The importance of building interoperability of Serbian Armed Forces for participation in multinational operations

Marija Ignjatijević
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Publisher
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy
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Print
Unagraf

Copies
200

ISBN
978-86-6237-155-3

BELGRADE, February 2018.

Preparation of this publication was supported by Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) through the project „Informing the Public Debate on Serbia-NATO Relations“. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not reflect the views of the Government of Canada.
INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Serbia has expressed its commitment to participating in multinational operations through strategic documents, constitutional and legislative framework and international agreements. As defined in the Defense Strategy, one of the three missions of the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) is participation in building and maintaining peace in the region and the world. By actively participating in multinational operations, Serbia contributes to the improvement of global peace and security and, at the same time, this process enables it to pursue foreign policy goals and strengthen its international reputation. Contingents in multinational operations under the auspices of international organizations such as the UN, EU and NATO usually have a mixed structure and hence, interoperability with other countries’ armed forces is of great importance for the successful implementation of activities and tasks within the operation zone. Through the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), Serbia has highlighted the importance of interoperability building and engagement in multinational operations. In accordance, the main aim of this analysis will be to identify mechanisms used to attain the interoperability of the SAF and to determine how it enhances participation in multinational operations.

Within the framework of IPAP, which represents the highest form of cooperation with NATO without the aspiration to become an Alliance member, a partner country defines foreign and security policy priorities and plans necessary reforms of the defense system. Chapter II of the IPAP, dealing with defense and military issues, encompasses a wide range of areas which require interoperability improvement, starting from strategic transport and military exercises to the Operational Capabilities Concept. Hereinafter we will look at those measures and activities related to interoperability building through military exercises and trainings for participation in multinational operations. With regard to this, it is important to first explain what interoperability represents, how the exercises and trainings contribute to its enhancement, as well as which mechanisms for improving interoperability are at Serbia’s disposal within the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). Furthermore, although IPAP is not a legally binding document, an assessment of the implementation of its measures can give insight into which elements within these mechanisms Serbia is using to improve its interoperability, what kind of exercises and trainings the members of Serbian Armed Forces are participating in, as well as how all these elements contribute to the engagement in peacekeeping missions.

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1 The author would like to express gratitude to professor Božidar Forca, Goran Janićević and Goran Topalović, as well as to colleagues from Belgrade Centre for Security Policy Bojan Elek, Vladimir Erceg and Katarina Đokić, for the help provided during the research process and useful comments on the draft versions of the paper.
ATTAINING INTEROPERABILITY

What does interoperability and compliance with NATO standards entail?

Interoperability is the ability of various military organizations to conduct joint operations. It enables the armed forces, units and systems to communicate and function together and use common infrastructure, doctrine and procedures. It may refer to the interoperability among different military units (infantry, navy and aviation) or to the interoperability between the armed forces of different countries.2

Interoperability can be established on four levels – strategic, operational, tactical and technological.3 It can refer to different areas, from technology, military equipment and weapons, through training and education and all the way to communication and intelligence exchange.4

Interoperability can significantly reduce the cost of joint operations through the pooling of resources and avoiding the duplication of capacities. However, it does not imply that systems or units need to become identical, but rather to be mutually compatible. The armed forces do not necessarily need to have common equipment; it is important that the parts of that equipment can communicate and function together.5 For example, different armies do not need to use radio devices produced by the same company, as long as they are compatible and able to communicate.

Interoperability refers to establishing a certain level of standardization in terms of concepts, procedures, tactics, trainings and many other aspects. With the aim of defining basic guidelines and improving cooperation, NATO publishes Standardization Agreements (STANAG), which define the processes for achieving the necessary level of interoperability. In that manner, STANAG 6001 for example, which refers to the language proficiency level, defines the basic language assessment criteria, terms and procedures required for obtaining certificates for certain formation positions.6 As a member of the Partnership for Peace, Serbia applies these standards, recognizing that language proficiency is of great importance for the participation of MoD and SAF members in international activities such as military exercises or multinational operations.

