

Fundamental issues related to cooperation of rescue entities

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Abstract — The study presents the subject matter of joint ventures of rescue entities on the example of the State Fire Service and the National Emergency and Fire System. The study defines the term ‘public safety’ which is understood as living in such an environment in which citizens do not feel threat to their existence or to their basic life interests. The responsibility of the state is to provide formal, institutional and practical guarantees of protection within the socially acceptable levels of risk. On this basis, the paper presents the scope of cooperation of the above entities, analyzes applied solutions related to the organization of this cooperation and evaluates their efficiency.

Index Terms— security, threats, risk, cooperation, rescue, law, administration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Recent years have abounded in dramatic events that affected the feeling of safety of many entities. Therefore, the need to acquire knowledge in the field of safety is now more important than ever. Human beings have every right to live a safe life and they should put in every effort to secure it (Jałoszyński, Wiśniewski and Wojtuszek, 2007). However, being subject to the laws of nature does not guarantee safety at all. In order to survive and develop people have to undertake activities that would provide them with the opportunity to influence the environment and give them a sense of unimpeded existence. The need of safety is one of the basic human needs (next to physiological needs, self-fulfilment, respect etc.) and in order to satisfy these needs people must be active (Ściborek et al., 2015).

Regardless of the fact how a given community is perceived, what was the genesis of its creation, how big it is etc., its members try to create appropriate conditions that would guarantee their safe existence. The above process is true of local communities as well as larger communities such as communes,

poviats or voivodships (Wiśniewski, 2013).

It is obvious that conditions for human life are changing. Along with the transformations, safety conditions need to be adjusted, both on micro and macro scale. The perception of threats constantly evolves, in place of old threats, new even more complex ones emerge. The consequences of advances in civilisation are not always positive and may give rise to threats to a safe existence. Following this, a series of classifications of potential dangers is made that may adversely affect the existing state of affairs. In this context it is understandable that the society has a wide spectrum of expectations towards the authorities i.e. bodies of central and local government administration (Ściborek et al., 2015).

The ever growing level of threats and their changing nature requires continuous cooperation of many entities which pursuant to the letter of law have the possibility to mutually support one another in the process of counteracting threats within their respective competences and in the phase of elimination of effects these threats bring. The support and cooperation between entities in the safety system refer to both cognitive (Czupryński, Wiśniewski and Zboina, 2014) and utilitarian sphere (Ziobro and Lubiewski, 2018).

Assuming that satisfaction of needs is the main motivator behind any human activity, it can be said that these needs force people to effectively cooperate with others (Wiśniewski, Koziół and Falecki, 2017) because in the surrounding world it is difficult to find individual people or small groups that would be fully self-sufficient and able to function independently and satisfy their basic needs without resorting to cooperation with others. Therefore, cooperation and mutual support are ubiquitous in daily life of communities, and the development of societies is closely related to the growth of these interrelations (Prońko, 2006).



II. PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is the process by which rescue entities ensure protection of life, health, property and the environment in emergency situations at every organizational level. Considering that the concept of public safety can be explained in many different ways, it should be emphasized that provision of public safety means protection of life, health, property and the environment against broadly understood consequences of technical as well as natural disasters. In this context one should also mention the system of public safety which is organized by the state. It is one of the subsystems functioning in the area of national safety. The public safety system is a set of norms and legal guarantees as well as the way of organizing authorities, public administration and other legal entities, creating formal and practical conditions for protecting citizens from situations dangerous to life and health or causing environmental damage, material losses etc. The entities within the system also ensure that effects of these dangerous situations are minimized and that the original state is restored. A part of the process concentrates on shaping the environment in such a way which guarantees a harmonious and sustainable development of groups, communities and entire nations (Ściborek et al., 2015).

Such a broad definition of public safety allows to make a conclusion that the public safety system is in fact created by all state bodies, central and local as well as individual formations and services. It should also be noted that the objectives of the public safety system coincide with the objectives set for the civil protection system.

Maintaining public safety at an appropriate level requires undertaking a number of system actions such as:

- prevention of threats;
- minimizing the risk of threats and their consequences;
- preparation of response systems commensurate with possible threats;
- effective response in case of occurrence of a threat;
- preparation and implementation of restoration programs (Wiśniewski and Zalewski, 2006).

Contemporary requirements related to the system of public safety put a special emphasis on its coherence and uniformity of coordinating activities and common procedures, in particular: planning, rescue, communication, information exchange, training and equipment.

III. SUBJECT SCOPE OF COOPERATION

Effective provision of public safety is not possible without a sufficient level of cooperation between entities that are statutorily appointed to carry out tasks in the field of broadly understood safety (Wiśniewski, 2018). Cooperation is a structured action of a permanent nature, including long-term transactions of resource flow between organizations which guarantees the achievement of goals which otherwise would be very difficult or even impossible to achieve as they would require involvement of much larger volumes of resources and

forces (Kožuch, 2008). Considering the above, the most important premises for cooperation are as follows:

- orientation towards actions in the public interest or for the common good;
- functioning in the same local or regional environment;
- private interpersonal relations.

