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## Role of Units Subordinate to the Minister of the Interior and Administration in Preventing and Countering Terrorist Threats in Poland

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# **ROLE OF UNITS SUBORDINATE TO THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND ADMINISTRATION IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING TERRORIST THREATS IN POLAND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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We live in a time when terrorism is everywhere, having become a permanent element of modern world's landscape. Hardly a day passes without mass media notifying us of yet another terrorist attack. States create laws aimed at making the functioning of the society orderly and protecting citizens against actions aimed at disturbing social balance and interfering with their peaceful and safe life. Under the above-indicated act, the Minister of the Interior and Administration is in charge of most anti-terrorist tasks. He has at his disposal tools, in the form of units subordinate to him, with which such tasks can be performed. Said units include: Police, Border Guard, Government Protection Bureau, State Fire Service. Units subordinate to the Minister of the Interior and Administration are charged with very important tasks as far as preventing and combating terrorist threats are concerned.

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We live in a time when terrorism is everywhere, having become a permanent element of modern world's landscape. Hardly a day passes without mass media notifying us of yet another terrorist attack. Depending on the consequences of a given attack, such information can be found on the first pages or on further pages of newspapers, it is broadcast at the beginning of news programmes on TV or close to their end. All this makes us not think too deeply about what lies at the core of the most critical non-military threat to the internal and international security of a state. All occurrences in which words such as: *bombing, hostage, hijacking, abduction* appear are immediately associated with terrorism by a majority of the society, including the media. The phenomenon of *terror* – i.e. resorting to the use of force or threatening to use it – is directly linked to terrorism, i.e. a certain philosophy underlying the actions of various types of extremists (whether right-wing, left-wing, religious, ecological, etc.) in which terror is a tool used to achieve specific end results. The ends, which result in consequences, of terrorist activity need to be *political* if we are to actually speak of terrorism – *organising attacks (armed attacks and also bombings) on members of the government, people of authority, political opponents, people of other religion or race, as well as foreigners, random passers-by, the abduction of people or the hijacking of planes with a view to gaining power and influence, creating an atmosphere of fear, confusion, or chaos, expressing opposition, procuring benefits for certain groups or classes or people, or, lastly, without a cause (...)*<sup>1</sup>.

Terrorism as a method of achieving a specific goal – “an end in its own right” – is a characteristic strategy of action for organisations carrying out terrorist attacks. On the one hand, their activity is unreasonable because it does not bear measurable fruits (except for what consequences directly affect the target of the attack) and, on the other hand, it is incomprehensible to the general public which might otherwise be willing to support the goals but would not accept the means to which such organisations resort<sup>2</sup>. At the beginning of his activity, Yasser Arafat (in the 1960s) proudly asked others to call him a terrorist. It was only when the anger and widespread contempt from the international public for the methods he and his associates used – causing death and injury to innocent victims – that

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<sup>1</sup> W. Kopaliński, *Słownik wydarzeń, pojęć i legend XX wieku*, Warszawa 1999, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> K. Karolczak, *Terroryzm. Nowy paradygmat wojny XXI wieku*, Warszawa 2010, p. 62.

his perception of the matter changed. He avoided the name “terrorist” in favour of another one: “freedom fighter”.

Terrorism, understood as actions of an individual or a group of people aimed at causing a disruption of social and political life, emerged in the 19th century – it was a product of modern mass society, a society in which media play a major part in shaping the opinion of the general public. It was at that time that the concepts of *terror* and *terrorism* began to be separated from each other<sup>3</sup>. Throughout the last two centuries (from the end of the 19th century and until the beginnings of the 21st century), terrorism was actively present in the social and political life (mostly in Europe) and its objectives and driving forces have been changing.

