CIMIC TASKS DURING THE ROMANIAN AIR POLICING MISSION IN THE BALTIC STATES. "BALTICA 07"

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Abstract: *This paper is aimed at analyzing the concrete aspects of the human interactions generated by the presence of the Romanian military in the Air Force in missions outside the national territory. Thus, the intention is to investigate empirically the real CIMIC-related problems, faced by the Romanian Air Force in carrying out missions outside the national territory. I have chosen for this short study one of the Air Force missions carried out by the Romanian Air Force troops in 2007 on the territory of the Baltic States, namely "Baltica 07". Therefore, I investigated problems and the way they were solved by the Romanian military personnel. The research allowed and led to pertinent conclusions regarding the importance of CIMIC operations in support of Air Force missions accomplishment that were performed outside the national territory.*

Keywords*: CIMIC (civil-military cooperation); interoperability; air policing; CAOC (Combined Air Operations Centre)*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper, laying the theoretical foundations of *CIMIC* structure from communication and military sciences, based on papers written or coordinated by authors like: Huntington (1957), Janowitz (1981), Habermas (2005), Zaalberg (2005), Dobrescu *et al.* (2007), Schiff (2009), Nielsen & Snider (2009), Soliman & Coskun (2015) and Vasile (2017), aims to empirically investigate the actual *CIMIC* problems encountered by the Romanian Air Force in carrying out missions outside the national territory. We chose for this study one of the real Air Force missions performed by the Romanian Air Force troops in 2007 on the territory of the Baltic States.

Investigating these issues and how they were solved by the Romanian military allows us to make pertinent conclusions about the importance of *CIMIC* operations to support the accomplishment of the Air Force missions outside the national territory. Among the variants of the case study, I have chosen for this paper the case study on events, roles, relationships, in which I propose the analysis of concrete aspects of human interactions generated by the presence of Romanian Air Force soldiers in missions outside the national territory. Therefore, I have chosen the case study method because, as experts point out, this is

a strategy to carry out research that requires empirical investigations in relation to a particular contemporary phenomenon in a real life context and using multiple sources of information interviews, questionnaires, testimonies, evidence, documents (Yin, 1994:196).

This method allows the

focus on a concrete case (which is interpreted in detail, i.e. giving in depth references about individuals, groups, target organizations), taking into account all its contextual particularities (Robson, 2002:180).

"Baltica 07" consisted of

defending the integrity of the Baltic Sea Airspace in peacetime for 24 hours with aircraft capable of taking off and acting in the event of an aircraft being broken by error or intentionally, the flight regime in the airspace of the Baltic States (Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:4).

It lasted for 3 months, between 31st July – 31st October, 2007. 4 Mig-21 LanceR „C" aircraft and a detachment of 67 personnel from 71st "General Emanoil Ionescu" Air Base, Câmpia Turzii were part of this mission. The mission took place within NATO, "under the command and tactical control of the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) of UEDEM, Germany" and "in cooperation with the Lithuanian commanders at the Siauliai and Karmelava base." (Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:4)

2. THE GENERAL CONTEXT

2.1. Geopolitical context. The Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were part of the USSR until the collapse of the communist empire. In 1991 they became independent, and since 2004 they have been members of the European Union and NATO.

In the transition period towards the European and Euro-Atlantic bodies, the Baltic States faced strong pressure from Russia to join the newly established Community of Independent States, as successors of the USSR, but their European vocation as well as Russia's inability to produce any credible influence on them, has ultimately led to adherence to NATO and the European Union. Under these circumstances, the borders of the Baltic States have become borders of the European Union with Russia, but especially with the North Atlantic Alliance with Russia's powerful military force, a potential enemy.

