

WOMEN MILITARY SERVICE IN ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN 2007

I. POLICIES

1.

Regulations concerning military career are incorporated in the Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of professional soldiers. In 2006 amendments to the existing regulations were introduced in the following areas (amended regulations are to come into force since 2008):

•policy concerning pregnant or breastfeeding women:

- the working hours of service have been limited to 40 per week, and work at night has been prohibited
- the prohibition to delegate a woman to a post outside her unit without her consent has been introduced
- ban to charge women with duty tasks which are especially strenuous or detrimental to their health, defined in a proper decree to the Labour Code
- breaks for breast-feeding (two half-hour breaks or in case of giving birth to more than one child two 45 min breaks included into working hours) have been introduced
- release from taking the annual fitness test concerning pregnant and breast-feeding women.

•the following policies regarding women who delivered a child have been applied:

- maternity leave (equivalent to parental leave) – paid in the amount of 75% of the pay, granted on woman's request, up to 10 months a year

•the following policies regarding military married couples have been applied

- possibility to post military married couples in the same garrison (if it is possible).

2.

Due to the fact that women have been allowed to study at military schools and universities/academies in all corps since 1999, the number of women on commanding posts, such as platoon and company commander, has increased. Within the past two years first women – platoon commanders were seconded to Polish military contingents (PKW) in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

3.

Recruitment to military schools scheduled for 2007 predicts demands in the following areas: Educational Force, Media Forces, Medical Forces, Justice and legal services, financial and logistic forces, as the greatest inflow of women is expected

in these specialties. The system of education will encompass training of candidates both at 5-year military studies and one year long and 3month long training for graduates of civilian universities: doctors, lawyers, psychologists, sociologists, journalists, historians, graduates of technical and economy studies.

4.

The announced process of transforming the Polish Armed Forces into professional forces (by 2012) triggering smaller recruitment to military compulsory service and extension of professional Privates Corps and Non-Commissioned Officers Corps will create an opportunity to increase number of women in the Polish Army in the years to come.

II. ORGANISATION

1.

Women have served in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland since 1988. They serve in all branches of the Armed Forces – Land Forces, Air Force, Navy; in 3 Corps of regular cadre (private, non-commissioned officers, officers), and also in other structures of the special forces and outside the departments of Ministry of Defence.

2.

According to the data of 31st December 2006 (Personnel Department of MoND) there are 962 service-women in the Polish Army, which comprises 1,2% of the professional soldiers COS, and 256 women in various military schools of. Altogether, the number of service-women amounts 1218 and it is the highest number in the post-war history of the Polish Armed Forces.

3.

The number of women has increased by 180 persons, from 782 in the year 2006 to 962 in 2007. The slowest rise is observed in the professional Privates Corps as there are only 57 women.

4.

Current PERCENTAGES of total force by service

	Total % of Female soldiers	% of female flag officers	% of female senior officers	% of female junior officers	% of female NCO	% female of soldiers lower rank than NCO
Land Forces	1,1	-	0,6	3,3	0,7	0,1
Air Force	0,9	-	0,2	2,7	0,6	0,3
Navy	1,2	-	0,6	4,0	0,6	0,5
Others	1,5	-	0,8	4,8	1,3	0,8
TOTAL	1,2	-	0,6	3,7	0,8	0,5

III. RECRUITMENT

1.

Recruitment of women to the Polish Armed Forces depends on the number of candidates to military schools announced in the decision of Minister of National Defence every year. The decision determines number of candidates without parity regarding men and women. Candidates are admitted on the basis of their exam results.

2.

Since 1999 women are entitled to studies at military schools (NCO, officers) having passed examinations encompassing various fields of knowledge and fitness test. Fitness test differentiates man and women, whereas general knowledge examination is identical for both genders.

3.

In order to be drafted to regular soldiers corps (military schools) applicants should meet the requirements defined in the Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of regular soldiers (persons without criminal record, of Polish citizenship only, adequate physical and mental capacity to perform military service, be of 18 years of age, posses required education).

4.

Female graduates of civilian universities with specializations desired by the Armed Forces can apply for Officers' School. Having completed one-year or three-month training (depending on the corps) and having passed final examinations, candidates to professional military service are promoted to the first officer rank – second lieutenant.

