

The Soviet Legacy: Transforming Bulgaria's Armed Forces for Homeland Security Missions

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War is much too serious to leave to generals

George Clemenceau¹

National security is much too serious to leave entirely to civilians

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Introduction

At the Istanbul Summit in June 2004, the member states of NATO confirmed that collective defense remains the main goal of the Alliance. The nations “remain fully committed to the collective defense of the people, territory, and forces” of the Alliance’s member states, and stated, “transatlantic cooperation is essential in defending our values and meeting common threats and challenges, from wherever they may come.”³ The processes of defense transformation have to ensure that the means match the ends, that the available capabilities match the missions.

A number of processes that have the character of a military revolution affect the latest developments in military affairs. Militaries undertake new additional missions and tasks. The Bulgarian armed forces are fully involved in these processes.

National Policy on Deployment of Military Forces in Domestic Contingencies

Bulgaria’s Military Strategy defines three broad missions that encompass the relevant tasks for the Bulgarian armed forces: “Contribution to the national security in peacetime; contribution to peace and stability in the world; and participation in the defense

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² John M. Collins, *Military Strategy: Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 2002), xvi.

³ Istanbul Summit Communiqué, 28 June 2004, Press Release PR/CP (2004) 0096.

of the country.”⁴ These three missions were slightly modified by a Strategic Defense Review, and once again reconfirmed in a policy framework document.⁵

Extraordinary Cases: Armed Attack on the Nation, Including CBRNE Attacks

The participation and role of the Bulgarian military in the process of crisis management and defending the country against an armed attack on the nation is very clearly described in the Military Strategy. The armed forces should be prepared to face “military threats” in specific actions in the event of “deliberate violation of borders, large-scale sabotage and other activities, use of another country’s armed formations and direct military aggression; mass epidemics and damage as a result of bacteriological, biological and chemical contamination.”⁶ But they also have a role to play in cases of violations of “security and public order like organized crime, terrorism, and ethnic and religious tensions.”⁷

Emergency Consequence Management for Disasters and Terror Attacks

In peacetime, the armed forces can participate in operation in cases of crises of a non-military character within Bulgaria’s borders. They can conduct preventive activities or provide direct support and protection of the population and the national economy in the event of natural disaster, industrial failure, or other catastrophes. When a state of emergency is declared, they can participate in operations against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal trafficking in weapons, and international terrorism, guarding strategically important sites and interdicting terrorist activities.

Temporary Support to Civil Authorities

Units and formations of the armed forces can participate in operations against the traffic in drugs, people, or weapons. The military can also aid in guarding objects or sites that are potential targets for terrorist attack. Because these tasks are primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior and the civil law enforcement agencies, the military would only participate when the civil authorities’ efforts and resources are not sufficient or spent, and the sovereignty and security of the country are threatened. The armed forces contribute to the collecting and processing of information on potential security risks and threats; operations to deter and neutralize terrorist, extremist, and criminal groups; protection and support of the population; and providing support (as appropriate) to other state bodies and organizations.

Traditional Missions

The Bulgarian military develops and maintains capabilities of “collection, processing, and analysis of information necessary for the purposes of early warning and support to

⁴ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria*, approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2002; available at www.mod.bg.

⁵ Strategic Defense Review, “Policy Framework,” adopted by the National Assembly on 25 March 2004; available at www.mod.bg.