NATO members develop interoperability through common plans, exercises and trainings. Through the program of PfP and different mechanism of military cooperation within it, NATO offers partner countries the opportunity to further develop interoperability with the Alliance members, by providing financial support and expertise, and for example, by offering the opportunity of participating in exercises and trainings.

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How do the PfP mechanisms contribute to interoperability building?

The most important NATO mechanisms through which partner countries can enhance the interoperability of their armed forces are the Planning and Review Process (PARP) and the Operational Capabilities Concept – Evaluation and Feedback (OCC). These mechanisms are of great importance for the development of SAF operational capabilities, as they are aimed at reforming the defense system and the development of the necessary capabilities through cooperation with partner countries.7

Serbia joined the PARP mechanism in 2007, with the aim of achieving interoperability and better preparation for cooperation with NATO and PfP members through developing capabilities for performing trainings, realization of exercises and joint action during the realization of entrusted missions and tasks.8

The Planning and Review Process is an instrument of the Partnership for Peace, which aims to foster the interoperability building and the development of partner countries’ capacities, but it is also a tool for assessing the level of progress and further planning of the partner countries’ defense system reforms. PARP can be accessed on a voluntary basis by completing a questionnaire containing information regarding the partner country’s armed forces: such as the budget, defense plans and participation in multinational operations etc. The package of Partnership Goals is then developed on the basis of the questionnaire, which should respond to the specific needs of the partner country.9

The current package of Partnership Goals from 2016 contains 42 partnership goals. MOD and SAF organisational units are in charge of achieving these goals.10 The partnership goals include different areas, from cyber security and the fight against terrorism to medical support.

The PARP mechanism also defines the level of forces to be engaged in the PfP activities. SAF declared one infantry light company, one engineer general support company, one military police platoon, and one CBRN defense platoon (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) for participation in the PfP activities as defined by PARP evaluation document in 2015.11

Serbia’s commitment to participate in the Operational Capabilities Concept was defined by the Presentation Document, while the evaluation of the declared units was defined by the SAF internal documents.12 The evaluation of the declared units for participation in the PfP activities in accordance with the Operational Capabilities Concept was initiated in 2011.

The term operational capabilities has replaced a term which had been in long use in our military tradition – combat readiness. Namely, with the change in the very notion of security, which includes a wider range of challenges and threats than merely military ones, concept

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8 The Ministry of Defense response to the BCSP questionnaire, 20 December 2017, available upon request.
9 January 2018.
10 Ibid.
11 Ministry of Defense response to the BCSP questionnaire, 20 December 2017, available upon request.
12 Ibid. Presentation document is a document drafted by the partner country in order to determine the path of cooperation with the Alliance and define political goals of its participation in the PfP. The Serbian government adopted the Presentation document in 2007. See: ISAC Fund, "What is Partnership for Peace?", 2010, <https://www.isac-fund.org/lat/publication/sta-je-partnerstvo-za-mir>
of armed forces development based on capabilities has been incorporated both in theory and practice. Since the mandate of the Serbian Armed Forces can no longer be constrained only to combat missions and tasks, because it also entails, e.g. participating in multinational operations, international military cooperation and civilian authorities support in emergency situations, the term operational capabilities is more suitable. According to the definition given in the SAF Military Doctrine, operational capabilities represent “the ability of the Serbian Armed Forces or its units to achieve the desired operational effects in the prescribed time and according to certain standards by combining strength, resources and task execution methods”. However, bearing in mind that the operational capabilities in fact represent the level of a country’s ambition with regard to its army forces, the operational capabilities can be defined as a set of requirements, i.e. the ambition level and standards that show the willingness of the Serbian Armed Forces or its units to carry out assigned tasks and missions.

OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES CONCEPT – EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

This mechanism enables the evaluation of the achieved level of the operational capabilities of the units designated by the partner country. Thus, the Operational Capabilities Concept is not a training program, but rather an evaluation and feedback program for the units declared within the Operational Capabilities Concept. It represents an upgrade of the PARP mechanism, considering that it is oriented towards raising the quality and verification of the forces’ capabilities which the partner country puts at disposal for the activities and operations within PfP and NATO. In order for the Operational Capabilities Concept to be successfully implemented, it is, first of all, necessary to determine which units will be evaluated, as well as to organize the training of a certain number of evaluators. In order to obtain a capability certificate according to the standards of the Operational Capabilities Concept, the units must successfully pass two levels of self-evaluation conducted by the partner country (SEL 1 and 2) as well as two levels of evaluation carried out by NATO (NEL 1 and 2). Level 1 evaluation focuses on assessing interoperability in terms of training, equipment, structure etc., while level 2 evaluation refers to the assessment of military capabilities and the ability to perform tasks.

The self-evaluation process is carried out by the National Evaluation Team, which consists of SAF members from different organizational units. The Serbian Armed Forces currently have 40 certified evaluators for level 1 assessments and 23 evaluators for level 2 assessments. The courses for evaluators are organized by the Allied Command Transformation, while the Allied Command Operations (ACO) issues the certificates. Although the partner countries are fully responsible for the realization of the self-evaluation, NATO can provide help if there are available resources and in practice, NATO often sends a supervising team in order to oversee the evaluation. The director of the National Evaluation Team makes the final assessment of the declared units’ capabilities. Self-evaluations are considered valid if they are conducted by following the methodology and the checklist provided by NATO. SAF evaluators certified in

13 Forca, B. “Prerequisites of Building Operational Capabilties in relation to the Development of Serbian Armed Forces Doctrine ”, Vojno delo, spring/2014.
14 Božidar Forca, professor at the Faculty for Business Studies and Law - response to BCSP questionnaire, 27 September 2017.
16 Božidar Forca, professor at the Faculty for Business Studies and Law - response to BCSP questionnaire, 27 September 2017.
18 Ibid, 2017: 15-16
19 The Ministry of Defense response to the BCBP questionnaire, December 20, 2017, available upon request
20 NATO Liaison Office in Belgrade response to the BCBP questionnaire, 18 January 2018.
accordance with the Operational Capabilities Concept also take part in, or oversee the evaluation process in countries such as Austria, Germany and Bulgaria.²¹

The evaluation team conducting NATO 1 and 2 level evaluations has a mixed structure and consists of evaluators from both NATO members and partner countries. Only the representatives of partner countries that have actively participated in the program of the Operational Capabilities Concept can be a part of the evaluation team which conducts level 2 evaluations. Most of the time, these teams include representatives of the countries whose units are being evaluated. The number of people in the team necessary to conduct a credible evaluation varies and depends on the type, size and the tasks the unit is being evaluated for. ²²

The evaluation of SAF units through the Operational Capabilities Concept was conducted through the series of exercises, The Shield and The Rock. So far, in total 4 units and 401 SAF members have passed the evaluations.²³

In 2017, the infantry light company, military police platoon and CBRN platoon passed the level 2 NATO evaluation, while the engineer general support company passed the level 1 NATO evaluation. The level 2 self-evaluation for the engineer general support company is planned for the year 2018, while the level 2 NATO evaluation can be expected in 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shield 01</th>
<th>“South” Base</th>
<th>November 2011</th>
<th>Infantry light company (SEL 1) Military police platoon (SEL 1) CBRN platoon (SEL 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shield 02</td>
<td>Sombor “Airport” barracks</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
<td>Engineer general support company (NEL 1) Military police platoon (NEL 1) CBRN platoon (NEL 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shield 03</td>
<td>Pasuljanske livade</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Infantry light company (SEL 2) Military police platoon (SEL 2) CBRN platoon (SEL 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock 01</td>
<td>“South” Base</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
<td>Engineer general support company (SEL 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock 02</td>
<td>“South” Base</td>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Engineer general support company (NEL 1) Infantry light company (NEL 2) Military police platoon (NEL 2) CBRN platoon (NEL 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluations are conducted in the English language as a part of field exercises such as “LIVEX” and they usually last about a week. “LIVEX” or live exercises involve a realistic simulation of events in the operation zone with the participation of forces and the use of equipment. A special scenario is created for the purposes of the evaluation which most of the time supposes the existence of three imaginary sides confronted on a political, religious, economic or another level and when the conflict escalates, it is necessary to engage multinational peacekeeping forces. Different abilities are being tested during the exercises such as commanding procedures, maintaining control and communicating in English, patrolling and observing, escorting convoys, and interrupting violent demonstrations etc.²⁴