The situation of the Baltic countries is also complicated by the proximity of the Russian Baltic territory of Kaliningrad, in fact a Russian military fortress at the heart of Western democracy, but also by the relatively low level of development of the national military force and a military infrastructure based on the Soviet technology and facilities of the last century. The massive Russian military presence in the Baltic Sea, both in Kaliningrad and in other maritime areas in its sphere of influence, poses great challenges to the sovereignty of the Baltic States. Given their NATO membership, the defense of their airspace with the involvement of the Alliance's resources is fully justified. A number of 13 NATO member states participated in rotation with troops and aircraft on air defense missions to protect the Baltic Sea airspace since April 2004 as support missions. Since March 2006, as missions under the common umbrella of the Air Defense, the Baltic Airspace became a NATO Airspace (Laurențiu Chiriță, in Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:5).

2.2 The cultural, social and economic context of the mission. The Baltic countries are northern cultures, similar to Norway and Sweden, but with no negligible Russian influences. Occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, a fact unrecognized by the US and other Western democracies, the Baltic countries underwent a powerful process of Russianization, massive Russian-speaking population transfer, and the requirement of studying Russian. Nowadays, within the population of the three Baltic countries, the Russian population represents a quarter of the Estonian population and one third of the Latvian population, and the capital of Latvia, Riga, has a mostly Russian population.

The official languages in the Baltic States during the Soviet period was preserved locally, but in parallel with the Russian language, so that today the elder population and even middle-aged people know and frequently use Russian language. In Latvia, for example, about 34% of the population speaks Russian at home, including people who are not Russian. The fewest Russian speakers are in Lithuania.

The religion of the Baltic countries is traditionally Christian. The Soviet occupation and infusion of the Russian-speaking population determined the penetration of Catholicism by powerful Orthodox communities. There are also segments of the population who, under Western influence, have adopted various reformed, Protestant and Neoprotected cults. The Lithuanian population is 77% of Roman Catholic; Latvian is divided between Lutherans (700,000), Catholic (500,000), and Orthodox (370,000), while Estonia is the least religious in Europe, comprising 75% of the population without religion, the rest of the population being divided into Lutherans and the Orthodox.

From a social perspective, the Baltic countries have the characteristics of the Nordic countries of Europe, and they are rapidly adapting to the Nordic lifestyle, with major emphasis on the recovery of the national cultural specificity, education and health. There are significant differences between the three Baltic countries. While Lithuania grants one of the highest education budgets (14.7%), being one of the most educated nations in Europe, but also the highest suicide rate in the world, in Estonia the average education is at the odds while Latvia education and health are in distress.

Economic life in the Baltic countries has witnessed a significant development after gaining independence. With oscillating growth rates marked by ups and downs, Baltic countries economy is today one of the most robust among the Eastern bloc countries of the European Union. All three Baltic countries have adopted the single European currency, which has led to a strong integration into the economic circuit of the Eurozone. At the same time, the Baltic countries are massively geared towards high-productivity, high-productivity industry and a great deal of human intelligence.

2.3. Military development in Baltic States. One of the major concerns of the Baltic States, after independence, was the development of

military forces to ensure its preservation and defense. Rapid joining NATO structures and massive participation in the Alliance's military activities is one of the core drivers of this concern.

Of the three Baltic countries, only Latvia has a professional army. The Latvian defense concept is based on a Swedish-Finnish model, which involves the establishment of a Rapid Reaction Force and a mobilization centre to build this force. Lithuania abolished compulsory military service in 2008, but it reintroduced it in 2015, keeping under arms a staff of 15 000 active soldiers.

Estonia has never intended to abolish the compulsory military service, which has a variable duration of 8-11 months, depending on the specialization, but it also prepares a Paramilitary National Guard (League of Defense). As a result of massive cyber attacks on national security structures, the Estonian Army set up, in 2006, the Emergency Informatics Response Team of Estonia (CERT). The organization operates on security issues in the country`s networks, aiming at providing the vital data transfer infrastructure in Estonia. Following the Estonian experience in the field, NATO has decided to place, *The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre for Exellence* (CCDCOE) in Estonia.

The Baltic States cooperate in several cooperative initiatives at the level of the armed forces, including the Baltic Battalion Baltic (BALTBAT), the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), the Baltic Sea of Airspace Surveillance Network (BALTNET) and joint military education institutions, as would be the, *The Blatic Defense College* from Tartu. Future cooperation projects include sharing of national training facilities for military training and specialization training (BALTTRAIN), as well as collective training of battalion-sized contingents for use in NATO`s rapid response force. In January, 2011, Baltic countries were invited to join *NORDEFCO*, the defense framework of the Nordic countries.