⁶ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

making political and military decisions on issues related to the military aspects of national security.”⁸ They provide capabilities and contribute to the control of Bulgarian airspace and territorial waters.⁹

Air force units help ensure the security of Bulgarian airspace, and navy ships and units implement maritime surveillance and interdiction tasks. The armed forces participate in the process of air traffic control jointly with the respective state authorities, as well as in the control and safeguard of the sea. Duty forces and assets are ready to act against airspace violators and safeguard the air and maritime sovereignty of the country, provide surveillance and control of the traffic at sea, and to offer forces and assets for response to vessels that violate the country’s maritime sovereignty.¹⁰

Historical Precedents

Post-War: How Military Forces Were Employed from 1945–1990

It might be useful and interesting to start the history overview a bit earlier than many twentieth-century histories do, and go back to the period after the First World War. In 1919, the Bulgarian armed forces were exposed to heavy international restrictions with regard to manpower strength, quantities of armament, equipment, and heavy weapon systems. At the same time, the country’s population and economy were suffering tremendous difficulties that were considered a national catastrophe. The prime minister at the time, Alexander Stamboliisky, leader of the party of the Bulgarian Agrarian Popular Union, passed a law through the parliament establishing a new “obligatory labor conscription,” mobilizing men over the age of twenty and women over the age of sixteen for the building of public construction projects; this effort became one of Stamboliisky’s most famous and admired reforms.¹¹ Even though it was announced as a temporary measure aimed at rebuilding the country after the war, and particularly at reconstructing vital infrastructure and economic installations, the “labor corps” (based on “labor conscription”) outlived Alexander Stamboliisky’s government by about eight decades.

In the period 1945–1990, the “labor corps” developed further, and split up into a series of armed and paramilitary formations subordinate to the different ministries, including the Ministry of Infrastructure and Construction and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. They were building, maintaining, and in some cases guarding important infrastructure installations such as power plants, large administrative or cultural buildings, bridges, roads, and even blocks of flats. The Ministry of the Interior also had its own troops. They consisted mainly of internal forces and border guard troops.

Another tradition also began from a lesson learned during the rule of Alexander Stamboliisky’s government. He became a victim of a military *coup d’état*, which was

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Strategic Defense Review, “Policy Framework.”

¹⁰ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria*.

¹¹ Stefan Gruev, *Crown of Thorns* (Sofia: 1991), 109.

later followed by yet other coups. That was seen as a reason to keep the armed forces out of internal security issues as much as possible, and particularly out of any political struggles.

Post-Cold War: Examples from 1991–2001

The period 1991–2001 was a period of transition. Changes took place in the state government, the political system, and the economy. The military faced questions about the role of the armed forces in a liminal period, when the guarantees of collective defense were not in effect, since the Warsaw Pact had collapsed, but Bulgaria had not yet become a member of NATO. The armed forces are constitutionally obligated to maintain their readiness to provide reliable defense of the country; at the same time, however, they began implementing changes, and moving toward a “new qualitative status.”¹² The Bulgarian armed forces implemented a reform plan with key parameters that have no equivalent in the history of the country.¹³

Similar processes of changes took place with regard to the forces, troops, and formations subordinate to other ministries. The labor corps was terminated, along with the practice of labor conscription. The troops belonging to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Construction and to the Ministry of Transportation and Communications were disbanded. Within the Ministry of the Interior, a civilian border police service replaced the border guard troops, and the Internal Forces were transformed into a form of “Gendarmerie.”

Post-9/11

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the world is no longer the same. The importance of the availability, deployability, and usability of a capable military force was especially strongly outlined as a result of these tragic events. Bulgaria had begun to act as a real ally to the Atlantic Alliance long before it was invited to become a NATO member. Bulgarian troops have taken part in the operations in the Western Balkans, and at present Bulgaria is also providing host nation support and transiting of people and equipment for KFOR and SFOR (now known as EUFOR). With the formation of the global coalition against terrorism, the country has contributed in different ways, ranging from providing political support, to opening its airspace and providing an airfield for coalition forces, to sending a mechanized platoon to Afghanistan and an infantry battalion as part of the Polish multinational division in Iraq.

¹² *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

¹³ “Updated Plan 2004.” Some of the key parameters are: reduction of the military’s peacetime strength to 45,000, and wartime strength to 100,000; significant cuts to the main armament systems and military infrastructure; increasing interoperability with NATO; professionalization of the force; establishment of a permanent reserve; and implementation of important modernization projects.

