

SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION DURING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ROMANIAN GROUND FORCES' UNITS IN MISSIONS IN DIFFERENT THEATRES OF OPERATIONS

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Experience of participation in operations in two different theatres highlights important issues relating to the military service requirements in the current period. The first of these issues relates to the obligation of the staff to know English, the official language within the Alliance, and the second aspect concerns the urgent need that our Armed Forces' military structures be interoperable with those of our allies.

But the training of staff is in close dependency with the equipment necessary to achieve fast communication, and high accuracy in conditions of safety and protection related to transmitted messages.

Keywords: Ground Forces; international missions; military operation; theatre of operations; communication.

Romania, member state of N.A.T.O. and the European Union, having a stance of outpost, from geographically standpoint, contributes with forces, outside national territory, to the general effort to resolve backlog crises to maintain stability in various areas of tension around the world.

So far, Ground Forces have participated in international missions in theatres of operations, in principle, only with executive structures (up to battalion level) and with staff officers in multinational headquarters encased at different levels.

National military structures were used, commonly at the post-combat phase, accomplishing the following types of missions: protection of labour; antiterrorism retaliation (especially search/crawler); Military Police special missions; missions of genius-infrastructures; information gathering missions; participation in CIMIC missions.¹

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¹ Teodor Frunzeti and collective, *Lessons learned from participation in multinational missions – 2004-2005*, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 5-20.

Romanian military participation in international missions is also a very appropriate occasion for validating knowledge and experience resulting from observation and study over the years of training, exercises and executed military actions.

Also, participation in these missions may check as realistic and fair as possible the communicational capacities of the participants be them individuals or formed sub-units.

Conducting operations in very difficult geo-climatic and military conditions has represented endurance tests for both participating staff and equipment of the endowment.

The successful achievement of the diversity of missions entrusted to constitute an acknowledgement of the special military training, cohesion existent within the Romanian participating establishments and subunits, highlighting at the same time the upward trend of the system of preparation and training of the Ground Forces, as well as sustained efforts of the logistical structures involved.

The specific aspects of communication during the participation of Romanian Land Forces' units in missions in different theatres of operations

Whatever field of activity would be the subject to analysis on international missions carried out by the Romanian soldiers, by default it would also constitute an analysis of the communicational act performed inside the participating structures in these missions, as well as between them and other structures, institutions or persons.

As a result of such review, carried out with much realism, numerous concrete aspects resulted and brought to conduct activities under normal circumstances. A large part of them were due to perturbations occurring in the process of communication.

On the basis of lessons learned, highlighted during missions carried out in theatres, but also in the conduct of exercises or tactical applications in the country, we conclude that communicational malfunctions have emerged at the level of each element of the communication process and that have affected all types of communication. The most numerous malfunctions were manifested within the channels of messages' transmission, the most affected type of communication being the verbal communication.

Some of the causes that have led to these perturbations will be highlighted as follows: endowing the technique of fighting with bad or incompatible communications/partially compatible with those of the correspondents; lack of joint security keys and algorithms; impossibility of

the use of communication means worn under the terms of individual protection measures, in certain situations; advanced usage and frequent fault tolerance of communication means in terms of overtraining communication flows; the nonexistence of total or temporary means of liaison with local government in the area where the actions were taking place; the lack of encryption-decryption.

Among the concrete manifestations of perturbations generated by the previous highlighted reasons we list the following:

- lack of efficient transmission means makes during inspections on the ground or during the journey, the communication with the heads of teams or machines to be often absent, being jammed by the Iraqi police stations (operation *ANTICA BABILONIA*, Iraq);²
- lack of a single mode of short range wireless equipment arranged on the armoured technique (mobile command station) and an insufficient number of ultra-short radio waves range equipped with power amplifier determines the impossibility of permanent communication (operation *ENDURING FREEDOM*, Afghanistan);³
- lack of the same algorithms and security keys has made it difficult to achieve permanent communications in order to coordinate actions during the American-Romanian joint missions (operation *ENDURING FREEDOM*, Afghanistan).⁴
- lack of direct link with local government in the area of responsibility, has made it impossible, temporarily, ensuring the contact with it within cooperation, information and timely coordination (operation *ENDURING FREEDOM*, Afghanistan).⁵

All these situations have been resolved in a relatively short time, but with some of them, Romanian soldiers who are in theatres may still face, whereas the limited financial resources of recent years have not allowed the purchase of modern means and entirely compatible with those of the allies.

