Waldemar Zubrzycki

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THE POLICEMEN OF ANTI-TERRORIST SUBUNITS IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Assoc. Prof. WALDEMAR ZUBRZYCKI, PH.D. Police Academy in Szczytno, POLAND

ABSTRACT

Service in a special unit of the Police is extremely tedious, both in physical and mental terms, with very high expectations for their policemen. It cannot arise only from official duties, but – above all – specific lifestyle, which should be the primary stimulus for taking them. It is confirmed by research conducted among policemen-antiterrorists, relating to their motivation in taking service in anti-terrorist subunit of the Police. Studies have also shown that such service is not fully in line with the expectations of the officers, and their priorities change over its course. A lot of factors have impact on it, negatively affecting the attitude of policemen, which were revealed in the study. The results can be used to create such conditions of service, which will reduce or eliminate loss of idealistic motives for taking service in the special unit of the Police.

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In the course of police action there are interventions that require the use of outstanding resources, due to complexity of the task, or security of the Police officers. There are the situations in which anti-terrorist subunits of the Police shall be used, which are an important element in the fight against terrorism and organised crime. There used to be an atmosphere of mystery over their actions, and in the common opinion there were a lot of myths about their performance and serving in them¹. In the context of progressive computerization and informatization of modern society, the information about this type of formation is available for anyone interested².

Police anti-terrorist subunits has repeatedly became the object of scientific interest and the subject of ongoing research; a number of articles and publications are devoted to this issue. The role and tasks of police entities responsible for counter-terrorism in Poland are also quite often mentioned in all kinds of essays: bachelor of arts, master of arts³, as well as doctoral and postdoctoral level. Their value is quite high, mostly being an empirical study report, conducted also in the Police antiterrorists' environment. All of them cannot be mentioned here but for the purposes of this study works of the following authors have been used: Marek Przewoźnik (2009)⁴, Sebastian Drała (2014)⁵, Tomasz Torczyński (2014)⁶, Piotr Baczar (2014)⁷ and Waldemar Zubrzycki (2012)⁸. The credibility of the listed authors is raised by the fact that they all were officers of given formations.

¹ W. Zubrzycki, *Pododdziały antyterrorystyczne Policji*, Jografika, Warszawa 2010, p. 5.

² W. Zubrzycki, Pododdziały antyterrorystyczne Policji w badaniach naukowych, [in:] Policyjne siły specjalne w Polsce, K. Jałoszyński, W. Zubrzycki, A. Babiński (eds.), WSPol Szczytno 2015, p. 89.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ M. Przewoźnik, *Nabór i szkolenie do jednostki specjalnej Policji*, M.A. essay, Szkoła Wyższa im. Pawła Włodkowica, Płock 2009.

⁵ S. Drała, Rola Biura Operacji Antyterrorystycznych KGP w zwalczaniu zagrożeń terrorystycznych, M.A. essay, WSPol w Szczytnie 2014; survey among 20 police officers, serving in counter-terrorist units in Łódź and Warmian-Masurian voivodeships.

⁶ T. Torczyński, *Zaplecze szkolno-bojowe pododdziałów antyterrorystycznych Policji w Polsce w latach 2013/2014*, M.A. essay, WSPol w Szczytnie 2014; surveys among commanders of all the Police anti-terrorist subunits and Anti-terrorist Operation Bureau in the Main Headquarters of the Police.

⁷ P. Baczar, Model zmian w funkcjonowaniu samodzielnych pododdziałów antyterrorystycznych Policji wobec współczesnych uwarunkowań bezpieczeństwa terroryzmem, Ph.D. essay, WSPol w Szczytnie 2014.

⁸ W. Zubrzycki, *Oddział antyterrorystyczny Policji w zwalczaniu terroryzmu*, postdoctoral essay, Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2011; within the research of a number of expert interviews were carried out with commanders, deputies and instructors of training division, Anti-terrorist Operation Bureau in the Main Headquarters of the Police, as well as surveys in all the Police anti-terrorist subunits that included 369 policemen (more than half of staff).