States create laws aimed at making the functioning of the society orderly and protecting citizens against actions aimed at disturbing social balance and interfering with their peaceful and safe lives. This follows from the internal structure of a state. Being an organised creation, it is obliged to protect its people against the activity of criminals. The safety of a state, achieved as a result of properly organised security and protection against any and all external and internal threats possible, is expressed as the relation between the state’s defence potential and the level of threat<sup>4</sup>. In the case of terrorism, such defence potential consists of all resources and measures prepared for combating terrorism, as well as legislative means aimed at countering it.

Terrorism is a special type of criminal activity directed against both the state (striving towards its destruction) and the society which it targets; it causes casualties and it creates an atmosphere of fear.

Every state develops its own policy regarding terrorism. It could be known to the general public or secret. For example: British and French governments have secret policies. This makes its adjustment to every terrorist incident possible and causes uncertainty among terrorists as to possible development of the situation on the part of authorities. Israel and the USA have policies towards terrorism which are commonly known. Such a policy results in limited capacity for adjustment. Every concession towards terrorists may be considered a token of weakness of such states.

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<sup>3</sup> R. Borkowski, *Kult i kultura zbrodni – terroryzm na tle przemocy politycznej*, [in:] *Wojna z terroryzmem w XXI wieku*, B. Hołyst, K. Jałoszyński, A. Letkiewicz (ed.), Szczyt-no 2009, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Zbiór podstawowych terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa państwa*, Warszawa 1992, p. 6.

In order to achieve the desired effect, manifesting itself as a high level of security, it is necessary to develop a certain security system – *an internally coordinated set of organisational elements, human resources, and material resources geared towards counteracting any and all threats to the security of the state, particularly psycho-social, ecological, and military threats*<sup>5</sup>, which effectively ensures such a state of affairs.

The management of a modern state is based on systems related to various aspects of life, including social, economic, and political ones, thanks to which an internal and external balance can be maintained and smooth functioning is made possible. They have internal components (sub-systems which are, in essence, separate systems in their own right) forming a greater whole. The functioning of the entire system depends on their correct operation.

The anti-terrorist system in Poland is based on three areas of activity of state authorities.

1. Strategic – developing strategies for combating and countering terrorist threats, developing decisions related to handling crisis situations connected with terrorist attacks;
2. Operating – gathering, verifying, and analysing information about terrorist threats, recommending to authorities, on the strategic level, operations related to implementing solutions and lines of action to be taken in a crisis situation connected with the threat of terrorism;
3. Tactical – gathering and forwarding information about the threat of terrorism in the country to the operating level for verification, taking steps following from decisions taken at the strategic level with regard to lines of action to be taken in order to resolve a crisis situation connected with a terrorist attack, as well as action connected with possible terrorist attacks in Poland or against its citizens abroad.

Reacting to possible terrorist activity is twofold. The state, being an institution responsible for guaranteeing the safety of its citizens, should have at its disposal the relevant services capable of action commensurate with the threat.

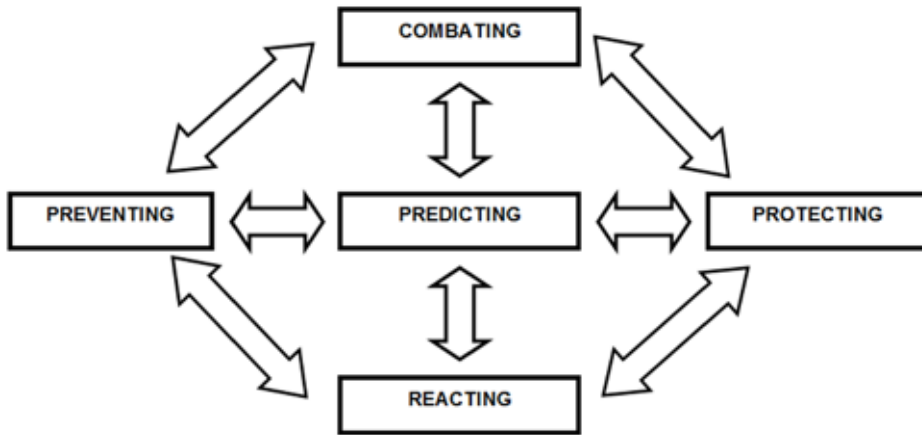
Preventing and combating terrorist threats is related to five areas (elements) of state influence<sup>6</sup> (fig. 1).