² Neagoe Visarion and collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2006 Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2006, p. 91. Mihai Ciungu River and the collective *Collection of lessons learned*, semester I /2010, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, 2010, Bucharest, p. 45.

³ Neagoe Visarion and collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2006 Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2006, p. 79. Mihai Ciungu and the collective, *Lessons learned to Pick*, semester II /2010, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Editorial, 2010, p. 149.

⁴ Neagoe Visarion and collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2006 Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2006, p. 81.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85; Mihai Ciungu and the collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester I/2010, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Editorial, 2010, p. 42.

Another set of reasons which affects the communication process of the participating structures, or between them and the institutions or people outside of these structures, including, among others, the following: not knowing the language of population in the area of responsibility; nonuse of means of identification; unawareness by the receiver of the signification of all messages received; the lack of material of representation of the nation; ignorance, at the required level, of English language by all Romanian soldiers in theater of operations; the lack of a communication, correct and honest at all times, between commanders and subordinates; cultural differences and the specific training of different armed soldiers, etc.

And these reasons have generated, in turn, important dysfunctions of the communicational act. Here are a few, brief, such aspects as follows:

- to collect data and information from the villages/settlements, during the missions, were necessary a minimum knowledge of pashtu language (operation *ENDURING FREEDOM*, Afghanistan);⁶

- lack of representation materials from battalion logistics during the mission from Iraq has made the image of our battalion and of our Army would not be reflected at its fair value, with the opportunity of receiving visits of various military and civilian personalities, when the Commander of the battalion has received various symbolic gifts (custom plaques bearing the signs of unity and the country's Army), having no opportunity to make analog (operation *ANTICA BABILONIA*, Iraq);⁷

- some inappropriate interpersonal relationships that is manifested between soldiers during the cohabitation period of 6 months, is one of the factors that erode the morale of staff;⁸

- organizational climate misunderstandings and expectations about the type of relationships and constraints during the mission causes a state of tension and irritability, as well as a collection of divergence of interests between the headquarters and sub-units (operation *ENDURING FREEDOM*, Afghanistan);⁹

- non-use of identification means, especially during the execution of the missions and especially at night, may be fratricidal.¹⁰

⁶ Neagoe Visarion and collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2006 Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2006, p. 94. Mihai Ciungu and the collective, *Collection of lessons identified*, semester I/2011, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2011, p. 9.

⁷ Neagoe Visarion and collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2006 Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2006, p. 98.

⁸ *Idem*, p. 105.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 107.

¹⁰ Mihai Ciungu River and the collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II /2010, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Editorial, 2010, p. 139.

The situations presented are real and, with the support of allies, have been overcome in a short time from apparition, but in order for them to reduce the number, or not to occur, it is necessary that the preparation for departure in the theatre of operations to be performed with special attention, and matters involving financial resource usage should be treated with more attention and even resolved if possible.

Many of the potential causes of some disturbance intuited in the communicational process were eliminated as a result of their identification with the occasion of the participation of units from Ground Forces in applications and exercises at a lesser or greater extent, previous departure in theatres of operations.

