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HUNGARIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION TRAINING MISSION SOMALIA

ABSTRACT: This article outlines some political and military professional considerations behind Hungary's participation in foreign military missions, with a special view to the European Union Training Mission Somalia, and relying on personal experience of the author, gives an insight into the situation of individual soldiers.

KEYWORDS: European Union Training Mission Somalia, Hungarian Defence Forces, military missions, motivation

As part of the common foreign and security policy of the European Union (EU), the European Union Training Mission Somalia (EUTM-S) was launched in April 2010 and its mandate has been extended several times since then.¹ Having trained thousands of members of the Somali military, now the mission performs its 5th mandate expiring on 31 December 2018. Until the end of 2013, the mission operated in Bihanga, Uganda, on a Ugandan army base and the training activities were supported by the Ugandan People's Defence Forces. During that period EUTM-S mostly provided basic training for Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), junior officers, specialists and trainers. After moving to its current location, the Mogadishu International Airport (MIA) zone, advising to the Somali military and defence leadership and mentoring trainers and training staffs were added to the mission mandate, and instead of basic training, the mission provided specialized training for various groups (courses on military administration, combat engineering, intelligence, company and battalion commander courses etc.). In line with the Somali security situation and the real needs of the army, the focus of the training shifted again in the middle of 2016, when the mission started its collective training program with the aim of setting up a new unit for the Somali army. In 2016 a pilot company course was launched, and during the 5th mandate the mission has the challenge to train three light infantry companies, three engineer platoons and three Somali training teams. Mentoring and advisory activities within the Somali security institutions (Ministry of Defence, General Staff) remain in the focus of the mission in the meantime².

The Mission Headquarters is located in a relatively safe zone guarded by the AMISOM³ around the MIA. Some security incidents occasionally did occur, however (mortar attacks against the zone, big explosions in the close vicinity, intrusion of armed fighters into the zone). EUTM-S supports the internationally recognized government and its military in Somalia, on which Al-Shabaab (AS), an Islamist militant group wages a civil war using

¹ See CFSP Decisions of the Council of the EU: 2010/96, 2010/197, 2011/483, 2013/44, 2015/441, 2016/2239.

² See these and more details in the "Factsheet on EUTM Somalia". European External Action Service. 17 July 2017. https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eutm-somalia/10983/factsheet-on-eutm-somalia_en, Accessed on 20 August 2017.

³ AMISOM is the African Union Mission in Somalia fighting with Al Shabaab and other armed groups in support of the Somali government and its military.

terrorist methods. The targets of the AS are government officials, the Somali military, AMISOM and everyone who supports them in any way, including all international actors. Since training and advising activities take place mostly outside the protected airport zone, it puts a serious burden on the mission to ensure security of its staff when conducting their duties. The mandate of EUTM-S is strictly limited to training and advising, the mission and its members are not involved directly in the conflict or any combat activities in Somalia and their use of force is limited to self-defence.

THE MISSION COMPOSITION AND HUNGARIAN INVOLVEMENT

Italy is the lead nation in the mission. The Commander and more than 50 percent of the mission staff are Italians, including the entire security support element. Currently another 10 nations⁴ of the EU participate with various contingents. The second largest troop contributing nation is Spain, whereas France and Romania are only represented by one person. Serbia, as a third party, participates with a military medical team filling the Medical Advisor position and providing primary health care services (Role 1) for the mission.