²¹ Vještić, V. “The Operational Capabilities Concept in the Serbian Armed Forces, year three”, 2014.
²² NATO Liaison Office in Belgrade response to the BCBP questionnaire, 18 January 2018.
²³ Ministry of Defense response to the BCBP questionnaire, 20 December 2017.
²⁴ Vještić, V. “The Operational Capabilities Concept in the Serbian Armed Forces, year three”, 2014.
Apart from assessing interoperability and the capability of units, the participation in the Operational Capabilities Concepts enables the partner countries access to military exercises, NATO Response Force and NATO operations (after successfully passing the level 2 evaluation) and it also provides the possibility to fill some of the headquarters posts within the North Atlantic Treaty.  

The importance of military exercises for improving interoperability

Military exercises represent one of the most common and most effective mechanisms for achieving interoperability. Large-scale multinational exercises aim to contribute to the cooperation between different countries’ armed forces which don’t have a common structure, weapons system and military equipment. Smaller-scale exercises are organized with a similar goal in mind, but at a lower level of command and organization. Regardless of differences in terms of the level of organization, topic, or challenge that is being tackled in the imaginary scenario, or the procedure being tested, all bilateral and multilateral exercises help the armed forces to become more interoperable.

MILITARY EXERCISE AS A POLITICAL SIGNAL

Military exercises can also be an effective foreign policy instrument, i.e. an instrument for sending short-term political signals or expressing long-term commitments. In that sense, military exercises can be seen as a tool for achieving interoperability on a strategic level. On the one hand, military exercises can serve to build or strengthen alliances with certain countries, but on the other hand, can send negative signals to other countries. In order to avoid the risks that may arise from the misunderstanding of the nature of and the message sent by military exercises, a protocol for conducting exercises on an international level was adopted, first as an integral part of the Helsinki Act from 1975 which was then expanded by the Stockholm Act from 1986. The basic rule of this protocol is that countries must inform their neighbors, within a reasonable time, of conducting military exercises. The OSCE Vienna document on Confidence and Security-Building Measures from 2011 also mentions informing other countries before the exercises are carried out in order to ensure the transparency of military activities. In addition to this rule, countries that are not participating in the exercises, but feel threatened for whatever reason, are invited to observe the exercises.

When it comes to NATO, military exercises represent an important tool with which the Alliance tests its concepts, procedures, systems and tactics. In order to build interoperability, the exercises are open to partner countries through the PfP program. During the exercises, the participants’ task is to respond to the imaginary scenario that corresponds to real-life situations. The exercises are executed in three forms: Live Exercise (LIVEX), Command Post Exercise (CPX) and Exercise Study. Live Exercises are exercises in which actual forces participate and they are conducted through the simulation of real-life combat conditions and the use of equipment. Command Post Exercises are computer-assisted exercises which involve commanders and their staff and are organized with the aim of enhancing coordination and communication.

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between the existing headquarters. An Exercise Study is an activity which may take the form of a map exercise, a war game, a series of lectures, a discussion group etc.\textsuperscript{28}

**SERBIA’S ACTIVITIES IN BUILDING INTEROPERABILITY**

**SAF exercises with NATO and PfP countries**

Serbia’s participation in the military exercises with the NATO and PfP members has certainly intensified since 2006, after it joined the PfP program. In the beginning, the SAF members participated more often as observers at large multinational exercises or they participated in exercises where interoperability and coordination were tested at command level. Over time, the SAF started participating in the exercises on an operational and tactical level and even hosted certain complex international exercises. Some exercises, such as the Platinum Wolf series, directly improve interoperability for participating in multinational operations by developing scenarios and situations relevant for multinational operations. Others are focused on developing specific abilities (medical, logistic) or on responding to a particular threat (terrorism, emergency situations), but they certainly help SAF become more interoperable with other countries’ armed forces.