We consider useful the overview of some of the causes that may affect communication in the military structures of type unit or grand unit. One of these causes, resulting from the conduct of the exercises, *GETICA 08*, *JTF EAST ROTATION 08*, *CERTEX 08*, *SIMEX 08*, *SIMFTX2010*, *SABER DAWN 10*, *DACIA 10*, or *SUMMIT* of N.A.T.O. in Bucharest since 2008, we highlight the following:

- the failure to confirm the receipt of messages;
- appropriate non-transmission of messages;
- manifestation of erroneous transmission initiatives of some messages (without consent or approval superior echelon);
- sending messages to recipients with no responsibility as regards the content of the message in question;
- failure of message transmission channels (communication means);
- temporary impossibility of the use of the national telecommunications system, for various reasons;
- failure of classified documents' transmission by means of radio communications owing to the lack of necessary equipment;
- reduced compatibility or incompatibility of the analogue technique of digital circuits with military units of the national communications system;
- lack of INTRAMAN connection does not allow transmission of important messages and very necessary management actions;
- poor communication or lack of communication led to the emergence of difficulties in coordinating the elaboration of bilateral documents, Romanian-American, for the Organization of a joint exercise;
- difficulties in developing and approving bilateral documents due to the limited powers of the appointed representatives and non-compliance of official channels, for the approval of documents;
- wrong choice of the event's hour of the press conference;

- failure to consult of the Romanian representative by the American about the date and hour of the news conference;
- failure to confirm, by the representatives of the local administration, of the presence at the protocol activities to which they have been invited, however presenting them or their delegates;
- failure to transmit managerial documents on deadline;
- establishment of cumbersome streams of transmission of messages;
- the lack, in some structures, of reporting methodologies;
- the existence of an insufficient number of telephones post to transmit the necessary information for leadership and cooperation during the war-fight;
- the use of personal phones during conducting actions;
- limited possibilities to collect information from open source due to low internet access points;
- failure to distribute the cooperation procedures with other structures of the national defense system.¹¹

The identification of as many of the causes which might foster the emergence of communication dysfunctions comes in support of commanders and staff officers for taking effective measures regarding prevention of the apparition of similar events, or for their timely disposal.

As the experience increases, it is also improved the effectiveness of measures to remove such causes of distortion in communication, in particular within the ordered structure, but should not be overlooked two particularly important aspects: dynamism and complexity of the communicational process.

On the other hand, the diversity and complexity of the theatres of operations in which the structures of the Romanian Army act in accomplishing international missions, impose the initiation of the staff to review a system of rules, procedures and standards resulting from the gained experience.

Conclusions

The end of the 20th century and early 21st century were marked by a relatively large number of military operations carried out in different theatres of operations. Types of operations most commonly used were those of

¹¹ Nicholas N. Roman and collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2008, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2009, pp. 9-149. Mihai Ciungu and the collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester I/2010, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Editorial, 2010, pp. 49, 51, 123. Mihai Ciungu and the collective, *Collection of lessons learned*, semester II/2010, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, 2010, pp. 44, 71, 87, 157, 159, 163. Mihai Ciungu and the collective, *Collection of lessons identified*, semester I/2011, Technical Centre Publishing – Editorial of the Army, Bucharest, 2011, pp. 27, 86, 87.

stability and support, but, unfortunately, were also held specific operations to the armed struggle. It outlines quite clearly the option of using, in particular, operations of support and stability, and only in extreme cases of specific operations of the armed struggle.

At the same time, we conclude that during the reference period, military operations had a multinational character, a fact which had some influence, both on process management and communication.

The reality of the theatres of operations highlights the fact that the communicative process adjacent of leading the Ground Forces' operations has common characteristic, both in specific operations of armed struggle and stability and support operations, but at the same time there are special features of communication for each of these types of operations.

At the same time, it appears clear that the communicative process is a perfectible one, and the increasing of the performance of communication it is possible only in conditions of an endowment with the latest technical means - compatible with those of the allies — and only through a training to the highest standards, both on specialty field and on field communication.

In our opinion, increasing the efficiency of communication should be a permanent goal for all commanders because a modern communication makes possible a more efficient command.

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