The model personal type of officer of anti-terrorist unit is a man extensively shaped⁹, having a special psycho-physical predispositions. High fitness, ease of communication, rapid problem-solving and decision-making, rapid and smooth action, team work – these are the skills required for the Police anti-terrorist subunit. The necessary characteristics of personality of the officers of such formations include: resistance to stress, determination, patience, regularity, responsibility, operability, and perception. Desirable are also: courage, independence, assertiveness and innovation¹⁰. Others characteristics are: to subsist in unpredictable conditions and the relevance of the activities of individual and group decisions¹¹.

A prerequisite that the candidate for service in anti-terrorist unit must comply with, is a voluntary consent. This is due to the high degree of risk of loss of life or health, posed by combat tasks, and of dangers resulting from advanced training process¹². Service in anti-terrorist subunit is difficult, to meet the stringent requirements forces specialized prioritisation, including priorities of life, permanent development for that daily work does not result solely from official duty, but primarily from lifestyle, characterised by people active and valuable, blessed with not only physical strength¹³.

This is confirmed by the results of a research conducted among officers of the Police special forces. In a study of Sebastian Drała, on question about motivation for taking service in the anti-terrorist unit, most of the respondents replied that the main reason to take in her service, was to getting high qualifications, used in combat operations¹⁴. The smallest number of respondents indicated that it was caused by a desire to help others. Study of Waldemar Zubrzycki showed that among the motivational factors that led respondents to take up service in anti-terrorist subunit of the Police, the most frequently given answer (321) was the self-development. Subsequently, respondents pointed the desire to self-challenge (221), prestige (169) pertained to members of

⁹ K. Paweł, *Terroryzm i jednostki antyterrorystyczne na świecie*, Fenix, Warszawa 1992, p. 25.

¹⁰ W. Zubrzycki, *Pododdziały antyterrorystyczne...*, p. 19.

¹¹ P. Baczar, *Model zmian...*, p. 186.

¹² K. Jałoszyński, *Pododdział antyterrorystyczny- uzbrojenie i wyposażenie*, Wydawnictwo Ban Lex, Warszawa 2001, p. 20.

¹³ W. Zubrzycki, *Pododdziały antyterrorystyczne...*, p. 151.

¹⁴ S. Drała, *Rola Biura Operacji...*, p. 71.

elite structures and privileges (129), resulting from particularly dangerous conditions of service. The least provided answers were earnings (31). In the open part, respondents mentioned also interest (7), passion (3), nature of service (4), a passion for sport (2) and work as a team (2). In individual cases, they pointed out the possibility of training in different fields, the possibility to perform the activities, for which they would normally have to pay (diving, parachuting, altitude training), activities *reserved* for special units and specific training and equipment, unavailable for other police officers, work in a team of enthusiasts, self-development, the ability to use your experience and competence, satisfaction of work, as well as the desire to assist internal need to fight organised crime and willingness to serve the country. One of the interviewees stated that this type of service has always been his goal, one just admitted that it is coincidence¹⁵.

On the basis of declared motivations for taking the service in anti-terrorist subunit of the Police, we can specify the model personality profile of a policeman-anti-terrorist. He is an ambitious man, active, with a large sense of self-worth. A specific style of life is reflected in the continuous self-development, including sacrifices and hard work. The said characteristics may be helpful in the development of an adequate system of recruitment for this kind of service, on the assumption that the superior people should join in¹⁶. Unfortunately, as practice shows, in many cases, the reality is much different from the stated ideals¹⁷.

Because of specific nature of service, process of recruiting candidates for anti-terrorist subunits of the Police consists of several stages. The goal of each of them is seeking and selecting the best people from the needs of the unit point of view¹⁸, taking into account their tasks under specific conditions. Candidates are tested comprehensively in one day. Test is to assess characteristics of candidate's personality, as well as the degree of his physical preparation and predisposition to physical training (for example, valid motor coordination), and thus exercises technical and tactical¹⁹.

¹⁵ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 121.

¹⁶ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 133.

¹⁷ W. Zubrzycki, Sylwetka policjanta antyterrorysty. Oczekiwania, dobór i rzeczywistość, [in:] Policyjne siły specjalne w Polsce..., p. 106.

¹⁸ M. Przewoźnik, *Nabór i szkolenie...*, p. 27.

¹⁹ K. Paweł, *Terroryzm...*, p. 25.