Apart from some transitional periods, Hungary has been represented through a four-soldier contingent since the beginning⁵. (The current mission strength is 178.) Hungary provided one officer acting as the Legal Advisor (LEGAD) from April 2010 until March 2017. In April 2017 Hungary switched from the LEGAD position to the Aid the Camp (assistant to the Mission Commander) position. During the first mandate (10 Apr 2010 – 30 Jun 2011) three training NCOs, during the second mandate (1 Jul 2011 – 31 Dec 2012) two mentoring NCOs and one logistic NCO were provided. During the third mandate (1 Jan 2013 – 31 March 2015) Hungary started to withdraw the training/mentoring NCOs and since 1 June 2015 we have continuously filled the “Headquarters Squad” positions in the logistic section with three NCOs (during the fourth and fifth mandates, 1 April 2015 – 31 Dec 2016; and after 1 Dec 2017). The Hungarian positions at EUTM-S have always been coordinated with our international partners. Sending logistic NCOs instead of trainers/mentors was because of a mission request. Hungary initiated the withdrawal from the LEGAD position because we had difficulties in providing personnel for that.

NATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The authorized strength of the effective military staff of the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) is 24,410.⁶ Although the exact numbers are not published, the actual strength must be lower by several thousand, as we can conclude from statements of defence and military leaders and expert opinions⁷. In addition, as a new task, thousands of Hungarian soldiers participated in building a fence (Transitional Security Border Barrier) along the Serbian border in 2015

⁴ Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom.

⁵ Information provided by the Peace Support Operation Branch of Joint Force Command of the Hungarian Defence Forces and Kiss Álmos, P., Besenyő, J. and Resperger, I. *Országismertető. Szomália*. Székesfehérvár, 2010. <http://mek.oszk.hu/12900/12980/12980.pdf>, Accessed on 20 August 2017.

⁶ See National Assembly Resolution 35/2013. (V. 16.)

⁷ An article put the shortage in strength at 5 to 8 thousand. K. Kiss, G. “Több ezer ember hiányzik a seregből, mégsem toboroznak katonákat?”. *napi.hu*. 8 February 2016. http://www.napi.hu/magyar_gazdasag/tobb_ezer_ember_hianyzik_a_hadseregbol_megsem_toboroznak_katonakat.609643.html, Accessed on 20 August 2017.

and have performed guarding and other duties there for about two years to prevent illegal immigration. Despite these serious challenges, Hungary keeps providing around 1,000 soldiers at a given period for international crisis management operations as it has been done for a long period. Our priorities are the NATO missions in Afghanistan and in the Balkans, where approximately 60 percent of the Hungarian mission personnel serve. Strengthening our lead nation role in international operations, participation in high-intensity operations, deploying new capabilities and a more effective use of our resources are further priorities, as the HDF Branch Head responsible for international missions suggested⁸.

As one can see from the above, EUTM-S is not a priority among the international operations of the HDF. Why is Hungary still committed to participating in this mission? Under the Hungarian constitutional system, ‘the Government shall decide on the deployment of HDF troops based on the decision of the EU or the NATO, and shall forthwith report to the National Assembly on these decisions’⁹. The Government, accordingly, makes the primary decision authorizing Hungarian participation in a foreign mission and setting the maximum strength of troops, whereas the National Assembly (Parliament) has an opportunity to review this decision subsequently. These procedures took place upon the foundation of EUTM-S and on every occasion when its mandate was extended¹⁰. In its reports to the National Assembly, the Government identified the same reason for our participation. Most recently the report read, ‘... Our country supports the fulfilment of the common foreign and security policy of the European Union and wishes to participate actively in the crisis management operations of the European Union not only in the European continent, but, expressing our solidarity, in a limited number, also in other continents. Further Hungarian military participation in the EUTM Somalia is in line with these aspirations.’¹¹ Besides this general political and security policy statement, a number of other arguments for the participation, and some against it were put forward in the parliamentary debate of the report concerning the Hungarian participation in EUTM-S.

The parliamentary debate took 54 minutes¹². As expected, except for one, all parties and Members of Parliament (MPs) participating in the debate supported the report, including the left wing opposition. The MPs of the ruling parties (FIDESZ, KDNP) mentioned among others that our international involvement is a means of the realization of Hungarian foreign policy and it strengthens Hungary’s position in the EU and the NATO. Hungary is commit-

⁸ See the lecture delivered by Head of Peace Support Operation Branch, Joint Force Command, HDF. Topor, I. ‘A Magyar Honvédség részvétele a nemzetközi béketámogató műveletekben’. 26 Sep 2016. Honvédség és Társadalom Baráti Kör Székesfehérvár. http://www.htbkszfvar.hu/weblap/wp-content/uploads/2016/nato_az_iskolataskaban/TOPOR-NATOISK.pdf. Accessed on 20 August 2017.