Legal Authority for Deployment

The main law of the country—the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria¹⁴—defines the role of the armed forces. They are to “guarantee the sovereignty, security, and independence of the country, and protect its territorial integrity.” Together with the constitution of the country and the Law of Defense and the Armed Forces in the hierarchy of fundamental documents, there are some other documents that have a special role relating to the possible use of the military in domestic contingencies. These include the National Security Concept, Military Doctrine, Military Strategy, Joint Operations Doctrine, Operations Other Than War Doctrine, Special Operations Doctrine, the Doctrines of the Services, and Tactical Level Documents.

The National Security Concept provides a definition for security as a situation when “the major rights and liberties of the Bulgarian citizens are protected,” along with “the state borders, territorial integrity, and independence of the country.”¹⁵

The Military Doctrine¹⁶ defines the primary goals in the area of defense. The first goal is to “guarantee the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of the country against threats of a military, armed, or *terrorist* nature,” and also the “protection of the population in times of natural disasters, industrial accidents, catastrophes and hazardous pollution.”¹⁷ The doctrine takes into account the risks to Bulgaria’s security and territorial integrity that result from “destabilizing effects of more limited military and/or armed formations and/or *terrorist groups*.”¹⁸

According to the Law of the Ministry of the Interior and the rules and regulations governing its implementation, this ministry is tasked with the responsibilities related to providing internal security. The participation of the armed forces in the implementation of tasks related to providing internal security is done “under conditions and in order established by the Constitution and the Laws. The legally established mechanism guarantees that the tasking of the Bulgarian armed forces is in the interest of the society and for the protection of the national values.”¹⁹ It is based on the provisions of the Military Doctrine and the Law of Defense and the Armed Forces. According to these documents, during peacetime, in an emergency situation (or when a state of emergency is declared), the military shall provide support to the civil law enforcement agencies against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the illegal traffic of weapons and people, and terrorism. The military takes part in guarding strategically important sites, and in operations directed at stopping terrorist activities. A state of emergency

¹⁴ *Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria*, adopted by the Parliament (Grand National Assembly) on 13 July 1991; changed and amended on 26 September 2003.

¹⁵ *National Security Concept of the Republic of Bulgaria*, adopted by the Parliament in April 1998; available at www.mod.bg.

¹⁶ *Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria*, Amended and Added, *State Gazette*, issue 200 (2002); available at www.mod.bg.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 13.

¹⁹ “Operations Other than War Doctrine 3.01,” 29 November 2000, in *Doctrines and Concepts of the Bulgarian Armed Forces*, Volume 1 (Sofia: Military Publishing House, 2001).

could be declared with a decision by the National Assembly (the parliament), or with an edict by the president when the parliament is not in session. Either the decision or the edict should specify the tasks, the number of troops involved, the period of use, and the command and control arrangements for the armed forces' units and formations that are involved. Some of the tasks described by the laws can also be implemented when a state of emergency has not been declared.

The Minister of Defense can give authorization for the participation of units and formations of the armed forces in the mitigation and resolution of the consequences of natural disasters, industrial catastrophes, and dangerous pollution on Bulgarian soil. The Minister of Defense and the Chief of the General Staff have to sign a special order for such authorization.

The military personnel implementing these tasks are instructed to strictly obey the provisions of the constitution and the laws. Limitations of the rights of citizens, freedom of movement, or violation of the sanctity of their property are permissible only as an exception and in cases of the highest emergency. The law or the act of declaring state of emergency describes these exceptions.

