

# Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland as foundation of Military Medical Service

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## Summary:

Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland is one of the most important documents that regulate actions in the field of the defense of Poland. It influences among other things, tasks of the Polish Armed Forces, and also, indirectly, the goals and assignments of Military Medical Service in case of threat to the country. Based on the content of the Defense Strategy, the authors indirectly set tasks for Military Medical Service. Based on that they proposed exact solutions concerning actions, structures and organizational procedures of Military Medical Service, that would prepare the Military Medical Service for a possible situation of threat to Poland.

**Key words:** Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland, Military Medical Service, threat to the country.

„The Republic of Poland, together with its partners and allies, will respond to present-day challenges and threats, guided by its national interests identified in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland” [1].

The Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland is based on the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland and it details and develops the defence provisions adopted by the Council of Ministers, and subsequently approved by the President of the Republic of Poland on 13 November 2007. Provisions of the Defense Strategy formulate guidelines for documents in the area of defence; they identify the functions and structure of the state's defence system and map out the main directions of the development of its subsystems [1]. In the light of the above, the Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland is a supreme document

which established general and basic actions in the field of defense of Poland. Its application within the Military Medical Service is preceded by appropriate decisions and conclusions at lower levels. However, based on the provisions of the Defense Strategy of the Republic of Poland, we may try to generalise actions and tasks that would be assigned to The Military Medical Service. More specific assumptions should be developed by lower authorities planning and introducing the guidelines of defense of the Republic of Poland. Important for the discussed matter are the Republic of Poland's main strategic goals in the area of defense:

- 1) ensuring independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Poland, its integrity and inviolability of its borders;
- 2) defence and protection of all the citizens of the Republic of Poland;

- 3) implementing commitments arising from Poland's NATO and European Union's membership;

Taking all that into consideration, the main mission of the Polish Armed Forces is to defend Poland and to take part in the defense of allies. These actions will be carried out in the national and allied structures [1].

The main assumption is to carry out defence tasks on the territory of Poland, to protect its citizens. Next, actions will be carried out within allied structures and partnerships. The next step includes participation in defence and peacekeeping operations on a broader scale, when possible.

The State's defense system consists of three subsystems, including the military subsystem formed out of the AFRP (Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland) responsible for:

- guaranteeing defence of the state and countering aggression;
- participation in the process of stabilization of the international situation and in crisis response and humanitarian operations;
- supporting the internal situation and assisting the population.

Waging of defence operations on the territory of Poland excludes the possibility of a concurrent use of the AFRP in crisis response operations outside the country's territory. Assignment of forces and resources to participate in operations outside of Poland has to be subordinated to the need to maintain capabilities ensuring security and inviolability of the Republic of Poland's borders [1].

The operational army of the AFRP includes medical components within the group of combat service support units. Moreover, the support army groups station medical posts. Military Medical Service is also connected with planning and implementation of tasks relating to the preparation and use of public and nonpublic health service to meet the state's defence needs. These include increasing the hospital base and changing its profile, the creation of substitute hospital places, activities relating to outpatient care, the organization of public blood service, sanitary and epidemiological protection, rules

on how to proceed in case of radiation and other effects of the use of weapons of mass destruction and the provision of benefits to certain organization units [1].

The role of the Military Medical Service is to fulfil general provisions of defence strategy as concerns the manpower of the armed forces, especially in the face of threat. Thus, the following issues should be considered and then implemented:

- determination of tasks for the Military Medical Service;
- development and improvement of the system of medical support of the military operations;
- determination of forces and resources for the Military Medical Service;
- studies estimating expected sanitary losses.

These issues are a subject of interest of military medicine division—Organisation of Military Healthcare.

The basic tasks of the Military Medical Service include:

- protection of life and health of soldiers (including full psychological well-being) and prevention of development of diseases, especially the infectious ones and their epidemics;
- provision of medical aid, treatment and rehabilitation of the wounded and sick soldiers.

These tasks are implemented in detail within the developed system of medical support of the army during military operations.

Medical support of the military operations includes all undertakings of the Military Medical Service to preserve the fighting ability of soldiers and to protect their health, to provide medical aid to the wounded and sick in due time, to evacuate them, rehabilitate, decrease the level of disability, as well as to prevent the dissemination of infectious diseases [2].