⁹ See Article 47 of the Fundamental Law of Hungary.

¹⁰ See most recently the Government Resolution no. 1755/2016. (XII. 14) concerning the Further Hungarian Military Contribution to the Mission of the European Union Aimed at the Training of the Somalian Security Forces (EUTM Somalia) and the Report at note 11.

¹¹ See Report No. B/13683 submitted by the Government to the National Assembly in January 2017 on the Further Hungarian Military Contribution to the Mission of the European Union Aimed at the Training of the Somali Security Forces (EUTM Somalia).

¹² See minutes of the debate. ‘208. ülésnap (2017. 03. 21.) 23–46. felszólalás’. Hungarian National Assembly. http://www.parlament.hu/ulesnap-felszolalasai?p_auth=iihDz4V0&p_p_id=pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_pos=1&p_p_col_count=2&pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8_pa irAction=%2Finternet%2Ffcpsql%2Fogy_naplo.naplo_fadat_aktus%3Fp_ckl%3D40%26p_uln%3D208%26p_felsz%3D23%26p_felszig%3D46%26p_aktus%3D17. Accessed on 20 August 2017.

ted to international peace and stability, and as all democratic states, it needs to fight against international threats and should contribute to the international efforts within means and capabilities. In the global world this directly improves our security and serves our national interests. Also, the knowledge and experience gained by the Hungarian troops in international operations is vital to the defence of our country. An MP of the main left wing opposition party (MSZP) shared these views acknowledging a consent among various Hungarian governments on the usefulness of the participation in international missions. The MPs and also the Parliamentary Secretary of State of the Defence Ministry agreed that a wide national support is required to our participation in foreign missions, including EUTM-S. What is the business of the Hungarian soldiers thousands of kilometres away from Hungary? – the Secretary recalled this frequently asked question. His conclusion was that because our soldiers act in the countries from which most migrants arrive, when they help restore law and order in those countries some time or other so that people can find their future and prosperity there, they also help Europe and Hungary keep belonging to the Europeans and to the Hungarians.

Although there was common principal consent in Hungarian politics concerning our involvement in international crisis management operations for 2 decades, and major political forces still do agree, many people find this involvement useless or against the national interests. A new, so-called radical right wing party (Jobbik) sharing this notion got into the National Assembly in 2010. They have been in opposition since then. During the previous parliamentary debate on the Government report¹³ concerning the participation of Hungary in EUTM-S in December 2015, they completely opposed our participation in any foreign military missions and voted against the report. Their speech-maker emphasized that all these international missions, whoever launched them (NATO, EU, UN), were unsuccessful and were part of the problem rather than the solution in the affected countries. In addition, these missions do serve economic and other interests of foreign great powers. Following its own national interests, Hungary should stay away from the skirmishes of those powers¹⁴. Notably, Jobbik took a more sophisticated position in the most recent debate on Hungarian participation in EUTM-S¹⁵: According to their speech-maker there are useful and unnecessary military missions, which are especially risky and serving foreign interests like the missions in Iraq or on the Sinai Peninsula. Concerning the Somalian mission, the speech-maker complained because, in the view of his party, there was not enough information available about the activities of the Hungarian soldiers serving there to judge the usefulness of our participation, especially in reducing migration. Therefore Jobbik abstained in the vote this time, instead of the complete rejection of the report.

Notably, all speakers of the above mentioned parliamentary debates appreciated the performance of Hungarian soldiers in EUTM-S and other international missions and thanked for their devotion and perseverance.