Graduates of NCO schools are promoted to the rank of corporal at first assignment to a post of duty.

5.

Separate regulations are applied in case of recruitment to professional Private Corps.

One of the conditions to commence serving in this corps is completion of compulsory military service.

As women in Poland are not subject to conscription, their calling up takes place in case of “justified need of the Armed Forces” if they possess particular qualifications or skills. Hitherto recruitment to professional Private Corps aims at drafting of over-term soldiers and soldiers who served in the military thus men have easier access to this formation.

IV. TRAINING

1.

Military education is currently undergoing a process of changes.

The new system will maintain 5-year MA studies for graduates of civilian secondary schools, and one-year or three-month training at Officers’ School for graduates of civilian universities.

The system of NCO schools will be maintained in training graduates of civilian secondary schools. Candidates for non-commissioned officers can choose from 8 NCO schools preparing for service in corps: Armoured and Mechanized Forces, Military Engineering, Logistics, Missile and Artillery Forces, Communication and IT Forces, Air Force, Radiotechnical Forces, Air-Defence Forces, Medical Forces, Navy.

2.

In accordance with the labour regulations professional soldiers participate in an appropriate course before every appointment/promotion (to a higher rank).

Criteria and requirements regarding forms of training for men and women in regular service and candidates to military service do not vary significantly. Various criteria are applied only in fitness tests. New criteria of fitness of women are adjusted to their capabilities in respect to age categories. All women are subject to fitness test, and the outcome is included in the general assessment of a soldier and is one of the factors in defining future career.

V. DEPLOYMENTS

1.

The Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of regular soldiers determines career models for officers and non-commissioned officers, and comprises the below mentioned steps in individual career:

1 participation in special courses, workshops, trainings, etc.

2 MA studies (daily, evening, extramural - as second/additional degree),

3 postgraduate studies,

4 academic career – doctorate at civilian and military higher schools,

5 military MA studies (supplementary) at the Academy of National Defence

2.

Participation of female soldiers in peacekeeping and stabilisation missions.

The number of women deployed to missions in preceding years did not show a significant discrepancy from the figures of the past two years and amounted to approximately 50 women per year.

- PKW Irak - 20 (2,28%),**
- PKW Afganistan – 5 (0,43%),**
- PKW KFOR – 2 (0,68%),**
- PKW EUFOR /SFOR – 1 (0,48%),**
- PKW UNIFIL - 4 (0,81%),**
- PKW UNDOF – 4 (1,09%).**

It should be observed that the number of female personnel (regular soldiers) fluctuates around 1 per cent of the number of male soldiers, thus it is relatively low. Appointment to posts is conducted on the basis of soldiers' qualifications and experience. In case of women-soldiers the qualifications were limited to medical only. Until 1999 women were not present at military schools and academies. Their recruitment was based on tailoring "special army needs," and these concerned mainly medium level medical personnel and doctors of particular specializations, dentist especially.

It was only after 2003 that woman – graduates of 4year military higher schools, and later military academies/universities, assumed military posts. Nowadays there are about 90 such graduates each year, and they represent a vast range of specialists in various corps: Armoured and Mechanized Forces, Radiotechnical Forces, Missile and Artillery Forces, logistics, Defence against WMD, Military Police, Communications and IT Forces, Air Force, Navy, Medical Forces.

Hence the range of posts to which women are designated on missions has been enlarged because they possess useful qualifications. At first, women (officers, non-commissioned officers, warrant officers) were seconded solely to medical posts at Polish Military Contingents.

In the medical forces women took up the following posts:

- officers – head of medical team, head of the laboratory, commander of medical team;
- Warrant Officers – head of section; paramedic, nurse;
- Non-commissioned officers – paramedic, nurse.
- Since 2004 women have also served on such posts as:
 - PKW KFOR – head of medical team,
 - PKW UNIFIL – head of detachment – deputy company commander, radio operator,
 - PKW UNDOF – liaison officer (officer of military intelligence), platoon commander, staff officer,
 - PKW Iraq – senior officer, junior specialist, officer, staff officer, head of team, platoon

commander, consultant on psychological problems prevention, psychologist, solicitor, head of office.