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<sup>5</sup> *Słownik terminów...*, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> S. Wojciechowski, *Policja a problem przeciwdziałania terroryzmowi w Polsce – ogólne założenia*, [in:] *Policja w Polsce – stan obecny i perspektywy*, vol. 2, A. Szymaniak, W. Ciepiela (ed.), Poznań 2007, p. 198–200.

FIG. 1. FIVE ELEMENTS OF COUNTERACTING TERRORISM



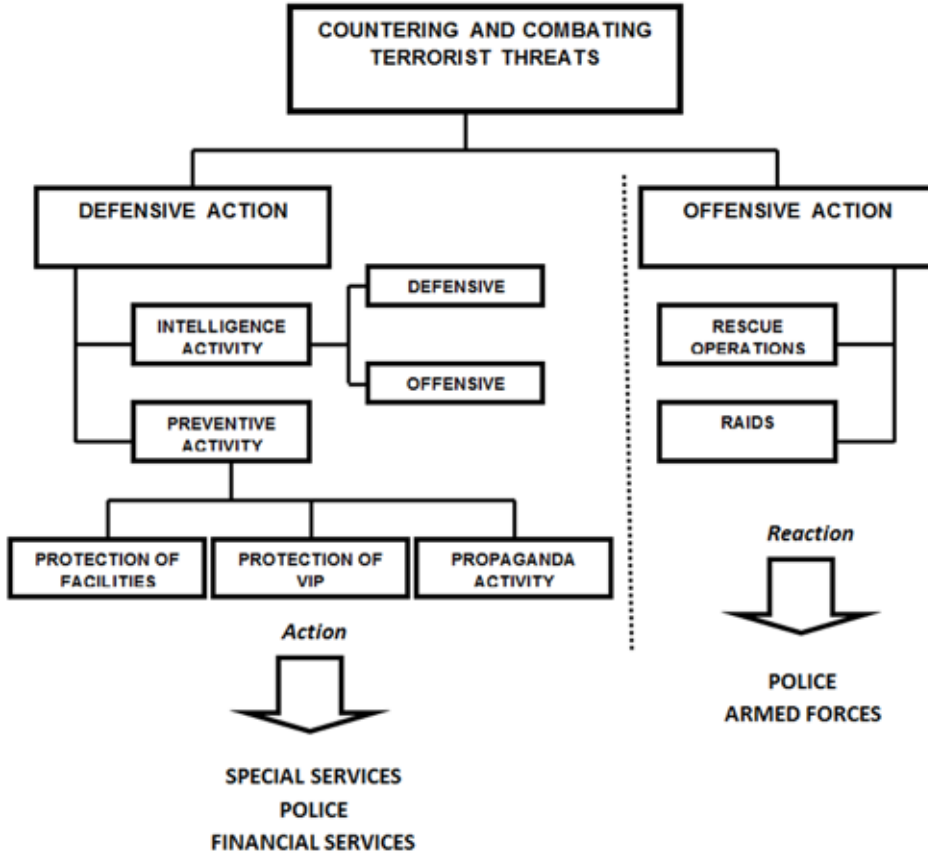
Source: S. Wojciechowski, *Policja a problem przeciwdziałania terroryzmowi w Polsce – ogólne założenia*, [in:] *Policja w Polsce – stan obecny i perspektywy*, vol. 2, A. Szymaniak, W. Ciepiela (ed.), Poznań 2007, p. 199.