¹³ Report No. B/4580 submitted by the Government to the National Assembly in April 2015 on the Further Hungarian Military Contribution to the Mission of the European Union Aimed at the Training of the Somali Security Forces (EUTM Somalia).

¹⁴ See minutes of this debate. "123. ülésnap (2015. 12. 02.) 17–40. felszólalás". Hungarian National Assembly. http://www.parlament.hu/ulesnap-felszolalasai?p_auth=sxxafWbY&p_p_id=pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_pos=1&p_p_col_count=2&pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8_paiAction=%2Finternet%2Fcplsq!%2Fogy_naplo.naplo_fadat_aktus%3Fp_ckl%3D40%26p_uln%3D123%26p_felsz%3D17%26p_felszig%3D40%26p_aktus%3D3, Accessed on 20 August 2017.

¹⁵ See note 11.

THE SOLDIERS' PERSPECTIVE

Finally let us examine the issue from the point of view of the Hungarian military service members who participated in EUTM-S. As a Reserve Major, I served as the Legal Advisor of the mission for 2 years between March 2015 and March 2017¹⁶. My observations in this article emanate from that period. During that time altogether 11 NCOs served at the mission as heads or members of the Headquarters Squad, performing mainly logistic support tasks. As the Hungarian Senior National Representative, I had some insight also into their life and work¹⁷.

Hungarian soldiers normally perform 6 month duty tours in most international missions, including EUTM-S, however, an extension of the tour is possible upon request, especially when replacement to the soldier is not readily available. Although under the applicable legal regulations the foreign deployment of soldiers, with some restrictions, is allowed without consent, the law states that volunteers shall be preferred¹⁸. In practice almost all deployments are based on voluntary applications. To be selected for a foreign service, soldiers must meet a number of stringent requirements like medical fitness, general military skills, special professional requirements, foreign language requirements for individual positions, etc.

With regard to the conclusions of a survey¹⁹ (hereinafter referred to as the *Survey*) on the subject taken among Hungarian soldiers participating in various foreign missions, the motivations and the stress factors for Hungarian participants in EUTM-S could be outlined as follows.

The most important motivating factor for almost all mission participants, to include EUTM-S, is financial incentive. When serving in a foreign mission, Hungarian soldiers are entitled to their home pay, and in addition also to a “currency allowance”. Altogether their incomes can be 2-4 times higher in missions than at home. The currency allowance is fixed to the position filled at a mission and varies in dependence on the danger identification of the mission, and, to a less extent, to the climatic factors²⁰. Because EUTM-S is identified as a highly dangerous mission, soldiers there receive relatively high allowances.

¹⁶ A new voluntary reserve system largely based on retired soldiers was introduced in the HDF in 2012. Within that framework, “operational” reserve soldiers are allowed to apply for foreign service. This is especially useful for the HDF when there is no candidate available for a certain position from the active personnel, as it was in the case of the EUTM-S LEGAD position. Together with my predecessor, who was a Reserve Lieutenant Colonel, this position was filled by reserve officers between June 2014 and March 2017.

¹⁷ See my short reports with photos about the work of the Hungarian NCOs and the LEGAD published on the official Hungarian national defence website. Kelemen, L. “Magyar logisztikai csoport az EU Szomáliai missziójában”. honvedelem.hu. 10 November 2015. http://www.honvedelem.hu/cikk/53990_magyar_logisztikai_csoport_az_eu_szomaliai_missziojaban, Accessed on 20 August 2017. and Kelemen, L. “A szomáliai misszió jogi szemmel”. honvedelem.hu. 26 September 2016. <http://www.honvedelem.hu/cikk/59456>, Accessed on 20 August 2017.

¹⁸ See A honvédek jogállásáról szóló 2012. évi CCV. törvény 202. § (Article 202 of the Act No CCV. on the Legal Status of the Members of the HDF).