3.

Institutions responsible for structuring contingents point to the problems referring to (apart from lack of candidates with required qualifications) lack of proper social conditions for women, the need to secure separate bathrooms, and an effort to protect women against hardships.

It is also influenced by the character of the mission itself – Iraq or Afghanistan are perceived as extremely dangerous. However, it should be noted that while recruiting there are no obstacles for women interested in serving in the contingents.

4.

Realization of UN 1325 Resolution.

The introduction of gender perspective as criterion of appointments, comprehending the need of women participation in peacemaking process requires changes in ways of perceiving the role of men and women. The role of women-soldier has been defined more broadly than it was in the past when it was limited to logistic and securing tasks. The process of changing mentality is long-lasting but it also entails emphasis on values and virtues *brought in* by women and divergence from stereotypical division of tasks. It is a new challenge in the Polish Armed Forces which, hopefully, will alter the status quo.

VI. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

1.

Regulations concerning professional military service provide for equal opportunities of employment, appointment to posts, pay and career prospects regardless of gender.

2.

Limitations concerning posts restricted for men only has not been introduced in Poland yet. The exception comprises posts exposed to detrimental elements, or strenuous to the health of women, which should be observed with regard to pregnant or breastfeeding women. These are mainly posts where a woman would perform tasks:

- requiring physical effort and transport of heavy goods and forced body position
- in cold, hot or unsettled microclimate
- exposed to noise and vibration
- exposed to impact of electromagnetic fields, ionising and ultraviolet radiation, and monitor screens
- underground, below the ground level and at high altitude,
- exposed to high or low pressure,
- exposed to hazardous biological elements,

- exposed to hazardous chemical substances,
- liable to grave physical and mental injuries.

3.

In comparison with the last five years the most visible and significant difference is the fact of reaching commanding posts by female graduates of military schools, academies and universities and extension of the range of posts for women on peacekeeping missions.

4.

The process of adaptation of women on commanding posts has been monitored by Personnel Department of MoND. Women – commanders are appraised highly by their superiors, and their aptitude in creating good relations with subordinates and solving educational and pedagogical problems is pointed out.

5.

The need to take care of children may be decisive in military career as the stereotypical division into man being the breadwinner and woman – the caretaker is still omnipresent in Poland.

Women can also have limited access to posts perceived as strenuous and detrimental to health in the following corps – Missile and Artillery Forces, Navy, Radiotechnical Forces.

VII. SPECIAL INTEREST ITEMS/EVENTS

1.

In the year 2007 two educational films were produced in cooperation with NGO. One of them concerns the problems of discrimination and stereotypical perception of women in the society. The second – prevention of sexual harassment in the military.

2.

Widespread marketing, preventive and informative actions on women in the military were undertaken (information and marketing materials encouraging women to join the army were distributed at civilian universities, regional military staff and secondary schools; propagating military service for women in the media).

3.

Action to improve the system of supplying female soldiers with uniforms and means of hygiene was continued.

4.

The report on the situation of women in the Armed Forces was elaborated by Department of Control of MoD. According the report, the equal rights on men and women in the military are respected.

5.

The amendments in the Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of professional soldiers were introduced. Nowadays the Act protects maternity better than the former regulations.

6.

Two women - graduates of Navy Military Academy - were posted on the positions in the submarine.

9.

The project of training for military personnel on gender mainstreaming was initiated.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Taking into considering the above mentioned gender issues within the Ministry of Defence, the following areas need to be addressed:

1.

Conducting information and marketing strategies encouraging and supporting women to join the ranks of the professional army.

2.

Creation of such legal and administrative conditions which reconcile military service and motherhood.

3.

Undertaking educational activities and programs aiming towards changes in stereotypical perception of women in the military; pathologies in human relations; cooperation in this field with other institutions of the MoND, especially with the Department of Education and Promoting Defence, Council on Women at MoND, etc. Propagation of „gender mainstreaming” within the military environment.

4.

Increasing number of female peacekeepers.

5.

Cooperation with other Ministries, especially with Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Employment and Social Policy and NGOs in realization of projects for the benefit of women.