

Cooperation between Communal and City Guards, the Police Forces and the National Fire Service during Floods

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Abstract— Anticipation, avoidance and reduction of the impact of threats have become a real challenge for contemporary generations. The old perception of threats characteristic of the 20th century (armed conflicts, global wars etc.) is no longer valid in the 21st century. Nowadays the forces of nature constitute the biggest threat. Therefore, it is vital to prepare and be ready for natural disasters, outbursts of epidemics among humans and animals, and for technical failures. It should be noticed, that in counteracting threats which occur in modern world it is necessary for a number of services to closely cooperate with one another. Floods are one of the most common threats against universal security in Poland. For the sake of efficiency, it is vital to organize cooperation between city or communal guards, the Police forces and the National Fire Service in order to assure smooth course of operations in case of a flood. The paper contains a description of the above mentioned cooperation and ends with some recommendations with respect to strengthening of the efficiency of cooperation between the services under discussion.

Index Terms— city guards, communal guards, the National Fire Service, threat to security, flood.

I. INTRODUCTION

Addressing contemporary threats to people and the environment requires close cooperation between many entities. Human actions are inspired by various reasons and the driving force of actions are needs that arise at a given moment. Assuming that needs are the main motivator of actions, it can be stated that satisfaction of needs pushes people towards mutual interactions. It is difficult for an individual or small groups of individuals to be independent and fully self-sufficient without the necessity to rely on others. Therefore, cooperation or mutual support are ubiquitous in everyday life of societies and their further development requires strengthening of the above mentioned interrelationships (Prońko, 2006). The same applies to the activities undertaken in the field of safety of persons and their property. Nowadays, ensuring

broadly understood security is not possible without the cooperation of statutorily obliged entities and the involvement of societies. An example of joint actions taken for the sake of security is the cooperation of communal and city guards, the Police and the National Fire Service.

II. CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY FOR UNIVERSAL SECURITY - FLOODS

In the 21st century, the entities responsible for provision of broadly understood security face a number of challenges, many of which involve cooperation in crisis situations such as, for example, floods. The challenges should be understood as inalienable needs that require specific responses and appropriate actions that result from occurring threats and opportunities (Haliżak, Popiuk - Rosińska, 1995). Therefore, a challenge means a new, difficult situation in which a relevant entity has to describe the scope of activities and take appropriate actions. If those actions are not implemented, the new situation may evolve into a threat. It should be noted that a challenge is uncertainty, not yet a threat. If entities responsible for ensuring security do not take actions to solve the problem in due time, the challenge may turn into a threat. In short, it can be said that tackling challenges is positive because it does not involve negative actions, but when a challenge becomes a threat, entities are obliged to undertake negative actions aimed at eliminating the threat. Therefore, security activities constitute a chain of actions alternately positive and negative. [...] *The border between a threat and uncertainty (created by challenges) is quite unclear because it depends on determining values that are subject to protection, however, it also depends on individual sensitivity of the perceiving entity. Whereas people's perception and assessment of security is always subjective, threats are often combined with challenges* (Zięba, Zajac, 2010). Unfortunately, people are often mistaken in perceiving the phenomena around them and have a tendency to



describe ordinary challenges as threats to their security. R. Zięba and J. Zajac emphasize that in order to avoid misunderstandings in the subjective differentiation of challenges and threats, both should be perceived as one and treated as a risk to security (Zięba, Zajac, 2010). It should also be emphasized that changes in the conditioning of national security, even those that constitute a challenge, can create not only threats but also opportunities which can lead to strengthening of the level of national security. Therefore, new situations although they may carry a potential risk, should be treated as an opportunity which may bring specific benefits.

Anticipation, avoidance and minimization of effects of threats have become a real challenge for modern societies. In the 20th century threats equalled an armed conflict, total war or the use of weapons of mass destruction. But the 21st century has brought in significantly and fundamentally new challenges and threats (Skrabacz, 2010). That is why it is now necessary to brace for threats posed by natural forces which can lead to natural disasters, epidemics of infectious diseases or technical failures. It is worth noting that occurrence of threats related to natural forces or technical failures may give rise to social unrests and conflicts if these phenomena violate the security of a given community (Wiśniewski, Zalewski, 2006).

In Poland, one of the most common phenomenon that poses a threat to security is a flood which is defined as a clear increase in the state and flow rate of water in watercourses and lakes, caused by increased power supply or incidental raising of the water level caused by the acts of nature. Floods always generate considerable economic and social losses.

The intensification of flood occurrences in recent years is a logical consequence of human activities. Developing economies and advances in technology have had a considerable impact on river basins. Development of land often destabilizes natural flows of rainwater, also expansion of agriculture means that vast areas of forests are replaced with arable lands, meadows or grasslands for animals, all of which have a disturbing effect on natural water cycles. Moreover, the intensification of agriculture activity often speeds up the processes of weathering of rocks.

III. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY COMMUNAL AND CITY GUARDS DURING FLOODS

The events of the last few decades have definitely impacted the perception of security, as well as forced societies to introduce new paradigms regarding security standards and preparation for adverse events. Provision of security is understood as the implementation of a specific mission of state and local organs. It should be emphasized that it is the task of local government units to satisfy collective needs of their communities and to uphold public order and security of citizens (Act of 8 March 1990 on communal self-government). When it comes to the organisational entitlements with respect to provision of security on local level, there is a statutorily guaranteed permission to create uniformed formations of local guards dedicated for protection of public order within the local government unit and entrusted with subordinate tasks

performed for the benefit of local communities. In smallest units of local government, which in Poland are called 'communes', where the executive body is called a 'president' or 'mayor', the guard is referred to as 'city guard'. Whereas, in rural communes the formations are referred to as 'communal guards'. Local guards operate pursuant to provisions of the Act of 29 August 1997 on communal guards. The guards perform tasks in the field of law enforcement in accordance with local laws and regulations. Of particular importance here are tasks related to tackling the effects of natural disasters e.g. :

- securing the area affected by the catastrophe or an area where the forces of nature are expected to hit against access of unauthorised persons until the arrival of emergency services;
- cooperation with relevant entities in order to save life and protect health of citizens;
- assistance in removing the effects of technical failures etc.

Communal guards also plays an important preventive and informative role, as they are obliged to inform the local community about the current state of affairs and types of potential threats.

As previously indicated, a flood is a natural disaster with quite frequent occurrence in recent years. The threats that may occur in relation with a flood and which have to be addressed by local guards include:

- threat to human life and health;
- loss of property;
- violation of public order;
- non-compliance of people with orders or ordinances issued by public administration bodies and by rescue and emergency services;
- riots in evacuation areas;
- increased crime rate e.g. theft of property left by evacuated people;
- theft of property of evacuated people from its storage locations;
- theft and assaults on transports with humanitarian aid;
- theft of humanitarian aid from its storage and distribution points.

In addition, in the time of flood there may be traffic disturbances along routes and roadways caused by mass uncontrolled migrations of people to areas not affected by the disaster, there is also a risk of outbursts of panic. The activities undertaken by city or communal guards during floods should be divided into tasks performed inside the headquarters of the local guards and on locations in the areas covered by the flood. The activities performed in the headquarters of the local guards include:

- receiving information about flooding and directing officers on duty to the place of the incident to collect additional detailed information and then taking necessary actions;
- informing other services and guards about the incident;
- if necessary, sending additional officers to the place of

the incident;

- establishing cooperation and exchange of information with public administration bodies and other institutions competent to act in situations of combating the effects of floods;
- preparation and protection of own facilities and equipment for the event of the risk of flood;
- gathering extra equipment which will be needed for operations in flood conditions;
- securing the operations from the logistic point of view;
- ensuring smooth operations of the unit.
- The actions undertaken by communal and city guards in flooded areas include:
 - alarming the public about the danger;
 - monitoring the areas threatened by the flood;
 - maintaining security and public order;
 - providing assistance in evacuation of the elderly, the injured and the sick;
 - providing storage centres where people can leave their property for the period of evacuation;
 - localization of sensitive places on roadways and assuring their protection;
 - organizing patrols to prevent theft of property left in areas abandoned by people due to evacuation;
 - organizing bypass routes of flooded spots and areas threatened with flooding;
 - informing mass media of threats and obstacles in movement.

IV. TASKS PERFORMED BY THE POLICE DURING A NATURAL DISASTER

The tasks to be performed by the Police forces during a natural disaster can be divided into: alerting and warning, maintaining public order, directing rescue operations and actions aimed at restoring the state that existed before the threat occurred. The tasks related to alerting and warning include: obtaining, processing and forwarding information about an incident for the purpose of directing and commanding, transmitting information and emergency messages through the police communication channels, sharing the police means of communications with other rescue authorities and services. The actions related to maintaining public order include: enabling free access to and departure from the area of operations for all involved emergency services and rescue teams, organizing bypass routes of endangered areas and dissemination of information about the bypass routes, protecting order in places where rescue teams work, at medical points, victim collection points and securing places that may pose an additional threat to people's life and health. The Police is also obliged to prevent gathering of onlookers and to put out any outbursts of panic, to enforce law and public order, to pilot columns of vehicles of rescue services, to direct traffic and to protect storage areas and humanitarian aid centres. In the scope of direct rescue operations, the tasks of the Police include: assistance in evacuation of victims, providing first pre-medical assistance,

providing means of transport for the purposes of the rescue operations, participating in protection of technical devices or in creation of fortifications in the event of a direct escalation of danger. In order to restore the state existing before the threat, the Police is supposed to regulate the movement of people and vehicles, to protect the process of distribution of humanitarian aid, to provide information on whereabouts of victims and the properties which was stored and secured, and to disseminate information on the current state of emergency. It is worth mentioning that the tasks undertaken by the Police during natural disasters and technical failures are implemented in four phases which correspond to the phases of crisis management. The phases are: prevention, preparation, response and reconstruction.