Types and Capabilities of Available Forces

The protection of the country and its population is realized through different types of forces and assets for domestic contingencies. This pool includes "forces and assets, established for direct implementation of the protection tasks and also forces and assets of ministries and departments, economic and scientific organizations, executing their basic functions, part of which sometimes have defense implications."²⁰ For the protection of the civilian population, forces are provided from the Agency of Civil Protection; formations belonging to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense; personnel and assets of the Ministry of Health; and resources from other ministries and organizations, central and local governments and administrations, non-governmental organizations, and volunteers.²¹

It is very important that the government have capabilities for fast and adequate reaction to terrorist attacks. Such a response would be faceted in nature; it would include "specialized detachments for rapid reaction in situations with hostages, to prevent chaotic massacres similar to the one in Beslan; technical teams; emergency medical personnel."²²

Active Military Forces

Units of the three branches of the armed services maintain readiness for participation in different activities anywhere on Bulgarian soil. They are operational formations, and can be used only with the permission of the Minister of Defense and the Chief of the

²⁰ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

²¹ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

²² Brian Jenkins, "The Four Defenses Against Terrorism," *24 Hours* (Sofia, 25 September 2004).

General Staff. Modular formations—created on the territorial principle, taking into account the location of the units—and combined detachments conduct specialized training to act in different situations.

Combat commando teams are prepared as part of the special operations forces. The specific structure of the special operations forces, along with their armament and special equipment, enable them to act in all kinds of conditions and allows flexible planning with a variety of options.

The Air Force Tactical Aviation Command can also bring to bear some of its special capabilities, such as aerial photography, reconnaissance and escort, transport of personnel and materials (including combat commando teams), and close air support. For the Air Defense Command, one of the biggest challenges is the detection, identification, and elimination of high-speed, small-size air targets, flying at low altitude, and coming into sight suddenly. The navy is able to contribute with their surveillance assets, aviation, and ships.

Paramilitary Police Forces

The Ministry of the Interior supervises a number of national law enforcement elements that have forces and assets with specific tasks. The Security Service specializes in counterintelligence and information gathering. The national police are an operational search and protection service for maintaining the public order and the prevention and investigation of criminal activity. The Counteraction to Organized Crime Service is dedicated to neutralizing the activities of local and transnational criminal structures. The Fire and Breakdown Safety Service provides fire control, firefighting, and search and rescue support on the national level. The Border Police guards the national border and observes the implementation of various legal regimes governing the nation's borders with its neighbors. The gendarmerie replaced the Internal Forces in 1997; it is a specialized guarding and operational search service for guarding strategic sites and other objects of critical importance, fighting terrorist and sabotage groups, maintaining public order, and preventing crime. Its units are highly mobile police structures, and can act individually or in concert with other services to deal with crisis situations, maintain the public order in civil disturbances, and also serve as reserve of the Ministry of the Interior for guaranteeing internal security.

Some specific tasks are assigned to the specialized anti-terrorist detachment. They may be implemented in interaction with other services of the Ministry of the Interior and armed forces units and assets, and include counteraction and neutralization of terrorists, searching specific regions, detaining terrorists and transferring them to the police, securing certain areas from terrorists, establishing contact with terrorist groups, and working for the release of hostages.

Reserve Forces

All forces and assets of the Bulgarian armed forces, regardless of which command structure or branch of service they belong to, or their level of manpower, are obliged to participate in activities in cases of crisis situations within the boundaries of their garrisons.

The structure of the reserves is changing with the transition from conscript to professional armed forces. A concept for a “national guard”-type structure under the supervision of the local authorities is under development. It is aimed at filling the gap created while the reform process is under way. Moving operational units to the center of the country and closing a large number of garrisons left significant parts of the nation’s territory without any military forces. Very often it takes an unacceptably long time to move the nearest military modular formation or unit to crisis and disaster areas.

Other

The Civil Protection Agency provides search and rescue teams, deals with the mitigation of the consequences of natural disasters, industrial failures, and other catastrophic events. The national Agency for Refugees manages the verification, reception, and accommodation of displaced people, establishing temporary reception centers for foreign citizens seeking protection, along with other tasks. The Operational and Technical Information Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for the important task of explosives disposal.