The five concepts indicated above are to be understood as follows<sup>7</sup>:

1. **preventing** – all actions aimed at making it impossible for individuals or groups of people to engage in any terrorist activity;
2. **combating** – actions targeted directly against terrorist organisations and aimed at **discovering** their location, numbers, connections, etc. and at **neutralising, punishing, and preventing** them from re-creating currently existing structures, communication systems, or sources of funding – this is known in Polish as the **4U formula** because Polish words standing for discovering, neutralising, punishing, and preventing all begin with “U”;
3. **protecting** – ensuring as much protection against terrorist attacks for people and infrastructure at risk as possible;
4. **reacting** – activity connected with minimising the consequences of possible terrorist attacks;
5. **predicting** – analysing actual and possible targets, choosing the types, means, and methods of action commensurate with the severity of the threat, developing a compilation of possible targets and perpetrators of attacks. Predicting is a connection between the remaining four elements, taking all other interplay between them into account.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

FIG. 2. MAIN AREAS OF ANTI-TERRORIST ACTIVITY AND MAIN ENTITIES WITHIN THE STATE RESPONSIBLE FOR PREVENTING AND COMBATING TERRORISM



Source: own study

In general, all steps taken as part of activity focusing on terrorist threats are referred to as anti-terrorism (consisting of anti-terrorist actions – i.e. activity aimed at reducing the level of vulnerability to terrorist attacks and counter-terrorist measures – i.e. active steps including deterrents and responding to terrorism<sup>8</sup>) defined as: a set of scientific, legal, military, and police activities aimed at combating acts of terrorism and at preventing

<sup>8</sup> M. Drost, *Operacje militarne inne niż wojna w doktrynie NATO i USA*, „Zeszyty Naukowe AON” 2000, no. 2 (39), p. 15.

them, countering them, and neutralising threats connected with possible terrorist attacks<sup>9</sup> (fig. 2).

Anti-terrorist activity – preventive – active, precautionary, aimed at reacting to planned acts of terror, consist of gathering information by special services and are related to:

- Gathering information – by means of using informers (secret collaborators), using technical means (bugs, spy cameras, etc.), resorting to white intelligence, i.e. gathering information by means of analysing commonly available and legal sources of data (Internet websites, books, press publications, academic studies);
- Analysing information – every piece of information has to be processed as far as its reliability and usefulness for future action is concerned;
- Using information – the gathered information about a terrorist threat are used for preparing recommendations for state bodies responsible for its security with regard to steps which need to be taken in order to protect the state against possible terrorist attacks;
- Keeping information – all information gathered is used for developing a database or databases (e.g. several databases with different focus) which could, in the future, be used for generating recommendations or predictions regarding the level of terrorist threat affecting a given state.

Intelligence activities can be divided into defensive activities, related to receiving (gathering) information systematically from individuals or developed using technical measures. Such activities can also be offensive and related to special services causing certain behaviours and circumstances in the presence of which it is possible to obtain further (more detailed) information.

Offensive (preventive) activities are also related to taking organisational steps aimed at protecting locations particularly susceptible to terrorist attacks. To this end, such locations are particularly well protected by police forces, the military, or specialised security agencies. To secure such venues, both physical security measures are used and technical security measures. Closed-circuit television systems are used for the surveillance of endangered infrastructure, as well as pyrotechnical gates detecting metal elements which may be used as weapons (knives, firearms, structural elements of explosive charges, etc.). Modern pyrotechnic gateways also have electronic sensors detecting explosive materials and

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<sup>9</sup> S. Pikulski, *Prawne środki zwalczania terroryzmu*, Olsztyn 2000, p. 125.



drugs. Roentgen devices are also used for screening luggage in order to detect any weapons or explosive charges concealed in it. Such devices, similarly to pyrotechnic gates, also have electronic sensors detecting explosive materials or drugs.

Protecting people particularly susceptible to terrorist attacks – VIPs – is a separate issue. From the point of view of state security, prominent public figures, such as, *inter alia*, presidents, prime ministers, certain other ministers or the head of the central bank, are particularly likely to become the target of a terrorist attack. Terrorist organisations often make it their goal to eliminate such people, resorting to two basic forms of terrorist attacks. The killing or wounding of a person of authority has consequences within the state and may also result in significant international repercussions. An attempt on the life of the president or prime minister or a prominent businessman always has negative political consequences and causes a disturbance of social equilibrium<sup>10</sup>. Protecting representatives of highest state authorities is a very difficult task – and not only due to the type of places which such people are likely to visit. Those venues do not always meet security requirements and the dynamically developing situation during the visit of a VIP to a given place makes it impossible to properly prepare it as far as anti-terrorist measures are concerned.