It should be emphasized that an important element of cooperation is its formalization (Wiśniewski, 2009). Specialists dealing with safety issues classify cooperation as non-executive activity in administration. They emphasize that the main form of state administration activity, which results from the necessity to conduct extended activities, is its social and organizational activity. This kind of activity embraces multi-directional socio-political tasks carried out by the state bodies and social organizations (Ura, 1998). If it is assumed that cooperation is one of non-executive forms of operation, it can be pointed out that the legal basis for taking a specific action may be even a general competence standard. However, the authors of the paper are inclined towards the point of view that the best legal (non-executive) form is conclusion of an administrative contract. Such contracts most often result from the need for cooperation between entities that perform a specific range of competitively similar tasks.

Contemporary threats to public safety are the reason why certain entities enter into cooperation agreements. Thanks to the cooperation, the achievement of set goals is easier, faster and the amount of effort and resources is kept on a reasonable level. Cooperation within the public safety system consists of the agreed usage of forces and means of all involved entities for a specific purpose, in a specific time and place in order to combat threats to public safety or to remove their consequences. These activities are carried out in the best possible way to minimize the adverse effects of a threat on the population, property and the environment. The essence of such an action is the necessity to organize combined, integrated and coordinated effort of entities that share a common goal and a joint desire to achieve it. That is why it is so important that all undertaken actions are specified to the extent that all participants in this process know what role they play and what specific tasks they are supposed to perform. The fulfilment of this condition can ensure that the actions will bring the intended effect. Each participant involved in the activity should receive the description of the task to be carried out as well as the information on the time and place of its implementation.

IV. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE STATE FIRE SERVICE AND THE VOLUNTEER FIRE BRIGADES (OSP)

An important element of cooperation focused on combating threats to public safety is cooperation between the state and social entities. The specificity of such cooperation can be presented on the example of the State Fire Service and the Volunteer Fire Brigades (OSPs). The idea behind this cooperation is connected with the national firefighting rescue system, in which the State Fire Service and the Volunteer Fire

Brigades are of key importance. The involvement of the two partners of the system determines the success of operations they engage in.

It should be noted that the Voluntary Fire Brigades are organizations created on the basis of the Act of 7 April 1989 on associations. In addition, the basic documents regulating the functioning of OSPs are: the statute of the Volunteer Fire Brigades and the statute of the Union of the Volunteer Fire Brigades of the Republic of Poland. The Statute of the Volunteer Fire Brigades defines in detail the organization and tasks set for the units. The tasks result from Article 19 Section 2 of the Fire Protection Act and from Article 9 of the Act on associations. The Statute of the Volunteer Fire Brigade defines all organizational and legal data regarding units of the Volunteer Fire Brigades i.e.: full name, location, area of operation, mutual assistance area, information on legal personality, financial affairs and internal organization. The basis for the operations of each Volunteer Fire Brigade is the adopted statute. In order to become an active unit it is necessary to register it in the Registry Court. The Volunteer Fire Brigades conduct operations based on resolutions of general assemblies and on decisions of the boards which manage their daily operations. The boards implement statutory activities, following the resolutions which are adopted by the general assembly. The Statute of the Volunteer Fire Brigade defines the scope of competences of its authorities, including matters reserved exclusively for the competence of the general assembly.

As part of the development of the national firefighting rescue system, the Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service specified the standards regarding training and equipment for inclusion of a given Volunteer Fire Brigade unit in the system. By introducing this standardization, the Chief Commandant determined that each unit should have at least twelve rescuers who meet the requirements of direct participation in rescue operations. All rescuers in the unit should have appropriate fire training, two of them must have completed chief training, two of them should have completed training for commanders and three rescuers should have training for drivers-conservationists, four rescuers should be able to deliver qualified first aid, the same number of rescuers should have training in technical rescue as well as training in directing traffic and securing the airstrip for an ambulance helicopter (National Headquarters of the State Fire Service, 2011). The Chief Commandant also specified the hardware standards for the equipment of the Volunteer Fire Brigades for units applying for inclusion into the system. The necessary equipment consists of: four sets of hypertensive air apparatus, one set of hydraulic rescue tools as well as one power generator, a pump for contaminated water, a PSP R1 set (for qualified first aid), as well as a radio communication device including selective calling equipment. The introduction of the above mentioned requirements made it possible to standardize the preparation of the Volunteer Fire Brigade units to carry out basic but also specialised rescue and fire-fighting operations as well as to cooperate with the State Fire Service. The introduction of the quantity aspect made it

possible to supplement the network of the National Firefighting Rescue System (Kogut, 2014) with the Volunteer Fire Brigade units, assuring that the time of arrival of the rescue forces to the place of the incident is no longer than 15 minutes from receiving the notification about the incident (National Headquarters of the State Fire Service, 2011).