Blue Road, the first military exercise conducted according to the NATO standards in which the former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro participated after a long absence, took place in 2004 in Romania before joining the PfP program. Before this event, our country had last participated in a military exercise with a NATO member country back in 1955, with the British Royal Navy.\textsuperscript{29} In this first exercise, the members of SAF and Romanian armed forces participated in the simulation of an anti-terrorist action and defence of strategically important objects in the Đerdap Gorge area. SAF members carried out their tasks on the territory of Serbia, separately from the members of Romanian armed forces and the coordination consisted of establishing communication between the command headquarters.

Following this exercise, before it joined the PfP program in 2006, Serbia participated in several bilateral military exercises with NATO member countries. After joining the PfP, Serbia’s participation in military exercises with the Alliance member countries and partner countries intensified significantly. From 2006 until October 2017, Serbia took part in about 150 bilateral and multinational military exercises together with NATO and PfP members.\textsuperscript{30} For the sake of comparison, with Russia, which is the second biggest exercising partner (after NATO and PfP members), Serbia has participated in 10 military exercises since 2006.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{28} NATO Military Exercise, 4 January 2011. <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69725.htm> 18 January 2018

\textsuperscript{29} Anastasijević, D. "Virtual terrorists", Vreme, June 3, 2004.

\textsuperscript{30} The exact number of exercises with the NATO and PfP members is still unknown, given the fact that the data from the questionnaire response that the Ministry of Defense provided (December 20, 2017) to the BCBSP are not comprehensible enough. Namely, there is certain number of multinational exercises on the submitted list of bilateral exercises with NATO and PfP member countries (133), including even two military exercises with the Russian Federation, thus, there is no clear criterion based on which military exercises were divided into two categories (bilateral and multinational exercises under the PfP auspices). The questionnaire is available upon request.

\textsuperscript{31} The Ministry of Defense response to the BCBP questionnaire, 20 December 2017.
Most recently, Serbia participated in the REGEX 17 exercise which took place in Jordan, in September 2017. REGEX is a military exercise held annually with professional and partly financial support from the Allied Joint Forces Command in Naples. The main goal of this exercise is the enhancement of the operational capabilities of participating countries’ commands and units in planning and conducting multinational operations. Serbia participated in the first REGEX exercise in Turkey in 2014 with 5 officers, then in Greece in 2015 with 4 officers, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016 with 5 staff officers and one military police platoon. The plan is to organize the REGEX 18 exercise in Serbia in October 2018. The news that a military exercise conducted in accordance with NATO standards would take place on the territory of Serbia has caused strong reactions and contradictory statements in public. The minister of defense, Aleksandar Vulin, explained that this exercise is not a NATO military exercise, but that it is instead a regional initiative and that this wasn’t the first time such a military exercise was being carried out in Serbia.

According to the definition stated by NATO, a NATO military exercise is any exercise organized by a NATO commander, i.e. initiated by NATO, both individually or in cooperation with the partner countries. Thus, REGEX exercises may fall into this category, as they were organized with the help of Allied Joint Forces Command in Naples. However, it was correct to say that wasn’t the first time a military exercise under the NATO or PfP auspices has taken place on the territory of Serbia. The first such exercise, MEDCEUR 2009, was held in September 2009, in Niš. Apart from SAF and the United States European Command as organizers, 15 more NATO and PfP member countries participated in this exercise. MEDCEUR 2009 was an international military medical exercise of a humanitarian character and was organized with the aim of increasing the capacity and interoperability of the participating countries in cases of natural or other disasters. Furthermore, it is also important to mention the multinational command and staff logistic exercise LOGEX organized by the United States European Command. This exercise is organized in a two-year cycle and is aimed at the development of the logistics capacities and establishing interoperability among the participants during planning and carrying out multinational operations. So far, Serbia has participated 3 times in this exercise, and in 2015 it also hosted the exercise, when 14 NATO and PfP member countries participated in the simulation exercise in the General Staff Training Center. Finally, Serbia was the host of the VIKING in 2014, a command post exercise supported by computer simulations, which will be realized in Serbia in April 2018 as well.

