

ZRÍNYI MIKLÓS
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
MILITARY SCIENCES
DOCTORATE SCHOOL

THEME DESCRIPTION

**”SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES, THEIR PLACE, ROLE AND
ACTIVITIES IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS OF THE 21ST
CENTURY”**

A PhD dissertation by

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- 2. Name of tutor:** Dr. Kőszegvári Tibor, Major General (ret), Professor Emeritus, The doctor of Hungarian Academy of Sciences
- 3. Theme of dissertation:** The Role of Special Operations Forces In The Military Operations Of The 21th Century

4. Defining the theme

The „spirituality” of special forces units has had a great influence on me since my childhood, and in consequence, I have spent a lot of time studying special forces units, both military and police, that were set up in a number of countries. This has been a focus of my interests since my secondary school years, and even today, I believe that acquiring new experiences in connection with special operations forces and military parachuting will remain in the forefront of my interests all through my life.

I have spent several years with research into the matters of special forces units, their history, past and present, and their probable future uses. In 2001, at the time when I wrote my paper for the 25th National Scientific Student Conference Military Section (titled „The Place Of Special Units In The Hungarian Defense Forces”), and which paper earned me the second place in the competition, dealing with the notion and probable future of Hungarian special forces units was regarded as something close to heresy. Following the success of that paper, it came as natural to investigate a similar issue in my university thesis (titled „The Place, Role And Activity Of Special Forces Units In Military Operations Other Than War”). The title of my PhD dissertation was decided upon prior to the 9/11 terror attack against the USA in 2001, thus preceding the facts that proved through those sad events that the use of conventional military forces and techniques may prove inadequate to combat international terrorism.

In choosing my dissertation topic, I was greatly motivated by my aforementioned emotional attachment to the special forces and also my personal experiences that I consider significant in my military career, which were the followings: 5 years of service at the HDF 88th Air Mobile Battalion and its successor organization, HDF 88th Rapid Reaction Battalion, my

training as a parachutist and my training at the Police Special Service (of date: Antiterrorist Service).

Special operation units play a significant role in the military operations of the 21st century as well. Dealing with armed conflicts, managing crisis situations, they are present in all the theatres of the world. They conduct special operations that constitute only a fragment of the military operations, thus the special forces soldiers of today are key players in achieving results. This dissertation focuses primarily on them, their activities and their future.

5. Purposes Of The Investigation

Since the questions concerning the 21st century uses of modern special operations forces have not yet been discussed in a PhD dissertation, I have decided that the purpose of my investigation will be to construct a dissertation in which:

- I will introduce and assess the publications that address special operations forces and their past, present and future that are better known and I consider important;
- I will demonstrate the theoretical basis for special operations and the corresponding major definitions;
- I will discuss the leadership and management issues of special operations, the system that supports these operations;
- I will discuss the fundamentals of deploying special operations forces in an allied environment (NATO and EU-led operations);
- I will outline the tasks and challenges that the Hungarian special operations forces may be expected to face;
- I will draw conclusions as to the tendencies in deploying special operations forces in the future;
- I will articulate scientific results, and
- I will make recommendations based on the conclusions drawn (with special attention to the Hungarian special forces).

Through the scientific research that I conducted, I had the opportunity to study the special operations forces in a number of countries. I asked myself about which part of the ample data available to process in my dissertation. I have concluded that though the Russian special forces units are highly experienced, we may observe in their activities problems that are typical of mass armies. Nowadays, they follow the old Prussian school in their combat deployment (the movement-centered methodology) and their primary focus is achieving their objectives at all costs. In my view, the siege of the Russian theatre in 2002 is a proper example of this, where the complete annihilation of the terrorists entailed the deaths of more than a hundred hostages as well.

In contrast, the special operations forces of the USA and NATO, both having Anglo-Saxonic roots (material-centered methodology), are centered on man, and thus are intent on getting their tasks done while doing a „clean” job. The rescue of the pilot who had crashed in Bosnia is a good example of this.

Since Hungary, as a member of the Alliance, follows the basically Anglo-Saxon guidelines that are accepted in NATO and the American military, I have sought to discuss the theme following the same guidelines.

6. Methods Of Investigation

Before writing my dissertation, I began to collect the bibliography available on the matter. First, I organized the material that was in my possession and that was available at my workplace (books, doctrines, regulations, studies and journal publications). Then I continued to gather notes from the bibliography and publications available in certain libraries (ZMNE Library, National Széchenyi Library, Library of the Parliament) and by downloading material from the Internet. Following that I commenced writing my dissertation. In the course of that, I was able to utilize my personal experiences (I have taken part in two NATO special operations exercise), my university thesis and my own publications, too. I aspired to draw the necessary (partial) conclusions on having completed each chapter. On writing the last chapter (Final Conclusions), I studied the more up-to-date case studies, assessment and news, concerning the activities of special operations forces. Having analysed them, I drew my conclusions (synthesizing the

information collected) and I articulated the tendencies that may be expected in the tasks and activities of special operations forces.