Each occurrence of a crisis situation bearing the signs of a natural disaster requires from the Police to engage significant forces and resources. A good example of such a situation can be the flood which took place between 17 May and 22 June 2010. During the escalation of the risk of flood, about 3,500 police officers were directed to perform flood related activities on daily bases together with 1,200 police vehicles and 30 boats. Additionally, students from the Police Academies of Katowice and Legionowo were sent as auxiliary forces. Also the Police aviation forces were used in the operations to tackle the effects of the catastrophe. During the 2010 flood, at an extraordinary meeting convened by the Polish Prime Minister, a specially dedicated unit was created. The unit was called the Aircraft Flight Coordination Center (AFCC) and operated between 22 May 2010 (08:00) and 28 May 2010 (12:00) and again between 5 and 11 of June 2010. The main task of the AFCC was to coordinate the use of the aircrafts at the disposal of services subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and to the Polish Armed Forces. During the first and second wave of the 2010 flood, the Police Aviation carried out a total 303 flights which lasted jointly 322 hours and 40 minutes. These flights were operated by:

- the Police Aviation Board: 169 flights (184 hours 20 minutes in total);
- the Police Aviation Sections of the District Police Headquarters in Krakow, Łódź, Poznań, Szczecin and Wrocław: 134 flights (138 hours 20 minutes in total).

During the flood control operations, 43 helicopters were kept in full readiness for action, including:

- the Police Aviation - 14 helicopters;
- the Border Guard - 4 helicopters;
- the Command of the Land Forces from 8 to 21 helicopters, depending on the severity of operations;
- the Air Force of the Polish Armed Forces - 4 helicopters.

A total of 166 people were evacuated by air:

- the Police Aviation evacuated 116 people;
- the Polish Air Force evacuated 50 people;
- the Border Guard Aviation did not perform evacuation flights.

In addition, during the 2010 flood operations, the Police Aviation carried out:

- rescue and evacuation flights;

- patrol flights, including: lighting of embankments, monitoring of towns and residential places to prevent theft (looting),
- cooperation activities with ground units of the National Fire Service;
- reconnaissance flights, including: monitoring of embankments threatening to burst open;
- transport flights related to the construction of embankments;
- exploration flights for the Fire Service and the Police;
- search flights for a ship which broke off the tether on the Vistula River. The ship was located in the vicinity of Dęblin and was towed and moored in cooperation with a military unit;
- pursuit flights in connection with an attack on a convoy - 2 lost vehicles were successfully located.

The figures given above show that the Police Aviation had the biggest contribution into the rescue operations of all entities that carried out tasks using aircraft machines during the 2010 flood.

V. COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL FIRE SERVICE

Cooperation between city and communal guards, the Police and the National Fire Service is an important factor affecting the effectiveness of actions undertaken in crisis situations, also during a flood. The necessity of cooperation is determined by the needs which, despite considerable transformations that have taken place in recent years, have remained basically the same and still contain the same criteria. The entity in charge of a given complex of problems bears full responsibility in the area of implemented tasks; this entity is obligated to specify tasks for services responsible for providing assistance; to manage and supervise the process of implementation and to hold accountable those who performed given activities. The next criterion is transfer of mutually and systematically useful information between competent units. In addition, there are special working groups appointed for performance of specific tasks. The groups consist of representatives of institutions and their functional divisions. The last criterion is distribution of responsibilities among cooperating entities which remain in the field of interest of the National Fire Service. These responsibilities are supposed to be implemented on daily bases pursuant to specific agreements and mutual personal contacts. The cooperation with the National Fire Service includes: determination of organization of road traffic in the vicinity of rescue operations i.e. access routes for emergency services, evacuation channels for people and property, designation of hazardous areas and securing them against unauthorized access; enforcing orders issued by the head of the rescue operation with respect to evacuation of residents from endangered premises, removal of vehicles or other equipment hindering the conduct of operations, and finally, the exchange of information about victims and missing people. Other joint activities involve conducting search and rescue operations with the participation of specialized search and rescue groups operating within the structures of the National Fire Service. Some of the groups

dispose of rescue dogs, aircrafts equipped with thermal imaging cameras which allow conducting search activities in difficult, inaccessible terrain and in large forest areas.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The improved solutions in the area of prevention and response in the event of a flood are the outcome of the widespread conviction that safety has never been and will never be a permanent asset but one that must constantly be sought and pursued. Therefore, a prerequisite for the construction of efficient local security systems is a correct identification of challenges and threats for a particular community. Another necessary condition for efficient emergency operations is proper organization of cooperation. Considering the above, in order to increase the efficiency of cooperation between communal or city guards, the Police forces and the National Fire Service during floods, it is necessary to:

- improve the information transfer system between cooperating bodies;
- conduct systematic analysis of provided information;
- base the cooperation on mutual provision of services in order to accomplish the overarching task of ensuring security;
- strengthen joint responsibility and mutual assistance in the implementation of tasks within the territorial range of entities;
- develop and update cooperation plans which may be immediately implemented whenever a threat occurs.

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