At the moment, recruitment to anti-terrorist subunit of the Police is done on the basis of the Regulation of the Ministry of Interior and Administration of 20 March 2007 on the procedure and conditions for testing physical and mental capacity of the Police officers to serve in certain positions or in certain units of the Police²⁰. The regulation sets out procedure and conditions for testing physical and mental capacity to serve in subunits, including these performing combat tasks. In accordance with provisions of the Regulation, the process of recruitment of candidates to antiterrorist service applies only to the Police officers²¹ and takes place in two stages. The first includes psychological examination, the second is a physical agility test, whose task is to verify physical suitability of the candidate to service in anti-terrorist subunit of the Police.

Anti-terrorist subunit is in its assumption an unique formation, with special abilities, representing above-average psychological and psychical characteristics. However, positive results does not necessarily mean the ability to fulfill the tasks assigned to the anti-terrorist subunits. This only begins a long, process ongoing through years, including a varied training as well as participation in real-world operations²².

Proper preparation to perform extraordinary tasks requires the use of appropriate methods of training. It is based on the *Program of training and improvement of officers and anti-terrorist subunits of the Police*²³ and is aimed at professional preparation of officers to carry out the tasks of anti-terrorist subunits²⁴. Implementation of the program is to led to the gain by officers perfect skills in the use of weapons and tactics against terrorism, as well as gaining basic skills in numerous specialties²⁵. In accordance with its provisions, the primary method of tactical and combat training should be the necessary practical activities preceded by methods

²⁰ Dz. U. 07.62.423, 10 April 2007.

²¹ On the basis of separate regulation, it is also possible to recruit the officers of civil and military special services.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Decyzja nr 86 Komendanta Głównego Policji z dnia 7 lipca 1995 roku, w sprawie wprowadzenia do użytku służbowego programu szkolenia i doskonalenia zawodowego etatowych pododdziałów antyterrorystycznych Policji.

²⁴ Program szkolenia funkcjonariuszy Wydziału Antyterrorystycznego Komendy Stołecznej Policji na 1997 rok, Wydział AT, Warszawa 1997, typescript, p. 1.

²⁵ Program szkolenia i doskonalenia zawodowego etatowych pododdziałów antyterrorystycznych Policji, Biuro Prewencji Komendy Głównej Policji, Warszawa 1995, p. 1.

of activing, such as demonstration and simulation. The training of the Police officers should be at most useful and practical²⁶. The idea and the main task of the training program of anti-terrorist subunits is to gain knowledge of explosive device operations, hijacking of aircrafts and other means of transport, objects unlocking, taking hostages and arresting dangerous criminals²⁷.

Preparation of officers of anti-terrorist units to carry out assigned tasks should be based on a comprehensive training. A study of Waldemar Zubrzycki, relating to the quality of this training, showed differing opinions about it. According to 207 respondents, representing national anti-terrorist subunits, the system is adequate, a different view had 162. As the most common cause of poor quality of training respondents reported a lack of adequate resources for this purpose, the lack of ammunition, as well as the lack of facilities and technical resources and special equipment, primarily for the anti-terrorist tactics. In the light of the research results a significant obstacle are the differences in equipment between the various sub-units²⁸. Evaluation of the usefulness of specialized training for counter-terrorist unit was also made by Sebastian Drała. Positive opinion gave 60% of respondents, regarding the level of their preparation for combat operations as professional. Negatively commented about 40% of those polled²⁹.

Despite the large number of critical voices, respondents did not indicated the need for extension of further training, recognizing the current training program as sufficient³⁰. As it is concerned, the theoretical principles of training are appropriate but the problem is the lack of financial resources for their implementation³¹. Training of the Police officers of anti-terrorist unit, due to its scope, requires an adequate infrastructure, sometimes highly complex and specialized. The existence of such base would have a significant impact on the efficiency and quality of the training, due to its practical dimension. Training in many areas is impossible without it. Well prepared training base should consist of specialized ob-

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 2.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 4.

²⁸ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 125.

²⁹ S. Drała, *Rola Biura Operacji*..., p. 75.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 134.

jects functioning as a whole, thought as a comprehensive infrastructure for the training process³². As the study indicates, the quality of objects, which are at disposal of the national anti-terrorist subunits, is another weakness, having a direct impact on their preparation for action³³.

Study of Tomasz Torczyński shows that there is a great diversity in the possession and use of training facilities in the process of training of anti-terrorist subunits of the Police, often they must use objects that are outside of places of their permanent dislocation³⁴. The possibility to conduct most training sessions right on the spot, without having to leave the quarters, has – in terms of a large city – great importance. It determines not only the training on a regular basis and, consequently, the proper training of the Police officers, but also the mobility fast response to sudden events³⁵.