7. A Brief Description Of The Investigation By Chapter

CHAPTER 1

We could see special operations in almost all ages of history. Several Hungarian and foreign authors have discussed the history and actions of special operations forces. The first chapter of my dissertation deals with and assesses these works in a timely order. Through these publications we may be able to trace the past and present of special operations and special operations forces.

In my view, learning from the given examples of military history (including current experiences) the special operations forces of the future may become more effective and produce more results. The analysis of the works listed shows that in different ages, special operations forces played a role of variable importance in all major operations. Special application, special weapons and training are all typical of special operations units. The reputation of special operation forces is controversial, in some cases low, not in small part it is attributable to their history.

CHAPTER 2

I have established the fact that with the changing of the dangers that societies are facing, with the changes in their intensity of such challenges, the value of special operations and conducting special operations has increased. War on terror, efficiently fighting an asymmetrical war is such a challenge, to which the development of special operations forces may be one answer.

The place and interpretation of special operations within the framework of operations is controversial. While the USA applies a wider interpretation, NATO applies a narrower interpretation. In my view, the latter is the path to follow for the Hungarian Defence forces.

By giving a definition of what constitutes special operations forces, I attempted to establish the criteria that are needed to accomplish a given set of tasks.

By demonstrating the support system, training and equipment of special operations forces, we can prove that not only are they an integral part of the framework of military operations, but also require the provision of such conditions and circumstances that differ from the support, training and equipment requirements of conventional forces. In all cases, that entails a significantly higher demand for resources!

CHAPTER 3

Special operations forces play an important role in NATO and US-led international military operations. Thus the development of special operations capabilities has received increased attention. Our country, similarly to other NATO member states, has recognized the importance of this area and has created the necessary capability.

Once they have reached full operational capability, Hungarian special operations forces might be efficiently used in future peace support operations. This may be realized within an allied framework, or based on bi- and multilateral agreements, or on national interest. It is important not to involve them in „average” force-protection activities, but to assign special operations tasks to them that require their expertise.

Such tasks may be, in accordance with NATO guidelines, special reconnaissance and surveillance, direct engagement, military assistance and counter-terrorism. These tasks may be conducted in the Balkans theatre, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the future in Africa. In the case of special operations forces, considering the experiences gained through earlier operations is of a higher importance.

8. Final Conclusions

The majority of the countries in the world show an interest in the possibility of utilizing special operations forces, and, therefore, most countries maintain such capabilities in their armed forces. Democratic states are setting up their special operations forces one by one, a former member of the Warsaw Pact, Poland, set up such a force in her armed forces in the beginning of

the 1990s while Germany did so in 1995. Since then, during the short time of their existence, both forces have proven their superb training in military operations in different theatres.

The scientific research that I conducted while writing my dissertation allowed me to define the tendencies that may characterize the future of special operations forces (21st century):

1. Following the disappearance of the bipolar world order, the countries of the world are faced with new security challenges, threats, which may prove difficult to tackle. In the current era, as result of the assymmetrical environment, new capabilities are required alongside the application of conventional forces to resolve conflicts. Such new capabilities are civil-military co-operation, psychological warfare and **special operations**.
2. Based on the analysis of experiences gained in recent conflicts, eg in Afghanistan and in Iraq, the key role of the aforementioned capabilities, especially that of special operations forces has become evident. (The fact that the majority of tasks in such complicated environments like Afghanistan or Iraq are performed by the American special operations forces well characterizes the issue.)
3. Special operations units in modern armed forces will foreseeably continue to play an important role in resolving conflicts in the future. The profile of armed conflicts and clashes of the future will have transformed so fundamentally that traditionally trained forces may only be able to accomplish at unjustifiably high losses. As a result of this, while most countries have reduced their personnel in conventional armed forces, the strength of special operations troops has tendentially increased. (A good example for this is the USA where the strength of the special operations forces count 49,000 or the Russian armed forces where even after the large-scale downsizing a significant number of special operations troops have remained in service).
4. Researchers of security policy and military sciences agree that the probability of a global war in the future is negligible, most probably, regional crises and armed conflicts of a smaller scale will become more characteristic. Soldiers of specially trained units may be deployed to effectively tackle such conflicts. Thus we can conclude that special operations forces may effectively be used in all three stages of strategic environment, i.e. in war, in military operations other than war (peace operations, humanitarian operations

and crisis management)¹ and in tackling asymmetrical challenges (with special respect to the military aspects of the war on terror). These highly trained, well equipped and versatile units may be deployed from the air, the sea and certainly from the land.

5. The development of special operations forces and the adjacent capabilities will be an important task of future military leaders. A visible sign of this is the fact that different countries are setting up their special operations commands, e.g. the US Marine Corps recently established a new operations command, MARSOC², in February, 2006. The new command is tasked with co-ordinating the training and the activities of the marine special operations forces (1st és 2nd Marine Special Operations Battalion) under USSOCOM. In January, 2007, NATO established NATO SOF Coordination Centre, NSCC, the co-ordinating organization of the special operations forces of NATO in Stuttgart, Germany. An important question in developing special operations capabilities is research and development. It is by this that the availability of the most recent developments and cutting edge technology to special operations forces may be assured.