National Response Plans and Programs

While the availability of sufficient resources—both military and civil—is of critical importance, it is equally important for the government to have prepared “detailed plans for search and rescue, decontamination or quarantine operations. And most of all there must be an effective government structure and procedures for actions in crisis situations.”²³

The sharing of responsibilities for defense planning within the executive power is related to the implementation of government policy in the area of security and defense. This task is implemented through modern methods of defense resource management, concepts and programs for working in peacetime, and preparation of the national economy to work under conditions of a possible escalating crisis or in armed conflict. A system of crisis and wartime plans has been developed at all levels of the government—national, ministries and departments, organizations and companies, districts and communities—to insure the proper management of the nation’s defense resources.

The General State Wartime Plan provides for the “proper distribution and management of the nation’s resources in the interest of the defense of the country. This plan consists of a system of indicators and activities for all branches of the national economy.”²⁴ The development of the plan is an integrated process. The Ministry of Defense coordinates the process of formulating and executing defense policy. The activities for the implementation of crisis and wartime tasks are managed through both central and local administrative bodies. The plan could be updated if the needs and requirements of the Armed Forces or the capabilities of the national economy change.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ *White Book of Security and Defense*, available at www.mod.bg

The armed forces' formations conduct operations for direct support and protection of the population in close interaction with the government authorities responsible for crisis management. The planning of the military's participation takes place as part of the integrated planning process at the national level and also for each part of nation's territory, with the leading role taken by the central government administration, using common doctrines and procedures and focusing on the interaction among the different ministries and agencies. It covers the national-level activities, the preparation of the military formations to be deployed, the organization of the modalities of interaction between various groups and levels of administration, command and control arrangements, and logistic support. These plans are updated and coordinated annually.

The steps to be taken for the protection of the population, and the participation of the armed forces in particular, are described in "Plans for Interaction with the State Administration Authorities." This document outlines the methods of interaction between the different departments that participate in the "National Plan for Protection of the Population." For their part, the armed forces develop and maintain "Plans for the Protection of the Troops."

In cases of natural or industrial disasters, the Bulgarian military implements their "Plan for Potential Crisis Situations." Under certain procedure, they may be assigned to participate in the protection of the population and to conduct search and rescue activities in cases of natural disasters, industrial failure, catastrophes, and dangerous pollution.

The Council of Ministers manages non-military crises and coordinates the response activities. In the area of the crisis, the local government and administration authorities direct the effort. The senior commander, in accordance with the plans and the division of responsibility, exercises command and control of the participating military units. The command and control of the participating forces and assets requires a unified command and control system. The National Military Command Center is the principal element of this system for the Ministry of Defense and the Bulgarian armed forces.

Exercise "Joint Efforts 2004" took place in October 2004 with the participation of representatives, units, and personnel from the Ministry of Defense, the General Staff and the three services, the Ministry of the Interior, the Civil Protection Agency, and the Agency for Refugees. The goal of the exercise was to review the resources and capabilities that the state structures have for crisis prevention and management; to precisely define their responsibilities, functions, and tasks; and to assess their ability to act together. This, the first joint exercise of such a scale, was directed from the National Military Command Center.

Protection of Critical Infrastructure

The armed forces assist other ministries and departments by committing forces and assets for "protection and defense of strategic sites threatened by terrorist attacks, as well as during military conflicts in proximity of the state borders."²⁵ In cases of terrorist at-

²⁵ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

tack, the armed forces units guard strategically important civilian and military sites, limit and isolate the threatened region, provide security, and work to prevent the spread of rumors and panic.

It may be unexpected, but some good examples of capabilities that the Bulgarian armed forces have developed come from their participation in peace support operations abroad. A Bulgarian engineer platoon is building houses and doing substantial reconstruction of important infrastructure in Kosovo. In the process, it is developing capabilities that are very useful and will definitely be employed when the platoon returns back to its brigade in Bulgaria. A Bulgarian mechanized company is guarding the headquarters of SFOR (now NATO and EU HQs) in Sarajevo, and building skills in guarding strategically important infrastructure objects. Other units in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan, and Iraq are being trained and gaining experience in area search, establishing and manning checkpoints, patrolling, etc. These are specific skills and capabilities that can be used after the six-month period of the foreign deployment is up.