The last and essential aspect of preventive activity is propaganda activity to which one of the following chapters of this study is devoted.

Counter-terrorist activity – offensive – reactive are mostly related to responding to an actual act of terrorism and can be divided into three basic areas:

1. Combat activities as part of rescue operations connected with freeing hostages taken by terrorists;
2. Combat activities connected with arresting people suspected of terrorist activity;
3. Combat activities aimed at neutralising people considered terrorists, particularly leaders of terrorist organisations. Such activities are performed by, *inter alia*, special forces in the Gaza Strip or on the western bank of the Jordan and in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Scope of authority of Polish government departments and services as far as anti-terrorist and counter-terrorist activities are concerned was de-

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<sup>10</sup> K. Jałoszyński, *Terroryzm antyizraelski. Przedsięwzięcia kontrterrorystyczne w Izraelu*, Warszawa 2001, p. 53.

fined in an act of 2016: *Act on anti-terrorist activities [O działaniach anty-terrorystycznych]*<sup>11</sup>.

Under the above-indicated act, the Minister of the Interior and Administration is in charge of most anti-terrorist tasks. He has at his disposal tools, in the form of units subordinate to him, with which such tasks can be performed. Said units include:

- The police;
- Border guard;
- Government Protection Bureau [BOR];
- State Fire Service [PSP].

Those units, except for the State Fire Service, have the right to carry out operating work.

The main tool of the state used for preventing threats to security and public order and for properly responding to irregularities regarding the same is the police<sup>12</sup> – (...) *a uniformed and armed unit serving the society and meant to ensure the safety of people and uphold public order*<sup>13</sup>. The scope of authority of the police and their official rights are the greatest, enabling them to effectively combat all forms of criminal activity and social deviations.

The police are charged with two essential tasks following from their duty to ensure the safety of citizens and order within the state. The first one is to prevent crime, ensure that public order is respected, and find the perpetrators of crimes, while the second one is to assist citizens in all matters which they report to the police<sup>14</sup>.

The most basic form of police activity is **prevention**. Such actions, if performed properly and effectively, are of utmost and superior importance because they not only prevent the victimisation of citizens and their equitable rights but also reduce stigmatisation and humiliation of common criminals. Preventive actions include broadly understood use of force (also known as repressive action, even though this term includes the prosecution

<sup>11</sup> Act of 10 June 2016 *on anti-terrorist activities* (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 904).

<sup>12</sup> *Kompetencje organów władzy publicznej w zakresie ochrony bezpieczeństwa i porządku publicznego w Polsce*, [in:] *Ustrój i organizacja policji w Polsce*, part I, J. Widacki (ed.), Warszawa – Kraków 1998, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Mała encyklopedia wiedzy politycznej*, M. Chmaja (ed.), Chmara. Sokół, Toruń 1999, p. 217.

<sup>14</sup> J. Wikariak, *Podstawowe problemy pracy policji w okresie transformacji ustrojowej*, [in:] *Policja w społeczeństwie okresu przejściowego*, M. Róg (ed.), WSPol Szczytno 1995, p. 33.

of perpetrators of crimes) which also includes the restoration of public order by coherent police subunits after it has been disrupted. Use of force by the police also includes all police actions and operations conducted by counter-terrorist units during which policemen use means of direct physical coercion, including firearms<sup>15</sup>.

In Poland, the police operates on the basis of the act of 6 April 1990 passed by the Polish Sejm: The Police Act *O Policji*<sup>16</sup>. According to the act, the structure of the police is twofold. It presents the system of Police bodies by geographical areas and it lists types of policing services<sup>17</sup>.