The guidelines concerning medical support, commonly accepted by the Republic of Poland with alliances include:

- availability of medical aid to all soldiers, taking into consideration the provisions of humanitarian law and medical aid according to the clinical status, with the use of available means and possibilities;
- the standard of medical aid during crisis and

war should possibly follow the standards of medical aid in the times of peace;

- prevention of infectious diseases is the basic condition to preserve a good health of soldiers;
- when saving life and limbs, all means should be employed to adhere to the rule of six hours;
- triage should be followed at all stages of medical evacuation, leading to a rational and economical use of medical equipment;
- medical aid should be continuously provided at all stages of medical evacuation and during medical evacuation;
- at particular levels of medical aid rendered at medical facilities, there should apply gradation of medical aid provision - from the basic forms (the first aid) to specialist help and rehabilitation;
- the clinical status of the wounded and sick influences the time and means of medical evacuation [3,4].

**Medical support of military operations employs professional (full-time) forces and resources of subdivisions and divisions of the health care. It includes:**

#### **I. Protection of treatment and evacuation:**

- development of particular stages of medical evacuation and evacuation of the wounded and sick from the battle field to well-established dressing stations;
- provision of medical aid to the wounded and sick;
- temporary hospitalization of the wounded and sick not suitable for evacuation – outpatient treatment of mildly wounded and ill patients [2,5,7].

This is the basic group of tasks assigned to the Military Medical Service. Their implementation requires having professional (full-time) medical subdivisions, preferably modular, i.e. allowing for any configuration of the system of staged treatment at levels of medical aid provision, as well as for the possibility of exchanging and replacing medical components of the system. The function of medical subdivisions follows from the characteristics of the provided medical aid at particular levels of medical aid, based on the above presented criteria.

#### **II. Sanitary-hygienic and antiepidemic support:**

- sanitary and hygienic as well as

epidemiological reconnaissance in the areas of military operations;

- supervision over: food, uniforms, accommodation, provision of water and observance of rules of hygiene;
- sanitary, hygienic and antiepidemic actions aimed to prevent the development and dissemination of infectious diseases;
- isolation of patients with infectious diseases or suspected infectious diseases [5,6,7].

In this field, the basic tasks should be performed by tactical health care services. Complex activities on the territory of Poland should be carried out by Military Centres of Preventive Medicine (WOMP, Wojskowe Ośrodki Medycyny Prewencyjnej), and in interoperative situations also by the Epidemiological Reaction Centres of the Polish Armed Forces (CRESZ, Centrum Reagowania Epidemiologicznego Sił Zbrojnych).

#### **III. Sanitary protection against weapon of mass destruction (WMD):**

- reconnaissance of radioactive and chemical contamination of areas of developed medical components;
- reconnaissance of radioactive and chemical contamination of the wounded and sick, presenting to the dressing stations;
- provision of partial and total sanitary procedures to the wounded and sick as well as special procedures, sanitary transportation, uniforms, and management of the wounded and sick [5,6].

As far as the discussed group of tasks is concerned, the main role is played by tactical health care services, provided with specialist equipment, and within WOMP on the territory of Poland.

#### **IV. Provision of medical equipment and materials:**

- provision of individual sanitary equipment to the soldiers;
- provision medical equipment and materials to subdivisions and divisions of health care services [5].

These extremely important tasks conditioning efficient execution of a military function of health care services should be carried out based on simplified rules of management, national resources but aiming at unification within alliances, systematically updated and improved.

**V. Management of health care:**

- development of a plan of medical support of military operations;
- management of forces and resources of health care services during military operations [5,6,7]

Existing planning procedures concerning this matter should be updated to include current data on provision of medical support, and especially the expected sanitary losses, as well as (in case of interoperative operations) take into account procedures following from alliances. It is absolutely necessary to modify the system of health care management based on the medical information management system (MIMS).

**VI. Sanitary training:**

- training of manpower to provide first aid; professional training of health care personnel [5,7].

These tasks require extreme attention because they condition the efficiency of the system of medical support. Recruitment and training of medical personnel, especially of higher rank and

highly specialised, is currently a problem which must be solved. Sanitary training of manpower must be carried out continuously by medical personnel of a military unit. Training of medical personnel should be conducted by certified training centres.

**VII. Keeping records and reports required by law.**

This requires attempts to introduce MIMS procedures and to increase the application of IT and ICT solutions in unification with allies.

The authors believe that the above presented main groups of tasks influence appropriate function of the Military Medical Service and the system of medical support of military operations. Further studies on the discussed issues and their modification in the face of current challenges is absolutely necessary. It is important to obtain a coordinated system of procedures in combination with appropriate manpower, equipment and infrastructure which will be a baseline for implementation of assumed tasks for Military Medical Service.

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