Border and Transportation Security

Land forces, with forces and assets belonging mainly to the Operational Forces Command, but also to the reserve commands, could contribute to a number of homeland security tasks. These include embargo operations, protecting Bulgarian territory from terrorist activities, preventing illegal immigrants from flooding through the state border, blocking and neutralizing paramilitary formations, and rendering assistance to the population.

The forces and assets of the air force, in coordination with civilian and military air traffic controllers, can conduct operations for the protection of Bulgaria's airspace. They include actions for guarding and defending the airspace (establishing borders and limitations of the regional airspace and restrictions for using it, coordination at the tactical level of military approaches) and providing security for civilian and military air traffic (reduction of air traffic in the area of the operation, introducing limitations and interdictions in the interest of the safety of civilian air traffic).

The Bulgarian navy, in coordination with other armed forces services and forces and assets belonging to other ministries (such as the Border Police) and agencies (the government agency responsible for controlling civilian shipping), conduct when necessary operations for control of Bulgaria's territorial waters and the protection of shipping.²⁶ Their aims are maintaining a favorable operational situation, ensuring the safety of shipping, protecting and defending sea ports, conducting mine countermeasures, controlling the shipping lanes, preventing pollution, and inspecting ships in Bulgarian waters.

These are highly specific capabilities, which might not be needed every day. But the forces and assets that are providing them have to be properly equipped, prepared,

²⁶ Bulgarian territorial waters include internal seas, the territorial sea, the adjacent zone, the continental shelf, and the exclusive economic zone.

trained, and kept at a relatively high level of readiness. The following two examples—one of air policing and one of controlling Bulgarian waters—provide an illustration.

An air show took place several years ago in a neighboring country. The show finished a few hours earlier than anticipated, and a group of small aircraft of a different type from those participating in the show decided to go home immediately. They did not bother changing their flight plans and informing the air traffic control agencies. Bulgarian detection installations registered a significant number of “unknown targets” entering the country’s air space. Immediately, air defense fighter aircraft took off, established contact, and kindly invited the stray aircraft to land. These pilots were only harmless tourists. But what if among them were terrorists, who were equipped, trained, and had been preparing themselves for years for such an opportunity? And what if the fighters were not ready?

In a maritime example, a Bulgarian commercial ship sent an S.O.S. signal. One of the crewmembers, who was armed, attacked the captain and took as hostages two other members of the crew. The incident took place out of the range of police vessels. The navy sent a combat ship with a helicopter, and the issue was resolved without more loss of life.

Domestic Counterterrorism

Units of the Bulgarian armed forces can participate in operations against weapons proliferation or terrorist activities when the efforts of the civil law enforcement agencies are not sufficient to control the situation and the security and sovereignty of the country are threatened. These operations may include actions against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, illegal trafficking of weapons, international terrorism, guarding strategic objects, and counterterrorist activities.

After the declaration of a state of emergency, the military assists the Ministry of the Interior in its counterterror efforts. These actions are based on special instructions for the interactions between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior.

The military can participate in the fight against terrorists in two ways, active and passive. The passive method includes measures like exerting strict control over the military’s stock of weapons, preventing their illegal transfer to individuals, organizations, and other countries. The active method includes a wide spectrum of preventive work, countermeasures, and full interaction with the services of the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of the Interior, and other national organizations and agencies.

Military units, mainly the special operations forces, provide support to law enforcement agencies in combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the illegal traffic in weapons. They implement intelligence and surveillance strategies, and guard strategically important sites and convoys. In cases calling for direct action, they can participate in searches for and the collection of weapons and facilities for their production and use, as well as support the police units in such operations. Special operations forces, with their rapid-strike capabilities (especially in isolated regions), can also be used for direct attacks against terrorist groups and their supporting infrastructure, or for operations for release and evacuation of hostages.