¹⁹ Katona, T. “Misszió és motiváció: munkaérték preferenciák és a külszolgálatra motiváló tényezők kapcsolata a Magyar Honvédség állományában” [Deployment and Motivation: Workvalue Preferences and Factors within the Peacekeeping Operations at the Hungarian Defence forces]. *Honvédorvos* 62/1–2. 2010. 32.

²⁰ See some more details in the relevant decree and instruction of the Defence Minister [A békétámogató műveletekben részt vevő állomány részletes kategóriába sorolásáról szóló 58/2013. (IX. 20.) HM utasítás (Instruction of the Defence Minister no. 58/2013. (IX. 20.) on Detailed Classification of the Personnel Participating in Foreign Peace Support Operations)], A külföldön szolgálatot teljesítők egyes járandóságairól szóló 18/2013. (IX. 5.) HM rendelet. (Decree of the Defence Minister no 18/2013. (IX. 5.) on Some Emoluments of the Personnel Stationed Abroad.)

The *Survey* also identified a number of intellectual incentives like gaining new experience, challenges, professional development or learning English. Typically, the importance of these factors increased with the rank of the soldier. In my judgement, for the Hungarian members of EUTM-S professional development or challenges did not play a significant role, while some others, like independence, appreciation, practicing English and other positive effects of the international environment did.

From a professional point of view merely the LEGAD job was not especially challenging for me. Mostly I was engaged in creating the legal documents for cooperation of EUTM-S with other EU organizations (EU Delegation, EUCAP Somalia, EUNAVFOR Atalanta) and international partners (UNSOs²¹, AMISOM, etc) acting in the region, in negotiating with contractors extending services for the mission, and in providing legal advice to the Commander in many areas of the daily operation. After the initial few weeks many of these activities became routine. It was a challenge, however, that as the only LEGAD with the mission, I needed to act quite independently, even though some members of higher EU staffs could be reached for consultation or guidance. Doing this job I made some progress in the use of English legal and military terminology. My most remarkable task was the drafting of the new mission Rules of Engagement (ROE). The previous ROE were created in 2013 in Uganda. The new ROE needed to reflect the change of the location and the operational experience gained subsequently by the mission. The responsible EU bodies approved the submitted ROE request with some minor correction and the implementation of the new ROE started in December 2015.

The Hungarian NCOs in the HQ Squad provide some elements of logistic support. Their main task is transportation of the members of the mission and the visitors (including VIP delegations) from/to the nearby airport and to other locations within the airport zone on a daily basis. In addition they are in charge of cleaning and maintenance of the armoured cars they drive, manage stationery supply and office furniture, and liaise with the civilian contractors providing accommodation and catering for the mission. Again, these jobs in themselves are not especially challenging or demanding, but performing them in an international environment is a major motivating factor. The NCOs learned a new working and organizational culture with EUTM-S, where they enjoyed more freedom and independence than they normally do in their units. Therefore they were apparently happy to fill these individual assignments instead of belonging to a Hungarian unit stationed abroad. Of course, more freedom implies more responsibility. That did not pose any problem for the highly motivated Hungarian NCOs, whose manners, willingness and professionalism were widely appreciated both by their superiors and fellow mission members, which was another motivating factor for them. Learning English through practice is another advantage of an international environment. As a result of their position, the Hungarian NCOs needed to interact with most mission members, numerous local airport officials and market vendors. They gained a lot of interesting and valuable experience from these interactions. The NCOs were basically satisfied with their vehicles and the working and living conditions in the camp, and this motivated them further.

The *Survey* also looks through the potential stress factors for soldiers deployed abroad. The frequency of the identified factors varied depending on the level of danger in the mission and on whether Hungarian soldiers typically filled individual assignments or belonged to a Hungarian unit. In Afghanistan, unlike in other, more peaceful areas, death was the number

²¹ United Nations Support Office in Somalia.

one stress factor. Somalia is also a very dangerous country, especially for foreigners. Even if EUTM-S is not a combat mission, and even if its members are accommodated in a protected area, as mentioned, the mission compounds and the mission members could be exposed to attacks at any time, which permanently requires high awareness from them. Therefore death and injury is a major stress factor. It could be especially stressful that in case of an injury or serious illness, hospitalization of the mission members is only possible outside Somalia and evacuation could be both time consuming and hazardous.