Participation of OSP units in rescue operations conducted by the National Firefighting Rescue System is systematically growing, which is not only caused by the increasing number of incidents, but is also connected with their better preparation in terms of equipment and training. The Volunteer Fire Brigade units included in the National Firefighting Rescue System have a special role during rescue operations, especially those units which are deployed in rural areas and in small towns. The Volunteer Fire Brigade units also take on additional tasks on the basis of voluntary agreements having an invaluable contribution to actions undertaken jointly with units of the State Fire Service especially when it comes to extensive and long-term emergencies. In these cases, the participation of the Volunteer Fire Brigade units, which are a part of the National Firefighting Rescue System, is vital because human and equipment potential of the State Fire Service is very often insufficient which was evident during the great flood of 2010. It should also be noted that adequate training, experience and use of modern equipment makes it possible to extend the activities of the Volunteer Fire Brigade units well beyond its basic scope of activity which is extinguishing fires. The list of tasks performed by OSP units includes:

- technical rescue;
- road accident rescue;
- delivery of qualified first aid to injured persons;
- creating an airstrip and accommodating an aircraft both during the day and at night;
- illuminating the place of the incident;
- appropriate marking and securing the place of the incident;
- managing the traffic in the case of absence or insufficient number of the Police officers.

Recently the Volunteer Fire Brigade units included in the system have been increasingly active in the field of specialized activities such as water and diving operations, rescue operations including vertical rescue operations. The involvement of firefighters of OSP units as well as their professionalism, makes them a very important element of the safety system.

V. MOUNTAIN RESCUE

When it comes to provision of safety in the mountains, this task is also performed thanks to combined effort of social and state entities and the leading role in this case is played by the former. Here the relevant legislation is the Act of 18 August 2011 on safety and rescue in the mountains and at the organized ski areas. The Act defines the mountain rescue service as an organized assistance for people who have been injured or who are exposed to danger of losing their life or health in the mountains. Another task performed by the formation is

transport of corpses from the mountains. The legislation mentioned above also defines the ski rescue service as an organized formation providing assistance to people who have been injured or are at risk of losing their lives or health in organized ski areas.

The obligation to ensure safe conditions for people staying in the mountains rests on the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration but also on the bodies of local government units where mountain rescue units are located. Further, pursuant to the Act, the same obligation is placed on the managements of the National and Landscape Parks located in the mountainous areas, as well as on natural persons, legal persons and unincorporated organizational units which conduct organized activities in the field of sport, recreation and tourism. The legislator clarifies the issue of provision of safety in the mountains by enumerating specific tasks related to provision of safe conditions in the mountains for the entities mentioned above. The most important tasks are as follows:

- marking the terrain, facilities and equipment used for sport, recreation or tourism;
- preparation of instructions on how to use a given area, facility or machine;
- making sure that the entities authorized to perform mountain rescue operations have been provided appropriate conditions for organizing assistance for victims of a mountain accident and for those at risk of losing their lives or health;
- announcing the avalanche alert.

In the context of what was said above, particular attention should be paid to the provision of the Act which stipulates that entities entitled to conduct mountain rescue operations need to be provided with appropriate conditions to be able to perform their statutory tasks in the field of safety. It should also be emphasized that in accordance with the applicable regulations these tasks can be performed only by authorised entities i.e. entities that have obtained the consent of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration to conduct mountain rescue operations and have been entered in the register of units cooperating with the State Emergency Medical Service, which is mentioned in article 17 section 1 of the Act of 8 September 2006 on State Emergency Medical Service. The operations carried out by the mountain rescue teams consist of:

- taking reports on incidents;
- arriving at the scene of the accident with rescue and emergency equipment;
- providing qualified first aid;
- evacuating people from hazardous areas which pose a threat to their life and health;
- transporting people who have been injured or are exposed to the risk of loss of life or health to a place where it is possible to undertake medical rescue operations by the units of the State Emergency Medical Service, after prior arrangement of the place of transfer of a person who was given assistance as part of rescue operations;
- conducting search operations for missing persons in

the mountains.

Taking into account the fact that entities authorized to perform mountain rescue activities are responsible for organization, management and coordination of rescue operations, they are entitled to request assistance and support from central or local government administration units and from other entities cooperating with the State Emergency Medical Service including units subordinated or supervised by the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration and the Minister of National Defence. Other entities obliged to engage in rescue activities if necessary are the State Forests and the National and Landscape Parks.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In order to assure efficient functioning of the public safety system and fulfilment of its primary objectives, it is necessary to establish smooth flow of co-operation between all elements of the system. All participants in the system, although they function pursuant to different legal acts and have a different institutional subordination, exist in the same public space and perform their respective tasks for the benefit of the society. Assuring an effective system of public safety is the responsibility of the state because in the hands of the state lies the safety of its citizens.

VII. REFERENCES

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