

NATO-Ukraine: a history of success

Juergen BORNEMANN: I would advise to continue constructive cooperation in the fields where the alliance lacks resources

By Mykola SIRUK, *The Day*



JUERGEN BORNEMANN

Lieutenant-General Juergen BORNEMANN, who recently assumed the office of Director General of International Military Staff at the NATO Headquarters, has recently visited Ukraine. Previously, as Deputy Head of the Politico-Military Affairs and Arms Control Division, German Federal Armed Forces, he was in charge of bilateral relations between Germany and Ukraine. In an exclusive interview with *The Day*, Lt.-Gen. Bornemann spoke about the aim of his visit and assessed NATO-Ukraine relations in the military field as well as the Ukrainian government's efforts to boost cooperation with the alliance.

What is the purpose of your visit to Ukraine? As far as I understand it is your first visit in your capacity as Director General of the International Military Staff of NATO.

"Let me first of all thank the Ukrainian authorities for the great hospitality and warm welcome offered to me and my delegation as well as for arranging this very intense, pleasant and fruitful program for my visit. For me, this is not my first visit to Ukraine, I've been here several times during my previous appointment as Deputy Policy Director in the German Ministry of Defence. During this time, I was responsible for bilateral military cooperation between Germany and Ukraine. However, in my current function as Director General of the International Military Staff at the NATO Headquarters in Brussels, this is indeed my first visit to Ukraine. I was invited by the Chief of Defense of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to visit Ukraine and discuss with high level military and political authorities the status and prospects of the distinctive partnership between Ukraine and NATO."

"This visit provides an excellent opportunity to discuss practical constructive cooperation between NATO and Ukraine, which is carried out in the well-established framework of the Military Committee with Ukraine Work Plan.

This cooperation supports the implementation of defence and security related aspects of Ukraine's Annual National Program and the transformation of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The aim of the visit is to take stock of the status of our cooperation and look at possibilities of its further development in the numerous areas of common interests."

So you may now compare: you were here before as Deputy Policy Director, do you see any progress?

"Well, there is always progress, there is no doubt about it. The relationship between Ukraine and NATO has a long history as Ukraine was one of the first partners of NATO in the framework of Partnership for Peace after the end of the Cold War. Since then there has been a steady qualitative and quantitative increase of activities and development of the partnership on the political and military side."

What can you say in this context about the programme of military exercises which was passed by the Parliament?

"We, of course, very much welcome this important step as the ability to conduct joint military exercises is an important part of our practical military cooperation. We're very much looking forward to the implementation of the exercises planned for this year. International military exercises are a key tool to support capability development and interoperability with other nations."

What is your opinion about the Annual National Programme which was signed by the president?

"As you know, the Annual National Program is the key Ukrainian framework document for its cooperation with NATO and guides the overall reform process within Ukraine covering a wide range of areas and activities. We very much welcome the approval of the document and will now focus on the implementation. In the military sphere we will continue to support the implementation of security and defence related objectives of the Annual National Programme through our mutually developed and jointly agreed Military Committee with Ukraine Work Plan. This topic was also addressed during my exchanges with the leadership of Ukrainian Armed Forces."

What is your opinion about Ukrainian Armed Forces, their capability to cooperate with the Armed Forces of NATO Allies?

"Well, as you know, one of the major areas of our cooperation is, of course, interoperability, which means the capability of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to cooperate, coordinate, and act together with NATO forces. And as I said in the beginning, the long period of intensive cooperation between Ukrainian Armed Forces and NATO is a success story. Units of Ukraine's Armed Forces gain interoperability with Allied armed forces through different interactions, like participation in the Operational Capabilities Concept Programme (OCC), multinational exercises, and peacekeeping operations. You know that Ukraine is one of the important contributors to NATO-led operations, and the success can be seen in Ukraine's participation in operations in Kosovo, the Mediterranean Sea, Iraq, and Afghanistan as well as in the NATO Response Force."

To what areas should Ukrainians pay more attention for their Armed Forces to be more interoperable with NATO's?