33 Ibid.
37 NATO Liaison Office in Belgrade response to the BCBF questionnaire, 18 January 2018.
Training for multinational operations

*Mandatory training organized prior to deployment to multinational operations is another way of enhancing the operational capabilities necessary for conducting tasks and activities in the operation zone in synergy with other countries’ armed forces. There are two types of training that are being implemented for the SAF members before they are sent to multinational operations: individual, which takes place within the Peacekeeping Operations Centre of SAF General Staff, and collective, which take place within the Training Center for Multinational Operations Units at the “Jug” (South) base.*

The individual training is both theoretical and practical and it includes basic training for participation in multinational operations, which all candidates must attend. This training is then followed by supplementary courses that may focus on specific duties within contingents (e.g. a course for staff officers or military observers). The Peacekeeping Operations Centre also organizes specific courses, i.e. educational modules, which cover important and sensitive dimensions of peacekeeping missions, such as gender or integrity.

Collective training is also both theoretical and practical; it takes place in the “Jug” (South) base for SAF units that are later sent to multinational operations. Considering that the SAF units participate in the missions within the contingents of other countries, prior to deployment, key personnel usually attend joint preparation and contingent evaluation with the units they will be in the operation zone with.

Finally, just prior to being sent to multinational missions, the SAF members (both members of a contingent or those individually engaged) attend a course regarding the particular mission in which they will be engaged, political situation, historical context, culture and tradition, language etc. Upon successfully finished traning SAF members receive a certificate that confirms they have passed all the topics required by national legislation and recommended by the UN.

Center For Peacekeeping Operations is certified by the UN, it holds three certificates for three different types of training. The first was obtained in 2015, for the Course for staff officers, whereas the certificates for the Course for military observers and the Course for protection of civilians were obtained in 2017.40 Integrated Training Service of the UN manages the certification procedure which is aimed precisely at enhancing interoperability in the field through training standardization and can last up to three years.

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Training centers for peacekeepers

Before the deployment of participants on multinational operations, training courses are organized in the Center for Peacekeeping Operations in Belgrade and in the Center for Training Units for Multinational Operations in the military base “South” near Bujanovac.

The Center for Peacekeeping Operations is the SAF General Staff unit, which is in charge of the selection, training, equipment, preparation and deployment of MoD and SAF individuals and units into multinational operations. Individual training and certification for deployment to multinational operations is issued in the Center for Peacekeeping Operations.

The Center for Training Units for Multinational Operations in the South Base is an organizational unit of the Army, in which the units, deployed on peacekeeping operations, are being trained and certified. According to the IPAP, this center should have been turned into a regional training center by the end of 2015. Furthermore, it should have become the Partnership Training and Education Center (PTEC) by the end of 2017.

PTEC centers are educational and training institutions which function according to a unique concept, approved by the North Atlantic Council, and they can also be funded by one or more states. These centers offer courses, seminars and workshops to the military and civilian staff, so as to enable the education and training in various areas, which is in accordance with the NATO partnership goals. At the same time, these centers enable a platform for operational trainings and offer both classrooms and the ground for field training exercises. They were established formally in 1999 within the framework of PfP. The PTEC network is comprised of 31 centers on the territories of members of NATO, PfP, Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

One PTEC center is located in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Peace Support Operations Training Center (PSOTC) is in Sarajevo and it offers trainings and courses for multinational operations, which are usually attended by the MOD and SAF members.