A training infrastructure for the needs of anti-terrorist subunit of the Police should be – inevitably – a very broad. Every day they need not only all kinds of sports facilities (e.g. halls for different martial arts, treadmill, gym, swimming pools), but especially those which enable the improvement of combat qualifications. The real image of combat-training facilities of anti-terrorist subunits of the Police in Poland in the years 2013/2014 was examined by Tomasz Torczyński. On the basis of the research results carried out it can be concluded, inter alia, that:

- more than half of the units do not have in place of permanent dislocation such facilities, where officers can practice assault on buildings and premises ("black tactics"),
- half of the units have the ability to exercise elements of the "green" tactics at their stationing,
- only one unit (BOA) has on its territory a railway and airliner, for exercises in storming these objects,
- most of the anti-terrorist subunits (60%) have in their area a shooting range, but only 40% of them are allowed to be used,
- even those units in which shooting ranges are allowed to be used, have to use external shooting ranges. In most cases, they are permitted to shoot

³² K. Jałoszyński, S. Kulczyński, Infrastruktura szkoleniowa jednostek przeznaczonych do walki z terroryzmem, [in:] Zagadnienia fizycznej walki z zagrożeniami terrorystycznymi, K. Jałoszyński (ed.), Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2010, p. 164.

³³ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 196.

³⁴ T. Torczyński, Zaplecze szkolno-bojowe..., p. 84.

³⁵ W. Zubrzycki, *Pododdziały antyterrorystyczne...*, p. 55.

only the 9 mm Parabellum cartridge. This does not allow to carry on shooting with support weapons (among others AKMS, 416, HK G36) and sharpshooter rifle. Of crucial importance is the type of ammunition used and the distance of shooting,

- 60% of subunits does not have facilities for training altitude techniques (one of the ways of getting into the assaulted building or rescue techniques, used in rescue actions),
- 20% of subunits does not have gym in their place of stationing, most of them have a mat for hand-to-hand combat exercise and techniques of intervention,
- only one unit has the possibility to use the swimming pool at the place of stationing,
- half of units have sports fields in their area,
- 70% of units does not have an obstacle course³⁶.

Social expectations of anti-terrorist subunits' officers in a crisis situation are enormous. Expectations of the Police officers-antiterrorists are not so great. To create the conditions to allow adequate time for preparation to conduct any combat operations in the fight against terrorism, is probably not the excessive price for the declared willingness to make sacrifices³⁷.

The research carried out by Waldemar Zubrzycki shows that the lack of financial resources is the most frequently mentioned factor significantly aggravating service in anti-terrorist subunit. Out of 369, indicated it 339 Police officers. Also often pointed out weaknesses were the existing regulations (254), a similar number of votes obtained answers about absence of qualified men (81) and the reluctance of superiors (85). Among the other factors, they mentioned no conditions and facilities for exercise and the lack of special equipment for implementation of tasks. Such factors, according to interviewees, include: the lack of a nationwide coordination: physical in logistics, in law, the lack of international contacts, the lack of cooperation between the Anti-terrorist Operation Bureau, the independent subunits of the Police and anti-terrorist sections of the Police voivodeship's HQ's, and even a lack of knowledge of the superiors about the potential of anti-terrorism units. The financial limits results probably in no following the latest technology, which has a direct impact on the quality

³⁶ T. Torczyński, Zaplecze szkolno-bojowe..., p. 58–83.

³⁷ W. Zubrzycki, Możliwości szkoleniowe pododdziałów antyterrorystycznych Policji, [in:] Policyjne siły specjalne..., p. 374.

of equipment, and a small number of specialist training. For occasional or improper use of AT subunits contributes, in interviewee's opinion, too many "mock-specialised" organizational cells of the Police³⁸.

Being added to ranks of special unit could be a reason to be proud of and give a sense of the big awards. Conducted scientific studies, however, have made it possible to confront the expectations of candidates for service anti-terrorist subunit of the Police, with reality.

According to 133 respondents, this service is consistent with what they expected, 219 officers only partially meets expectations, 17 claims that this service does not meet their expectations at all. As the reasons for this state they indicate low salaries, inadequate for the risks taken and the lack of prospects for promotion, poor training, inadequate tasks-giving and underestimation by the superiors³⁹.

