in many areas, including the training and commissioning processes.

5. Negative aspects of the involvement

The highest price we paid for the operation undoubtedly was the soldier's life. Twenty three soldiers died in Iraq, forsaking their families.

Another argument raised by the opponents of the mission is that the *involvement of Polish soldiers* increased the **terrorist threat level** to Poland.

6. Improvement of future preparatory proceedings

6.1 Utilising the staff who took part in the mission appears to be an obvious solution. This can be conducted by both appointing the people as the trainers and making surveys within the community.

6.2 The future training process should be based on the **lessons identified** during all the operations of PAF, and especially include the experiences of the people participating in real battles.

6.3 Input from the veterans should be taken into account during procurement of equipment; the gear should be also tested prior to the deployment, not during the mission when it's too late. To make all these feasible, better law regulations have to be enacted.

7. Justification of the proposals

In my opinion the most important challenge in this arena is not to spoil the effort of thousands of soldiers involved in the mission, and change the **lessons identified in Iraq** into **lessons learned**.

This can only happen if all the above problems and proposals will be really addressed in the future planning processes.