9. Recommendations

I believe that in case of PhD dissertations, future utility is an important factor. Therefore, in articulating these recommendations, I aspired to make them applicable for military science, the Hungarian Defense Forces and the Hungarian special operations forces. In my view, my dissertation may prove to be useful in the following areas:

1. It may be used as teaching material. Parts or the whole of the paper may be used in the education of those pursuing military studies (BA / MA and PhD courses at ZMNE, or NCO training). Furthermore, it may be used as resource material by those who investigate issues of special operations and special operations forces.
2. It may be used as background material. It may be used in parts or as a whole to facilitate the work of experts and staff officers working at different leadership levels of the Hungarian Defense Forces (Ministry of Defense, HDF Joint Forces Command, HDF

¹ The American concept of Military Operations Other Than War, MOOTW is largely the same as, in NATO doctrines, Non Article 5 Crisis Response Operations, NA 5 CRO.

² MARSOC = Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command.

Special Forces Battalion) in the short- and medium term planning of special operations forces.

3. The material may serve to deepen the knowledge of those officers and NCOs who take part in the training and preparation of the special operations forces of the Hungarian Defense Forces (commanders, staff officers), and most probably will ease the work of special operations officers who start their missions abroad.
4. It may serve as an interesting read for those interested in the topic (military, law enforcement and civilian).

10. New scientific results

After researching the dissertation theme, exploring it in writing and drawing final conclusions, I was able to compose the following scientific results:

1. The application of special operations forces based on a systematized theoretical background proves that their role is better valued, due to the changes in the threats and the intensity of threats that societies are faced with.
2. Defining the concept of special operations forces, through defining the criteria that are essential but by no means sufficient to effectively accomplish a particular set of tasks.
3. Based on an analysis of the system of supporting, preparing and equipping special operations forces, I prove that such operations possess non-conventional source requirements.
4. Defining the future tendencies of utilizing special operations forces.

11. Practicality Of Research Results

This dissertation may in parts or as a whole be used in elaborating the Special Operations Doctrine of the Hungarian Defense Forces (national doctrine). In addition, it may serve as resource material for textbooks, teaching aids and standard operating procedures. By regarding the recommendations articulated in the dissertation, the activities of the Hungarian special forces units in international peace operations may become more effective.

12. Bibliography Of The Theme

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3. Kovács Csaba - Murinkó Attila: Különleges helyzetek, különleges csapatok, különleges kiképzés, Kard és Toll 2002/1.;
4. Kovács Csaba: Az évezred szuperharcosai, Kard és Toll 2002/2.;
5. Kovács Csaba őrnagy: A különleges műveletek helye és szerepe a Magyar Honvédségben (előadás), megjelent: Hadtudományi Tájékoztató 2002/2.;
6. Kovács Csaba: A hálózatos katona, hálózatos raj, hálózatos szakasz (részvétel a HM EI Rt. Megvalósíthatósági tanulmány elkészítésében, 2003.);
7. Kovács Csaba: A különleges hadművelleti erők tevékenysége a CIMIC során, Kard és Toll 2003/2.;
8. Kovács Csaba őrnagy: A nemzetközi terrorizmus elleni harcban részt vevő magyar katonák felszerelése és felkészítése (megjelent: Dr. Kőszegvári Tibor - Kovács Csaba: A nemzetközi terrorizmus elleni harc katonai területei és feladatai, egyetemi jegyzet, 5. sz. melléklet, Budapest, 2003.);
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13. Curriculum Vitae

Personal particulars:

Name: Csaba Kovács

Date and place of birth: October 17, 1967 Pincehely

Address of residence: 2117. Isaszeg, Sári u. 8.

Education:

2001-2004.

Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University, Military Sciences Doctorate School
(correspondence learning)

1999-2001

Zrínyi Miklós National Defense University , Faculty of Military Sciences, Department of Strategic and Tactics, Military Leadership Complementary Course (full-time education)

1986-1989.

Zalka Máté Military Technical College

Chemical defense (full-time education)

Professional experience:

2007-

HDF Civil-Military Co-operation and Psychological Operations Operations Centre, deputy commander;

2001-2007.

HDF General Staff Operations Division (currently HDF Operations and Training Division), senior staff officer;

1998-1999.

HDF NBC Area Centre, information staff officer, head of department for analysis and IT;

1993-1998.

HDF 88th Air-Mobile Battalion (since 1996 Rapid Reaction Battalion), platoon leader and company commander;

1989-1993.

HDF 93rd Petőfi Sándor NBC Regiment, platoon leader and company commander

Courses attended:

2007. INFOOPS course;

2007. CIMIC staff officers' course;

2006. Force Protection course;

2005. NATO Operations Planning staff officers' course;

2003. Special Operations Forces staff officers' course;

2002. NATO/PfP staff officers' course;

1996. sub-unit commanders' NATO – course;

1994. mountain training;

1994. airborne training (currently 163 parachute jumps);

1993. special training at Police Special Service.

Language skills:

2000. English - type „A” intermediate state language exam with military extension;

2001. English - type „B” intermediate state language exam with military extension;

2007. Russian - type „A” elementary state language exam with military extension;

2007. Russian - type „B” elementary state language exam.