Defense against and Response to Catastrophic Threats

Another important task for the military is participating in the prevention or mitigation of the consequences of nuclear, chemical, and biological contamination. The armed forces provide and maintain in permanent readiness capabilities for reaction in cases of nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological contamination, working in cooperation with the respective ministries and departments.

The protection of the civilian population and the national economy is part of a system of activities, both in peacetime and wartime, for the reduction of losses and negative consequences, and ensuring the necessary conditions for survival after a conflict. “The armed forces commit personnel and equipment to assist the population in emergencies, and especially in cases of disasters and catastrophes.”²⁷

Civil Support

In peacetime as well as in wartime, activities for the protection of the civilian population and national economy are a joint function of the state authorities, local governmental and administrative authorities, and various civilian non-governmental organizations. They are managed by special bodies and implemented by specially established paramilitary and civil formations for the purposes of search and rescue operations and emergency restorations and reconstruction of the country during crisis situations.

The armed forces maintain a high level of readiness for humanitarian assistance and search and rescue activities, both on Bulgarian soil and abroad. They provide support to the population in many different situations. Modular formations are prepared for fighting forest and agricultural fires, for actions in heavy winter conditions, for relief of the consequences of devastating flooding, earthquakes, or industrial catastrophes, and also for unexploded ordnance disposal. The minister of defense in a special order every year assigns the forces and assets earmarked for participation in operations for protecting the population.

The armed forces conduct operations for protecting the population in cases of natural disaster, ecological crisis, epidemic, large-scale migrations of the population, radiation and chemical catastrophes, and other emergency situations. The command and control structures and formations prepared for action in non-military crises, in interaction with other departments and agencies, local governments, and administrative authorities:

- Observe the risk factors and extrapolate the crisis situation (reconnaissance and analysis);
- Provide order and security in the threatened region (assist law enforcement authorities, ensure security of important infrastructure objects);
- Provide assistance to the civilian population (drinking water and food supplies, medical assistance);

²⁷ *Military Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

- Conduct urgent demolition and restoration activities (evacuation of the population, livestock, and materials; specialized and sanitary treatment; decontamination; deactivation of hazardous materials; firefighting; clearing roads);
- Resolve the causal elements of the crisis;
- Restore control of the situation;
- Contribute to the mitigation of the consequences.

For example, in early February 2005, severe snowstorms caused a disaster situation in many regions of eastern Bulgaria. After requests by the local governors, approved through the chain of command, units of the three services and modular formations were deployed around the clock, clearing out roads, pulling vehicles out of the snow, moving people to hospitals for life-saving treatment (including via navy helicopter), and delivering food and medical supplies to isolated villages.

Conclusions

The present spectrum of tasks for the military is larger than ever. It may be expected that the global and regional security environment will continue to present hard-to-predict challenges and the potential for dynamic changes. The military element will retain its important role in the homeland security system. It is a tool to maintain peace and stability together, along with diplomatic, political, economic, and other methods.

Traditionally, “the military do what the nation asks.”²⁸ But they should be primarily asked to do what they are designed for and prepared to do best. The main task of the military is and will remain the defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. The military are and will be more and more often asked to do things that are different or may seem different from the traditional purpose of a military force. Many tasks in peace support operations resemble the traditional role of the police. Search and rescue missions and support of the population have also become regular tasks for the military.

Military establishments are subject to changes. The military has to adapt its armament and equipment, structures, doctrines, and skills to new security challenges and domestic conditions. But they should not turn into a sort of police force in different uniform, or well-armed search and rescue teams and civil protection agencies. Although very important, these are supplementary tasks for the military, not its core purpose.

²⁸ Harry J. Thie, “Planning the Future Military Workforce,” in *New Challenges, New Tools for Defense Decisionmaking*, eds. Stuart Johnson, Martin Libicki, and Gregory F. Treverton (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2003).

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