Since joining the North Atlantic Alliance, The Baltic Sea armies participated and still participate with significant force and means at international peace missions, in theatres of operations in different parts of the world, with a wealth of experience in this field. They have an important contribution to the development and dissemination of experience in various fields, participating in the work of centres of excellence and even hosting some of them. It is of interest for our study Latvia`s participation in the NATO Centre of Excellence in the field of civil-military cooperation of Lower countries.

2.4 Socio-cultural, demographic, economic and military profile of Šiauliai, Lithuania. The town of Šiauliai, residence of the military base where the Romanian detachment for the "Baltica 07" mission was deployed, is the forth largest city in Lithuania. The choice for the Baltic mission was determined by the existence of the strongest airborne base left by the Soviets in the area, after the independence of the countries, with the longest route in the Baltic States (3500m), which provides the best possible facilities for air police missions.

According to the 2001 population census, the city`s population is de 276 406 inhabitants (10% of the country`s population). Ethnic Lithuanians comprise 93%, the Russians – 5% and the remaining 2% consist of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Roma, Latvians, Armenians and other ethnic groups. Approximately 94% of the city`s population considers Lithuanian as their native language, 5% speak Russian, and the rest speak Ukrainian, Belarusian, Latvian, Roma, Armenian. Approximately 80% of the 20 year-olds know Russian, while only 17% can speak English and 7% German.

The economy of the city was dominated by the leather industry during the Russian Empire, completed during the Soviet period by electronic products, mechanical engineering, woodwork, construction industry. However, the status of the Soviet military base led to slower economic growth than other Lithuanian cities, the Soviet army retaining the city in a closed one for its inhabitants and thus, forbidden for foreign citizens, due to its military importance. Therefore, the local population was not in contact with foreign citizens and in no way with NATO forces.

The city has a well-structured education network at all levels, from pre-school to university. There are 8 gymnasiums, 7 high-schools, 16 secondary schools, 7 primary schools, 9 non-formal education schools for children, 29 kindergartens. 21 000 pupils studied in education schools in 2006. Within the university education, over 15,000 students study at Šiauliai University and in other 5 higher education institutions.

3. *CIMIC* TOPICS FOR THE "BALTICA 07" MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT

3.1 CIMIC specialized training for mission accomplishment. Given that the air policing mission to be conducted in the Baltic States was

not isolated in time and space, but it was an episode in a series of previous and subsequent missions of the same nature carried out by the air force of 13 NATO member states, the foreign military presence in Šiauliai Air Base was a habit for the population, the press and the civilian city institutions, NATO civil-military relations being already consolidated. Communication channels, supply lines, cooperation programs, media promotion, protocols for special and unexpected situations and so on, were already established. From *CIMIC* perspective, NATO`s specialized forces, as well as the national detachments that preceded the Romanian one, carefully elaborated everything that was necessary in terms of procedure and cooperation. The task of *CIMIC* specialists involved in the preparation of the mission was only to familiarize the Romanian military with all these arrangements and possibly to fill some of them with aspects specific to their capabilities and means. However, the relatively general and theoretical nature of the training, connecting the Romanian detachment to this system in a short time so as to ensure the continuity of the mission and maintaining its qualitative standards required maximum receptivity from the mission personnel and rapid adaptation to an unknown environment, not only geographical, but also economic, social and cultural. Unlike the Soviet army, which was known to keep the city`s population and civil institutions in terror and isolation, NATO forces came with a radical change of attitude: openness, collaboration, cooperation, promotion, social and cultural integration, unconditional mutual acceptance, good intention. The military personnel of the detachment to be deployed to Šiauliai were trained to fully understand this type of civil-military relationship. They were informed about the culture, religion, habits, traditions, city population mentalities, the degree of acceptability of civilians in relation to foreign soldiers, as well as the way of behaviour during the mission, especially related to attitudes, behaviours, accepted or unaccepted gestures. At the same time, specialists responsible with technical interoperability, logistics, public relations, have been trained on how to come into play and on specific *CIMIC* activities that they will carry out.