The training center in the South base has carried out international exercises for members of NATO and PfP multiple times. However, it still hasn’t been accredited as the PTEC center. The base itself has well-developed infrastructure and contains, above all, a multipurpose classroom center, a simulation center, Borovac ground and Vrtoš Shooting Range which enables the high quality preparation of the units for multinational operations. Since it is planned for the center to become a regional and PTEC center for multinational operations that could host 1,000 soldiers, investment in infrastructure and objects situated on the base will accordingly

42 NATO Liaison Office response to BCSP questionnaire, January 18, 2018.
45 The military exercise, „Platinum Wolf” has taken place every year in the military base „Jug” since 2014. Thus exercise is aimed at the interoperability level enhancement, as well as at the adjustment of the multinational operations participation procedure. The last exercise, in which 9 countries took part, among which were the members of NATO and Partnership for Peace, was held in July 2017. The members of the armed forces from the participating countries were trained on how to use non-lethal weapons which they practiced through procedures, necessary for their mutual engagement in multinational operations <https://bujanovacke.co.rs/2017/06/14/baza-jug-poceo-platinasti-vuk/>
High officials have announced the finalization of the projects and base construction works on several occasions, such as the enhancement of the Shooting Range complex Vrtogoš in 2018. A great deal of financial means has been invested in the South Base, as a part of interoperability building mechanisms, particularly by the USA. Therefore, a couple of training vehicles have been acquired through the General Peacekeeping Operations Initiative - GPOI in June 2016. Through the same program, Serbia is expecting the delivery and installation of the shooting range equipment, as well as 40 pieces of MILES equipment (Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System).

Women in peacekeeping missions

The National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution Women, Peace and Security 1325 (NAP 1325) for the period 2010-2015, adopted by the Serbian government in 2010, predicted that at least 30% of female participants would be involved in multinational operations, by enabling equal participation of women through the institutional mechanisms. Furthermore, it has been predicted that educational training on female rights and gender equality will be offered to the participants of multinational operations, as well as the trainings on the special needs of women in post-conflict areas.

Between 2010 and 2012, women usually participated in MNO as members of medical teams, while in 2012 the first professional female soldiers were engaged in the UN mission on Cyprus (UNFICYP). The first female officer was sent to the UN mission in Kongo (MONUSCO) in 2013, where she joined the Serbian medical team AMET, for an airborne medical evacuation. So far, 262 female soldiers of the SAF have passed the training and participated in UN and EU multinational operations.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE MNO

The role of women in conflict prevention and peacekeeping processes and their engagement in multinational operations has many positive effects. For example, female members of the peacekeeping forces can more easily get in touch with the women and children who constitute the local majority in the operation areas. Depending on the country, some cultural norms can prohibit interaction between men and women, and thus the women’s presence within these peacekeeping contingencies is invaluable. This gives more weight to the importance of striving towards the inclusion of more female soldiers into the multinational operations, as well as to the need of raising the participants’ awareness on the issues and challenges of gender equality politics within the countries where the operations take place.

46 NATO Liaison Office response to BCSP questionnaire, 18 January 2018.
48 NATO Liaison Office response to BCSP questionnaire, 18 January 2018.
A new NAP 1325 adopted in May 2017 also contains information on the implementation of the NAP 1325 during a 5-year period, between 2010 and 2015. When considering this assessment, it could be concluded that, as far as multinational operations are concerned, no great improvements have been made in terms of the gender equality dimension. Firstly, an important mechanism that enables gender equality, a gender advisor for national contingents appointed within the multinational operations, has not been established. The trend of deploying more women on multinational operations is evident, however, the goals NAP 1325 has set haven't been achieved yet. The total number of female participants within the MOD and SAF was 10.06% of the total number of participants in 2015.

A small representation of women in the entire security system (31.53% in total) was certainly one of the first limiting factors that determined the lack in female participants in the peacekeeping missions. Certain systemic obstacles should be considered, such as the fact that the first generation of female second lieutenants completed their studies at the Military Academy in 2011, thus, they did not meet the criteria for participation in multinational operations. According to one condition, each candidate should obtain officer rank and have at least 6-years' working experience so as to be eligible for engagement in peacekeeping missions. Finally, due to being away from their homes and families for a long period of time, women have shown less motivation than men when it comes to their deployment on peacekeeping missions.