"There are, of course, capabilities which NATO needs and which are not available in the required amount within the Alliance. Therefore, we very much welcome that Ukraine has, for example, excellent capability in the area of defense against weapons of mass destruction. This is just one example where Ukraine is cooperating very intensively with NATO, but there are many more areas. My advice would be to continue constructive cooperation in areas, where NATO is short of required capabilities, as the experience gained is also beneficial for Ukraine."

What about Ukraine's strategic airlift capabilities? Are they used now?

"It is, of course, not NATO, who has airlift capabilities in its inventory, it is NATO member states. For example Germany as well as other countries, have signed contracts with Ukrainian companies for airlift. This is not a NATO issue, as it is the responsibility of nations to guarantee the transportation of their soldiers and equipment."

Which anti-terrorist capabilities of possible interest to NATO do you think Ukraine has? It's a very important topic now.

"The fight against terrorism is one of the top priorities for NATO and for partner countries. For this there are both political and military tools required, and it depends on the respective situation how those tools are used and balanced. Let us for example take Afghanistan, where you see the whole spectrum of political and military activities complementing each other. Ukraine is also participating in this operation as an important partner. Let me also highlight operation Active Endeavour, which is a maritime operation in the Mediterranean Sea, in which Ukraine is engaged through a liaison element and by deploying ships on a regular basis. So there are a lot of areas and common activities where NATO and Ukraine work together."

What is Ukraine's possible contribution of national missile defense to NATO?

"This is an issue which is currently under development. As you know, at the Lisbon Summit NATO Heads of State and Government agreed to create a missile defense system to protect the people and the territory of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This is a global and very complex threat that has an impact on all of us. This means it is a threat against NATO territories and countries as well as against Russia, and it is, of course, also against Ukraine. Therefore cooperation with partners is very important. One of the prominent partners is, of course, Russia. NATO considers Russia a valuable partner, with which it has established solid relationship with a continuous, positive gradient. Regarding possible future engagement with Ukraine we will have to look at the possibilities for consultation, coordination, and cooperation based on mutual interests. We are aware of and welcome that Ukraine pays a lot of attention to this topic and we have already started initial discussions with our Ukrainian friends to ensure transparency."

Is NATO interested in using those two radars – in Sevastopol and in Mukacheve?

"We are at the beginning of establishing a NATO system. First of all, NATO has a responsibility for the territory of its member states. This is the first priority. As I said before, this will be done in a transparent way. At the end there will be possibilities for practical cooperation with partners. The use of radars in Ukraine, this is a possible point that could be discussed. I personally believe that pending interoperability, exchange of information and data could be an element of mutually beneficial cooperation."

Some say that Russia cooperates with NATO more closely than Ukraine. What is your opinion?

"I would not go into a competition as far as cooperation is concerned. Russia is an important partner, Ukraine is an important partner, and I know that Ukraine is cooperating in the military field also with Russia. So it's not a question of competition. There are specific spheres in which we are cooperating with the Russians, and the same is true for Ukraine. I would hesitate to say whether we are doing more with Russia than with Ukraine. It is not a competition, both are important partners, and we have an interest to intensify cooperation with both."

I think most Ukrainians are interested to know what concrete help Ukrainian Armed Forces get directly from NATO or Allies to be more professional.

"I was briefed by the General Staff about the ongoing reforms of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. I know this is a very difficult, very challenging process. But this is a challenge for many countries, including NATO members, and all of them are currently working on it. As you know the security environment has changed and therefore the adaptation of internal structures, procedures, doctrines, and forces to these new challenges is required. This is true for Ukraine, but also for NATO member states, and therefore it is quite natural that we are in a dialogue with each other. NATO is gaining reform experience, which could be beneficial for Ukraine, but we can also learn from Ukraine about its reforms."

I know you're going to deliver a lecture now. What message would you like to send to young Ukrainians?

"The main message will be that NATO is looking for real partnership with countries around the world as NATO cannot ensure its security alone. Many threats and challenges are global and can only be tackled in close cooperation with partners. A couple of weeks ago, during a meeting of Foreign Ministers, NATO has adopted a new concept for global partnership. I will describe a little bit the background for this new partnership concept to the students of the Kyiv national university to promote an understanding that NATO is an organization which is changing, which is adapting to the new security environment, and which is inviting countries like Ukraine to cooperate."