According to *CIMIC* Manual, all military participants in this mission were to receive a behavioural guide, entitled The Soldier`s Manual. In case of "Baltica 07" mission, such a handbook was drafted, but a little bit adapted to the specificity of the deployment area, probably

starting from the premise that the deployment area is not actually a military theatre of operations, and detainee personnel, except for those involved in logistics or technical cooperation, interact with civilians only socializing, cultural or leisure activities. A brochure was distributed to the military personnel, but containing general theoretical data, valid in any theatre of operations, without concrete reference to the deployment area. I consider, however, that a manual specifically designed for this mission, would have been of great help to the military personnel and it could ensure that what they received as information and recommendations during mission preparation are at their disposal at every moment.

3.2 *CIMIC* topics regarding military interoperability

a. Aspects regarding the use and completion of technical and operational facilities: Being the 13th rotation of NATO Air Policing mission in the Baltic States, the Romanian detachment did not have to deal with major problems in providing technical and operational facilities for the mission. Since April 2004, when this mission started with the contribution of Belgium, until August, 2007, when the Romanian detachment took over the mission from the French detachment, the Šiauliai military base was given substantial improvements and modernizations in order to operate at the level of NATO exigencies and missions' specificities.

For the Romanian Air Force, however, this was the first combat mission with fighter planes carried out outside the country, after the Second World War" and, "the most important mission entrusted to the Romanian military aviation since joining the NATO structures" (Laurenţiu Chiriţă, in Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:4). As a result, the Romanian detachment military personnel were put in the position to solve unusual issues regarding the force deployment, as well as ensuring all the conditions for mission accomplishment. To this end, a mission-training detachment consisting of 30 military specialists from all branches, who assessed the technical, operational and logistical needs, was sent to Šiauliai and made a connection with the Lithuanian Air Force and with local authorities, as well. Given that each participating country has made available military aircraft of various types (F-16 AM – Belgium, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal: Tornado F.3 – Great Britain; F-4F Phantom – Germany; F-16C, F-15C Eagle – USA, Turkey; MIG-29 – Poland; Mirage F-1M – Spain; Mirage 2000C – France; MIG-21 LanceR C – Romania) for the direct

operation of the aircraft, technical means had to be deployed. In addition to the four fighter planes, the Romanian detachment deployed a C-130 Hercules aircraft for logistics needs as well. On their way to Siauliai, all aircraft made a stop in Warsaw for cross-servicing (supply with air, oxygen and fuel).

The Lithuanians provided only hangars for the four aircraft, an autonomous start-up unit and the fuel needed to supply the aircraft. In terms of personnel, an autonomous protection cell was provided, Romanian troops being part of it. At the same time, the Romanian detachment benefited permanently from the collaboration of military commandants and specialists from the Siauliai (operating base) and Karmelava – the Center of Reporting and Control (CRC). All these facilities were part of the requirements defined within NATO by the HNS concept of Force Nation Support. The Multinational Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Kalkar – Germany provided the command and tactical control, and CC – Air Ramstein, the operational control.

Fortunately, during the mission development, Romanian pilots were never asked to take off for any real case of violating the Baltic States airspace (Laurențiu Chiriță, in Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:6). In all these stages of preparing and taking over the mission from the French detachment, the *CIMIC* competencies of the mission commandant as well as of the specialists who prepared the mission have been requested in full. In this respect, there were no issues or difficulties. NATO *CIMIC* specialists have implemented from the very beginning of the Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States, clear, precise, unambiguous operational protocols and concepts, so that issues of misunderstanding or negotiation with military and civilian persons or institutions have been made clear without difficulty.