In the *Survey* several soldiers mentioned rare or unknown diseases as stress factors. This concern may naturally arise when serving in Africa. EUTM-S, through its contractors, grants high hygienic standards concerning the accommodation, food supply, and others. Therefore, even though minor diarrhoea infections sometimes occurred, serious tropical diseases among the mission members are very scarce, if appear at all. The mission maintains Role 1 and Role 2 level medical treatment facilities to its members²², whereas hospitals in Nairobi, Kenya, may extend more progressive (Role 3 level) health care services for mission members, and EUTM-S can organize medical evacuation by air to these hospitals, when needed.

Family and other private life problems may unavoidably occur when family members live separated for a long period. In some missions this was the most frequently mentioned stress factor and it also appeared in the EUTM-S Hungarian contingent. Even if some problems cannot be or can only be solved with difficulty from a large distance, it is very helpful that during most of the time the mission provided excellent free internet access to its members, so they were able to have permanent connection to their families.

Conflict with superiors or fellow soldiers was a highly rated stress factor in KFOR and UNFICYP missions, according to the *Survey*. Hungarian soldiers had no conflicts with superiors at EUTM-S. Apart from some rare minor skirmishes, cohesion and comradeship in the Hungarian contingent was excellent and members of the contingent supported one another in many ways during my tenure. Most members of the mission are accommodated in two-bed container rooms. The lack of privacy, intimacy, and different habits of people may lead to conflicts in such a situation. Hungarian NCOs did not have any problems with that, however. (I felt discomfort at the accommodation because of the use of the air conditioning by my roommate. Due to this and to my extremely long stay with the mission, after 10 month I was allocated a single accommodation.)

The mission and its environment contribute to the reduction of stress in many ways. As well as the good internet connection, a well-equipped gym, a small bar and a pool are available at the mission compounds. Depending on the security situation, the members of

²² „[Role 1] includes the provision of primary health care, emergency treatment (resuscitation and stabilization) and preparation for transfer usually under the guidance of a medical officer. This capability is normally integral to a major land-based unit and also reflects the provision of medical support inherent to an afloat platform.” “[Role 2] includes the reception and sorting of patients as well as the ability to provide elements of damage control resuscitation and the treatment of casualties. This is bolstered by a wider range of medical and nursing interventions and enhanced laboratory and imaging facilities. In addition, this level of care will prepare patients for further transfer with a limited holding capacity to prepare casualties for onward evacuation or for return to duties.” (Definitions cited from internet page. “Levels of Medical Care”. medevacmatters. 16 February 2012. <https://medevacmatters.org/2012/02/16/medical-treatment-facilities-mtf/>, Accessed on 20 August 2017.) As mentioned, Role 1 services are provided by a Serbian military medical team, while integrated with them, a private contractor (Medical Support Solutions Ltd.) extends Role 2 services. Because dental care is not included in the EUTM-S medical treatment facilities, the mission members have access to UNSOS facilities for dental services.

the mission are allowed to move freely within the airport zone to do some minor shopping, to do sports or relax at the ocean beach. During a 6-month tour, mission service members are entitled to two 96-hour stay in a good quality apartment in Nairobi, Kenya free of charge and they can have access to flights operated by EU or UNSOS to get there.

The Hungarian participation in EUTM-S has been successful and useful: The individual soldiers gained valuable experience, the HDF gained a number of more experienced and better prepared soldiers, whereas the mission gained motivated personnel who could effectively contribute to its smooth operation. In addition, all this strengthens EU solidarity and Hungary's reputation within the community.

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