

**WOMEN MILITARY SERVICE IN ARMED FORCES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN 2008**

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I. POLICY

1.

Regulations concerning military career are incorporated in the Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of professional soldiers. In 2008 amended regulations are introduced in following areas:

- **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's and company's commander, has increased. In 2008 – 256 women have served as commanders (152 as platoon's commander).

3.

Recruitment to military schools scheduled for 2008 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 encompass training of candidates both at 5-year military studies and one year long (or 3month, 8,5month) long training for graduates of civilian universities.

4.

The announced process of transforming the Polish Armed Forces into professional forces (by 2010) triggering 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 2008 (Personnel Department of MoD) there are 1153 service-women in the Polish Army, which comprises 1,45% of the professional soldiers, and 511 women in various military schools of. Altogether, the number of service-women amounts 1664.

3.

The number of women has increased by 191 persons, from 962 in the year 2007 to 1153 in 2008. The slowest rise is still observed in the professional Privates Corps as there are only 91 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	1,45	-	0,93	4,51	1,00	0,43
Air Force	1.10	-	0,26	3,56	0,74	0,46
Navy	1,54	-	0,51	5,03	0,85	1,01
Others	1,67	-	0,53	2,32	1,24	1,22
TOTAL	1,45	-	0,68	4,62	0,99	0,72

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 men 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 3-month, 8,5-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 posses 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 conducted in the 5year MA studies for graduates of civilian secondary schools, and one-year (3-month training, or 8,5-month - depending on the corps) at Officers' School for graduates of civilian universities.

The system of NCO schools is 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 regulations defined in the Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of regular soldiers, 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. 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 factor 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 stabilization missions.

The number of women deployed to missions in 2008 amounted 88 persons:

IRAQ - 21,

ISAF – 46,

KFOR – 3,

EUFOR /SFOR – 2,

UNIFIL - 7,

UNDOF – 4

CHAD – DARFUR - 5

It should be observed that the number of female personnel (regular soldiers) fluctuates around 1 per cent of the number of male soldiers. Appointment to posts is conducted on the basis of soldiers' qualifications and experience.

Since 2004 women have served on such posts as (eg.):

- **KFOR** – Senior Driver, Reconnaissance Platoon's Commander,
- **UNIFIL** – Team's Leader (Transportation's Planning Team), Platoon's Commander – Depot's Chief (Provision's Platoon),

- **UNDOF** – Platoon's Commander (Transportation & Maintenance Platoon),
- **IRAQ** -Communication Platoon's Commander, Meteorological Station's Commander, Warehouse Attendant (Delivery' Squad),
- **CHAD – DARFUR** - Reconnaissance Section's Officer, Engineering Platoon's Commander ,
- **ISAF** – Senior Pilot (Helicopter's Squadron), Exploitation's Chief (Technical Section).

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.

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 MoD. 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, Radio technical Forces.

VII. SPECIAL INTEREST ITEMS/EVENTS

1.

In the year 2008 two educational projects were introduced:

- The project of training for military personnel on gender mainstreaming (54 persons - management of MoD) .
- The project of training for women – platoon's commanders on develop of their personal skills (100 women – participants).

2.

The report on the situation of women in the Armed Forces was elaborated by Plenipotentiary in Charge of Women's Military Service and presented for Parliamentary Commission of Defence.

3.

The next amendments in the Act of 11th September 2003 on military service of professional soldiers were elaborated (paternal leave).

4.

Women – representatives of Council of Women in the Polish Armed Forces took part in the seminars: in Israel, Spain and in Sweden.

5.

Representatives of Women in the Polish Armed Forces visited Polish peacekeeping mission in Lebanon (monitoring of implementation UNSR 1325).

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 MoD, especially with the Department of Education and Promoting Defence, Council on Women at MoD, 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.