While confirming the practical value of smooth functioning and specialisation, the act identifies the following types of policing services<sup>18</sup>:

- criminal police – including: investigative and inquest services, criminal services, – criminal technique services, and operating technique services;
- traffic police and prevention;
- prevention units and anti-terrorist sub-units;
- special police forces – railway, water, and aviation police.

Under the act, tasks of the police are defined, including:

- Protecting the life and health of people and property against illegal attacks (...);
- Protecting safety and public order (...);
- Organising activity aimed at preventing crime (...), as well as rights, including:
  - the right to detain people;
  - the right to search people, luggage, dwellings, vehicles, etc.;
  - the right to use operating technique (monitoring, taps, recording sound and images);
  - the right to use means of direct physical coercion;
  - the right to use firearms.

Police forces are the main unit in a state responsible for ensuring safety and public order. They are responsible for both identifying and reacting to terrorist threats. As far as the anti-terrorist system in Poland is con-

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<sup>15</sup> J. Alderson, *Policjant w społeczeństwie prawa*, [in:] *Prawa człowieka a policja*, Legionowo 1994, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> The act of 6 April 1990, *Police Act*, Journal of Laws no. 30, item 179, (as amended).

<sup>17</sup> C. Gołota, *Struktura organizacyjna i zadania Policji polskiej*, [in:] *Policja polska wobec przestępczości zorganizowanej*, Szczytno 1994, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

cerned, the potential of police forces can be put to use at any time. As of now, there are 18 anti-terrorist sub-unit in Polish police forces. Their functioning is based on:

- Central subunit – Anti-Terrorist Operations Bureau (BOA) of the Police Headquarters;
- Local subunits – Independent Anti-Terrorist Sub-Units of the Police under Voivodeship Police Headquarters.

The Anti-Terrorist Operations Bureau has a consolidated and indisputable opinion of a police counter-terrorist unit consistent with all relevant European and global standards. Skills and knowledge of BOA police officers and their equipment make BOA a good match for other European “powers” of counter-terrorism such as the famous German GSG-9 or French GIGN or RAID. The weapons and equipment of Polish anti-terrorist sub-units are top class and are no worse than the weapons and equipment of other such units in Europe and all around the world.

Border Guard – it is a central state administration body handling matters related to borders of the state and controlling cross-border traffic. Protecting state borders focuses on preventing its illegal crossing by people and means of transport, as well as on transferring goods. Such tasks are performed by means of border activities – those are conducted along sections of Polish borders between border crossings, at border crossings, and in the areas adjacent to Polish borders. They include, *inter alia*, patrolling, monitoring (also with the use of technical measures), ambushes, chases, inspection of people and means of transport on access roads leading to borders<sup>19</sup>.

State borders can be crossed via designated border crossings open for cross-border traffic. As part of organising and monitoring cross-border traffic, actions aimed at ensuring that borders are crossed lawfully and in line with the relevant regulations. As far as the foregoing is concerned, it should be pointed out that the Border Guard is obliged to cooperate with the relevant bodies and institutions of the European Union and with border protection bodies of other countries as regards protecting Polish state borders and monitoring cross-border traffic.

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<sup>19</sup> D. Kamuda, M. Trybus, *Straż Graniczna i jej zadania w zakresie ochrony bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej – zarys problematyki*, „Humanities and Social Sciences” 2013, no. 3, pp. 59–72.

Under article 1(2) of the Border Guard Act,<sup>20</sup> the Border Guard is charged with many tasks useful for preventing terrorist threats. Those include, *inter alia*:

- protection of borders;
- ensuring the monitoring of cross-border traffic;
- identifying, preventing, and detecting crimes and infractions and prosecuting perpetrators thereof within the scope of authority of the Border Guard;
- ensuring the safety of international transport and public order in the vicinity of border crossings within the scope of authority of the Border Guard and also in areas adjacent to borders;
- conducting security checks in the vicinity of border crossing and for means of international transport;
- ensuring safety on board of passenger aircraft;
- protecting state borders within Polish airspace by means of monitoring aircraft and flying objects crossing Polish borders at low altitudes and notifying the relevant units of Polish Air Force of such flights;
- preventing the transportation of waste, harmful chemical substances, and radioactive substances across the border without the relevant permit required under separate regulations and preventing the pollution of water in the vicinity of borders;
- preventing the transportation of intoxicants and psychoactive substances and weapons, ammunition, and explosive materials across the border without the relevant permit required under separate regulations.