The commandant of the Romanian mission, as well as some of the military participants, however, noticed a relative indifference and uncertainty of the Lithuanian side, in the course of activities, due to the still low level of development and implementation of NATO standards in their Air Force, at that particular time.

b. Logistics interoperability issues: As already mentioned, for the logistics of the mission, "Baltica 07" detachment used a transport aircraft that deployed to the military base at Šiauliai everything that was needed: equipment, spare parts, maintenance materials, weapons and ammunition. For the other logistical needs, the detachment had already prepared supply and channels locally. The military personnel were

accommodated, at the expense of the Romanian state, in the two hotels in the city, where all conditions were ensured: rest, meals, hygiene, equipment maintenance, etc. For shifts, hotel restaurants provided food packages and adapted their schedule according to the timetable of these shifts. The detachment commandant had prepared channels of communication and cooperation for staff medical insurance, at clinics in the city. Two English-language translators were permanently available to the detachment who responded to all requests from the detachment staff. Communication with the families of the military personnel was made at their own expense by telephone and internet.

3.3 Cultural and social interoperability. Reports from the military press of the time, noted that interoperability within NATO, from a doctrinal perspective,

> was an exclusive technical exercise and did not include cultural interoperability, either in terms of cultural cooperation or knowledge of the local conditions (Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:6).

However, it is clear from the "Baltica 07" participants' reports that, in practical terms, NATO has set up a highly developed and structured PR program, the improvement of which all national detachments that followed have contributed to the Air Policing mission accomplishment. The Romanian detachment has fully assumed this program, trying to give it a specific Romanian touch, "by often writing down in the activity plan, special activities for the civil society" (Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:6).

a. Aspects regarding the language of communication with the military personnel and civilian actors: Given that more than 80% of the population aged over 20 speaks Russian and only 17% speaks English, communication with military and civilian personnel in the deployment area has become problematic. Lithuanian Air Force personnel with whom the Romanian detachment has cooperated are presumed to know acceptable English, a universal language of communication in aviation, but also a language of communication within NATO. However, this was not their natural language of communication, which is why, even in relations with this staff category, there were some difficulties. As for officials and civilian population, relations with them would not have been possible if the Lithuanian side had not permanently secured two young English translators, language in which Romanian personnel could easily communicate.

And, in this situation, the communication suffered because in-depth understanding, as well as the effective identification of the speakers with the transmitted content was vitiated by the successive passage through two stages of understanding: one coming from the transmitter`s mother tongue to the English language and the second, the other way round. Under these conditions, communicators focused more on logical, than on affective reception. Unfortunately, the Romanian detachment was not assigned a Russian-language person who, in most cases, could have simplified the process of understanding, reducing it to a single stage, in favor of stimulating affectivity in communication. Some activities, especially those carried out among young pupils or children in orphanages, were, from communication point of view, limited to non-verbal communication..

b. Aspects of promoting the trust of the Lithuanian population in the Romanian Air Force during their mission: As reporters pointed out on the spot,

> The entire period in which the Romanian detachment from Šiauliai carried out its activity, represented as many days of identity expression, of reflections and personal impressions, of supporting the image of Romanian Air Force and of Romanian Army (Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:6).

There have been visits of military and civilian personalities, journalists from various publications and televisions, groups of pupils and students at the military base where the Romanian detachment was deployed; two MIG 21 LanceRs participated in the events dedicated to the Lithuanian Aviation Day. All these activities have contributed fully to the development of the trust of the military, officials and the Lithuanian population in the Romanian Air Force, increasing the mutual acceptability and thus, facilitating the accomplishment of the missions.

The appreciations made by the Lithuanian Air Force and the Ambassador of Romania in Lithuania at the mission's ending ceremony confirms the full success of the promotion of Romania's image, trust and respect for the capability of the Romanian Air Force to carry out missions within NATO.

c. Aspects regarding the promotion of Romanian and Lithuanian national culture: Activities within the scope of this objective have become a tradition within the military base of Šiauliai. Each participating nation has made efforts to promote its own history, culture and civilization. The Romanian detachment followed, in the

rotation, the French one, which has a common historical and cultural heritage with the Lithuanian people, especially during the Napoleonic Empire. As a result, our detachment had to cope with the French standard and present its history, culture and civilization at the highest level. As part of the joint activities carried out together with the civilian population (sports contests, visits of officials, press or school pupils) presented films of Romania, the Romanian Army and Romanian Air Force, talks were held and questions were answered. The common neighbourhood of Moldova with Lithuania during the reign of Stephen the Great and other Moldovan rulers was revealed, and also the similarities of the destinies of the two peoples under the influence of the Russian, Ottoman, Napoleonic or Habsburg empires. The beauties of our country as well as aspects of historical and contemporary culture and civilization were presented.

