

THE CREATION OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

– Initiative with Major Impact of the Romanian Armed Forces –

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The author reckons that, through the establishment of the force structure for special operations, the national political-military decision-makers are provided with a viable instrument, able to achieve strategic results.

The preparation procurement of and state-of-the-art equipment make these forces a power multiplier of conventional forces by the fact that they are able to use force not only selectively but also in proportion to the size of the threat. In addition to achieving significant power and resources savings, the collateral damage and adverse effects caused by conventional responses are limited almost to the minimum.

In turn, the special operations component manages to ensure an effective coordination of the implementation of political and military decisions in the structures of special operations forces of the Romanian Armed Forces.

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The proliferation of the new risks and threats to the democratic nation states, of military and non-military nature, forced not only Romania but also the other NATO member states to reconsider their ways to defend and promote national values and interests. A milestone in this process was the NATO Summit in Riga on 28-29 November 2006, which addressed “NATO Transformation in the New Global Age”. Following the discussions at the heads of state and government level, it was agreed a joint action plan to further enhance the Alliance’s capabilities, focusing on upgrading the unconventional means. The concrete measures were stipulated in *NATO Special Operations Forces (SOF) Transformation Initiative – NSTI* through *NATO SOF Training Education Programme – NSTEP*.

Definitely, the evolution of the Romanian *Armed Forces Special Operations Forces* has subsumed under NATO’s Strategic Concept related to transformation in the field. Thus, there should

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be highlighted the approaches and the measures taken at national level to form a robust SOF structure able to fulfil its strategic role in the new geopolitical context. The emphasis has been placed on examining the need to establish a command and control structure (C2) at operational-strategic level, as well as the role it is meant to play within the national and allied command structures in support of both national and Allied strategic goals.

To achieve this desideratum, NATO's short- and medium-term effort in transforming *SOF* across the Alliance will be examined. A special importance is going to be given to the measures that have marked the evolution of the Romanian Armed Forces *SOF* and to the actions taken at national level to achieve the subordinate structures interoperability with the similar structures in NATO member states. The efforts made at the level of the Alliance lately to transform the *Special Operations Forces* and the modernisation of the command/control structures emphasise the interest in adapting the capabilities to respond to the new threats in the security environment. Thus, through expanding the existent structures and establishing new ones, *SOF* structures in NATO member states can be better used to support the achievement of the Alliance strategic goal.

The reference to the concept of *special operations* in the *Military Strategy of Romania* in 2000 is the starting point for the establishment of *SOF* structures in the Romanian Armed Forces. Two years later, during the Supreme Council of National Defence session on 5 April 2002, the members decided to set up an appropriate structure able to conduct special operations. Following this major political decision, on 1 March 2003, it was established the *SOF* land component: the 1st Special Operations Battalion. Simultaneously, at the General Staff level, within the Operations Directorate, the *Counterterrorism and Special Forces Service (CSFS)* was established. This structure was accountable for planning and management in five key areas of responsibility: combating terrorism, psychological operations, information operations, civil-military operations and special operations. Subsequently, in 2007 the *CSFS* turned into *Special Operations Service*.

These measures were supplemented by the establishment, in 2005, of a specialised training structure. Hence, the Paratrooper Training School was restructured as *SOF* Training School and starting 1 May 2005 the *SOF Training Center* was established within its framework.

SOF establishment continued with the creation of the *Naval SOF Group*, on 1 April 2006, under the Navy Staff. Moreover, the promulgation of *Law 346 regarding the organisation and functioning of the Ministry of Defence*, the same year,

represented another cornerstone for the *SOF* creation. At Article 30, paragraph d) the document stipulates the joint character of *SOF* structures and it states the main tasks. Furthermore, Article 31 insists on C2 prerogatives during operations both within the national borders and outside them.

The end of 2008 brought about new changes in the *SOF* structure. On 1 September, it was established the *Combat Search and Rescue Detachment (CSRD)*, under the Air Force Staff. This step was followed by the restructuring of the Special Operations Service within the Operations Directorate, on 21 November. As a result, two new *SOF* structures emerged – the *Special Operations Component Command (SOCC)*, as joint operational command under the General Staff, and the *Special Operations Office* within the Operations Directorate.

The process of creating the Romanian Armed Forces *SOF* was continued by the establishment, on 1 August 2009, of the 1st Special Operations Regiment that, besides the 1st *SOF* Battalion, comprised two paratrooper battalions. The measure was intended to expand the range of response options in the field of special operations.

The role of the *SOCC* is to strengthen *SOF* units' ability to train and operate in multinational environments in support of national and Allied interests. Due to its joint nature, under the authority of the Chief of the General Staff, *SOCC* must ensure not only the implementation, at the operational-strategic level, of the political and military decisions in two sensitive areas: special operations and combating terrorism, but also to advise military decision-makers on the use of *SOF* units. In order to accomplish these requirements, *SOCC* should be structured and manned so that it can perform properly the C2 function for *SOF* units on the operational continuum, both within the national border and abroad, in different theaters of operations. The experience of other NATO member nations has shown that the C2 structure must comprise J1 to J8 functional modules. The benefit of this structure is that during peace it provides administrative support in all *SOF* related areas, whereas during crisis and war, the functional modules can be reorganised as operations, support and communications centres.

The responsibilities of the special operations component in the field of special operations will be aimed at:

- a) human resource management for the Romanian Armed Forces *SOF* structures;
- b) management of the intelligence and data during the planning and execution of joint special operations;

- c) planning and conduct of joint special operations at the strategic and operational level;
- d) operational command of the Romanian Armed Forces *SOF* operational structures tasked to fulfil missions on the national territory as well as abroad;
- e) management of the financial and material resources for the *SOF* structures;
- f) establishment of procurement policies and technological research needs;
- g) coordination of the training process and harmonisation of doctrine, regulations, manuals and *SOF* specific regulatory provisions with those of NATO;
- h) coordination of the readiness enhancement process for the *SOF* structures available to NATO/EU and monitor the maintenance of the reached operational level;
- i) ensure standardisation and interoperability of national *SOF* structures with those similar to other NATO member states;

The responsibilities of the special operations component in the fight against terrorism are aimed at:

- a) operational command of the national *SOF* structures taking part in counter-terrorist operations abroad, directly or through the multinational headquarters in the theatres of operations;
- b) coordination of the subordinate *SOF* structures within the Ministry of National Defence with similar structures within the National Prevention and Defence against Terrorism System during the management of terrorist crisis;
- c) *SOF* resources management (weapons, ammunition, equipment and other specific means used during the operations to fight against terrorism);
- d) standardisation of the resources provided by the Ministry of National Defence and achievement of the equipment interoperability with the other structures from the national defence system.

To sum up, the establishment of a viable *SOF* provides the national decision-makers with a structure having unique capabilities, able to fulfil strategic objectives. Due to its training and the last generation equipment, *SOF* is a force multiplier for the conventional units, able to use force not only selectively but also at a proportional scale with the level of threat. Besides the economy of force achieved, it is beneficial as it reduces the collateral damages and minimises the adverse reactions caused by conventional responses.

However, tactical skills and experience do not always guarantee the success of special operations; they have to be supplemented with a viable C2 structure, able to control and monitor the way tactical *SOF* units carry out political and military directives. Therefore, the establishment of the *SOCC* ensures the needed coordination for the implementation of political and military decisions across the *SOF* structures in the Romanian Armed Forces.

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