

Symposium of Territorial Defence Forces from NATO's eastern flank countries

A symposium of territorial defence formations represented by 11 countries, forming the so-called eastern flank of NATO, was held on February 12-15 in Olsztyn, on the premises of the stationing of the 4th Warmia-Mazury Territorial Defence Brigade.

The symposium was organized by the Territorial Defence Forces Command with the participation of the General Staff of the Polish Army and the V Corps of the United States Land Forces (V Corps), whose command is stationed in Poznan. The event was attended by 120 soldiers representing: US, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Sweden, and Finland.

As the Chief of General Staff of the Polish Army, General Wiesław Kukuła, said at the opening of the symposium:

"The Territorial Defence Forces are an important component of the defence systems of the eastern flank countries. Our goal is to integrate their potential and capabilities with other components, especially land and special operations, in order to achieve synergy of effort and multiply the effects of our actions."

During the Symposium, representatives of each country presented their experiences in the formation of the formation, the training of its personnel potential and the use of territorial defence subdivisions, both in military and non-military operations.

Structures, armaments and equipment at the disposal of territorial defence formations in the countries concerned were presented. There was also a discussion of recruitment methods and service course models for soldiers of territorial defence formations.

Acting Commander of the Territorial Defence Forces, Brig. Gen. Krzysztof Stańczyk during the symposium said:

"This is the first such meeting of territorial defence formations of the countries of NATO's eastern flank, organized by the Polish side, which will bring results in the form of establishing contacts, give us operational awareness - which, in the event of an armed conflict, will be used to interact with operational troops, in particular with the V Corps of the United States Land Forces. In addition, as part of the meeting we demonstrate to twin territorial formations from other countries the equipment and armaments available to the Territorial Defence Forces in Poland. We talk about the methods used in other countries to encourage service in territorial defence formations, staying in the service as long as possible, and opportunities for developing the competence of soldiers serving in territorial defence formations. The symposium will result in tangible benefits."

The event included a static display of the weaponry and equipment available to the territorial defence brigades in Poland, as well as a dynamic display demonstrating the establishment of combat by WOT light infantry sections, in contact with the enemy, in urbanized terrain, and the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield.

Although the conditions of the operational environment in each country differ, it should be noted that despite the different structures and different approaches to the formation of territorial

defence formations, caused precisely by this different operational environment - these formations are united by the same goals.

They are:

- during military operations: defence of designated regions and ensuring smooth entry into battle for operational troops (freedom of maneuver),
- during non-military crises: assistance and support of local communities.

Although territorial defence formations differ in armaments, structures, numbers or training methods, in all countries this type of army has one thing in common: it is formed by volunteers - people with a passion for the military and a great sense of responsibility for protecting their homelands.

Lt. Col. Robert PEKALA
Spokesman of Territorial Defence Forces Command