No doubt, the lack of compliance of expectations with the reality, determining course of service in special units of the Police, has a direct impact on the evolution of preferences, which research participants pointed out as a leading, at the time of decision about joining the ranks of subdivision. Respondents were able to establish a hierarchy of values, which were at the time of research their overall objective of service⁴⁰. In opinion of the majority, the most important aim is an increase in salaries (684/7,52). The second priority is the largest possible number of specialised training (687/7,49). The following objectives are promotions in rank (1115/4,61) and to a managing position (1230/4,18). The least desirable goal is to start service in a larger subunit (1430/3,6). Among others aims, not listed in the survey, being of significant value, they pointed out prestige connected with service in an elite unit, disposable equipment, legislation protecting the policemen, equitable salary, atmosphere at work, stabilization, clear legislation, opportunity to serve in an international force, experience, which you can gain in the course of this type of service and morality⁴¹.

As you can see, a significant number of interviewees see promotion in rank and salary increase a parent target of service in an anti-terrorist subunit. As the first does not entail any appreciable increase in wages,

³⁸ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 127.

³⁹ Ibidem, p. 122.

⁴⁰ W. Zubrzycki, Sylwetka policjanta antyterrorysty..., p. 115.

⁴¹ W. Zubrzycki, Oddział antyterrorystyczny..., p. 123.

the second provides a uniquely motivating factors development of and an increased interest in financial stimuli⁴².

Assessing the clear promotion system, that should function in particular cells and anti-terrorist subunits, in 126 cases (Zubrzycki) repeatedly stated that such clear system does not exist. As the primary cause of unreadable rules of promotion are mentioned low grades in subunits structure and a small cadre fluctuation, that few staff changes at senior positions are possible. Low groups, small wages and the lack of perspectives result in the of lack of satisfaction from their profession. Among other reasons were pointed out lack of clear criteria for promotion, reluctance of superiors to promote people from the outside and functioning of *unofficial relations*, deciding on the choice of potential candidates. The Police officers pointed out on top-down decisions regarding staffing, in place of the required qualifications, and on promotion of the people, who do not identify with the unit and are not reliable in service⁴³.

Service in a special unit of the Police is extremely tedious, both physically and psychically. Anyone who joins in must be aware that will perform particularly dangerous tasks and participate in training with risk of injury. While taking such service, one must agree for taking the risks. Being an elite comes from not only the "special unit" name, but above all with unordinary tasks. Activities in which anti-terrorist subunits' officers of the Police arise from the sudden incidents (e.g. hostage taking, putting explosives) or are dictated by the high degree of danger, resulting from risk too high for the average Police officer (e.g. arresting armed criminals)⁴⁴.

On the basis of presented results of research it can be concluded that the current system of recruitment to anti-terrorist subunits of the Police is not satisfactory for their officers. In opinion of the majority of those polled, service in a unit of this nature only partially meets their expectations. All this means that there is potential in the country, but the form in which it works is not perfect⁴⁵. The primary goal here should therefore be a conformation of such a motivation system, in which initial – idealistic values – are not lost, while at the same time the extraordinary effort would be rewarded in a fair, independent from the Police general promotion system⁴⁶.

⁴² Ibidem, p. 134.

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 124.

⁴⁴ Program szkolenia i doskonalenia zawodowego..., p. 3.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 132–133.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 134.

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Author

Waldemar Zubrzycki – officer of the Police (ret.), i.a. deputy head of the Central Bureau of Investigation, deputy head of the Bureau of Main Headquarters of the Police, head of Department of Special Training in Police Academy, Szczytno. In 2003 plenipotentiary of the Main Commandant of the Police for creation on Anti-terrorist Operation Bureau in the Main Headquarters of the Police and its first Head. In 2004–2005 a member of the ATLAS group, comprising the commanders of the police central anti-terrorist units of the European Union. Associate professor in humanities, defence sciences, public institutions management (National Defence University, 2012). Head and deputy head of several bodies in the Ministry of Interior and Administration, expert and member of international governmental bodies concerned on security and terrorism. Currently associate professor in Police Academy in Szczytno and associate professor in University of Computer Sciences and Economics in Olsztyn.

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