From the talks with participants on the "Baltica 07" mission, however, the level of presentation of our detachment was much lower than of other participating nations, the issue being of interest for future missions. At the same time, the total lack of interest of the Romanian Consulate in Vilnius, which did not carry out any specific activity of supporting the Romanian detachment during mission development, was noted. Only the presence of the Romanian Ambassador in Lithuania at the celebration of the mission ending was highlighted.

d. Aspects of symbolic actions of cultural and social integration: visits to kindergartens, schools, universities, administrative and cultural institutions: Based on reports from the military press, scientific communications, and talks with participants on "Baltica 07" mission, the symbolic actions of cultural and social integration were part of a program well established by NATO *CIMIC* specialists, so the Romanian detachment was given the opportunity to interact with the civilian environment in various forms. In the magazine *Cer senin*, lieutenant-commander Gelu Miron, the detachment PR officer In the *Cer senin* magazine, lieutenant-commander Gelu Miron, the detachment officer of the detachment, presented the main activities that our soldiers participated in. Of these, we only notice those of interest for our theme:

> the preparation of over 100 food packages on the occasion of the Christian Feast of the Assumption, donated to the Orthodox and Catholic churches in the region; ... participation in the opening of the 2007-2008 school year at 'Pilot Judrenu Stepano

Dariaus' School in Judrenai-Klaipeda, where school supplies were handed out to students in the first grade; participation in sports events; visit to an orphanage in Šiauliai, where donations were made... (Barac & Săftoiu, 2007:6)

4. CONCLUSIONS

All these activities resulted in the integration of Romanian troops into the Lithuanian community of Šiauliai, even temporarily, as well as the increase of mutual trust between them and the local community.

However, at the time of the "Baltica 07", Romania's experience in the field was still limited. The Romanian legislation did not allow the allocation of funds for such activities, which, as one of the participants noted, was carried out "often by collecting personal funds". It is supposed that symbolic value perspective, these actions did not obviously and professionally involve the national symbols, the values specific to the Romanian people. I believe that for such missions where the armed conflict is absent and therefore the cultural component of the mission can be maximized, the detachment must be provided at the stage of preparation of the promotional material mission specific to the Romanian culture and civilization, simple objects printed with national symbols (flags, scarves, handkerchiefs, pens, toys, figurines, etc.), and for visits to schools and orphanages, or for protocols, packs of non-perishable goods, or symbolic gifts. Indisputably, there should also be special financial resources available to the detachment for such activities, which can be managed by the public relations officer and the mission commander. Given that the frequency and importance of the Romanian Armed Forces missions outside the national territory are increasing year after year, that the international military cooperation actions in NATO, non-NATO exercises, applications and training are becoming more frequent, the Ministry of National Defense should prepare within the specialized structures, through orders and purchases, or through their own forces, a wide range of promotional materials, both for the promotion of Romania as a nation and for the promotion of various branches. At the same time, for the immediate preparation of specific missions, specific promotional materials should be made, as well as if charitable actions, packs of non-perishable products, professionally packaged and inscribed with national symbols are to take place. Under any circumstance, when missions outside the national territory require CIMIC-type

actions, the status of the Romanian military force must be a state of national dignity, of affirmation of the Romanian Armed Forces as a distinct entity, solid values and principles undoubtedly anchored in the cultural and spiritual patrimony of the Romanian people. Under no circumstances should the Romanian Army and, in particular, the Romanian Air Force leave the impression of the Alliance's "poor relative". The indisputable professionalism of Romanian soldiers participating in missions outside the national territory must be favoured with the dignity, honour and prestige of the country of which they are citizens.

4. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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