Educational courses on gender equality are organized as a part of the training for multinational operations in the Peacekeeping Operations Center. So far, 74 officers from the MOD and SAF have attended these trainings. All the participants who are deployed to multinational operations as a part of the preparation and training program, have to pass the topic “Gender issues in multinational operations”. Therefore, the program for 2018, includes a module, within a UN certified course for civilian protection, particularly aimed at raising awareness on gender issues and applying the gender perspective in peacekeeping operations: starting from the process of planning, to the process of realizing specific tasks and mission activities.

Maintaining integrity in peacekeeping missions

The issue of integrity in multinational operations is another specific training which the members of the MOD and SAF attend before they leave for the operation zone. A big gap in power and resources between peacekeepers and the local population leaves an open space for the occurrence of malpractices and corruption. The peacekeepers’ behavior may seriously undermine the credibility and success of both the mission and organizations such as the UN and EU and damage the trust of the locals. Potential corruption risks also occur when certain participants in multinational operations become in charge of the public procurement for the needs of the contingent. Before the deployment to peacekeeping missions, training should be particularly focused on facing the risks of corruption and creating the measures of preven-

51 Ibid.
54 The Ministry of Defense response to the BCBP questionnaire, 20 December 2017
tion. It should also be focused on the specialized training on public procurement and financial management.

The Center for Peacekeeping Operations has been organizing an Anticorruption Educational Module since 2014, as part of the preparations for the participation in multinational operations. This program, introduced in the phase of individual, team and SAF units’ preparation, has so far been attended by more than 2,000 members of the MOD and SAF. Apart from that, members of the MOD and SAF regularly take part in educational courses on creating integrity in multinational operations in the PSOTC Center in Sarajevo.

CONCLUSION

When it comes to the realization of measures regarding military exercises and multinational operations envisaged by the IPAP, it may be concluded they are continually being conducted and enhanced. Every year, the SAF take part in a great number of both bilateral and multinational exercises along with the members of NATO and PfP. These exercises contribute to the establishment of interoperability, since they offer a chance to the members of the SAF to gain and share experiences in an international environment. They can also enhance the abilities necessary for the participation in peacekeeping missions. Some of these exercises, such as the Platinum Wolf or REGEN series, focus on the enhancement of interoperability for the participation in the missions and are created in such a way to simulate the situations which may occur in the operation zone. Other exercises are either designed as a response to specific challenges and threats, or for the improvement of some concrete abilities, which can also contribute to the preparation of multinational operations. In terms of the training conducted as a part of the preparations for the deployment to the operation zone, SAF has a very well-developed system of individual and collective training which is continually being enhanced. Apart from its basic training program, the Center for Peacekeeping Operations has also introduced courses that explore specific topics, such as gender issues and the question of maintaining integrity in multinational operations. The activities concerning the Operational Capabilities Concept have been realized to a great extent. According to this concept, the evaluation system was stipulated by the internal documents of the SAF, whereas the evaluations of declared units started in 2011. Two cycles of the first and second level evaluations have been finished so far, with the exception of the engineer general support company, which will pass the second level evaluation in the next two years. As for the PfP activities, the certified units currently take part only in military exercises. Finally, IPAP predicted that the Center for Training Units for Multi-national Operations in the South Base would have become the PTEC center by the end of 2017. However, it is yet to achieve that status.

So far, the experience of participation in peacekeeping missions has shown that the SAF has developed the necessary level of operational capabilities, essential for the missions in which we take part. Furthermore, high marks and successfully completed evaluations according to the Operational Capabilities Concept, have shown the interoperability and readiness of the

SAF units to integrate the capacities and equipment for the needs of participation into multinational operations. Even though it can boast the first place ranking at the regional level, and seventh place at the European level, in terms of the number of participants in the UN multinational operations, Serbia still contributes smaller forces and is greatly dependent on the countries within which contingents it takes part in the multinational operations. In terms of the education and quality of personnel sent to multinational operations, the SAF have attained a very high level of interoperability with other countries’ armed forces.
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Značaj izgradnje interoperabilnosti Vojske Srbije za učestvovanje u multinacionalnim operacijama

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