An important task with which the Border Guard is charged according to the law is ensuring the safety of international transport and public order in the vicinity of border crossings and also in the areas adjacent to borders within the scope of its authority. This means that the Border Guard has the right to carry out inspection as part of protecting the state against illegal import of harmful materials and substances and combating the smuggling of harmful materials. The Border Guard is also obliged to prevent the cross-border transport of waste, harmful chemical substances, nuclear and radioactive materials and to prevent the pollution of groundwater<sup>21</sup>. In

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<sup>20</sup> The act of 12 October 1990, *Border Guard Act*, Journal of Laws of 1990, no. 78, item 462, (as amended).

<sup>21</sup> J. Paśnik, *Straż Graniczna – prawne podstawy działania i uprawnień...*, p. 12–18.

addition to the scope of rights it shares with the police, the Border Guard additionally has the right to:

- carry out security screening at border crossings and in means of air, road, water, and railway transport – in order to ensure that no crimes or infractions are possible, particularly ones directed against the inviolability of state borders or the safety of international transportation;
- hold guard duty on board of aircraft and resort to such measures as are necessary, particularly means of direct physical coercion and service weapons, in order to render harmless any people posing direct threat to the safety of a flight or the life or health of passengers or crew members.

The role of the Border Guard is crucial as far as anti-terrorist activity is concerned. On the one hand, it can identify and detain people suspected of terrorist activity who try to make it into our country and, on the other hand, it may reveal the presence of such people in Poland. It can prevent the smuggling of weapons and hazardous materials which could be used in a terrorist attack into the country and it can prevent such materials from being transported from Poland to another place.

The level of efficiency of different units varies and it is difficult to assess it because the most measurable criterion is whether or not a given unit has ever “lost” a VIP. On the other hand, it is difficult to compare the results of an Israeli unit with, for example, a Latvian one because the level of threat with which they have to cope is not similar at all. Smooth operation is not enough, it also has to be effective. Efficiency is verified when a unit has to act in an emergency situation<sup>22</sup>.

In Poland, protective activity is handled by the Government Protection Bureau (BOR). It operates on the basis of an act dated 16 March 2001<sup>23</sup> in which it is stipulated as follows:

Article 1.1. A Government Protection Bureau shall be created as a coherent, uniformed, and armed unit, hereinafter referred to as BOR, performing tasks consisting in protecting people, facilities, and devices.

2. The name Government Protection Bureau and its abbreviation BOR may be used exclusively by the unit referred to in section 1.

<sup>22</sup> T. Białek, *Konieczność ochrony przedstawicieli państwa – obowiązek, a nie przywilej*, [in:] *Zagadnienia fizycznej walki z zagrożeniami terrorystycznymi. Aspekty organizacyjne i prawne*, K. Jałoszyński (ed.), Warszawa 2010, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 82.

Article 2.1. Subject to section 2, the range of BOR responsibilities shall include protecting:

- 1) The President of Poland, the Speaker of the Sejm, the Speaker of the Senate, the President of the Council of Ministers, the Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs,
- 2) other people – as required by the good of the state,
- 3) former presidents of the Republic of Poland, as per the act of 30 May 1996 on benefits available to former presidents of Poland (Journal of Laws no. 75, item 356 and of 1998, no. 160, item 1065),
- 4) representatives of other countries on official business trips in Poland,
- 5) Polish diplomatic missions, consular offices, and representative offices operating under international organisations outside of Poland,
- 6) facilities and devices of particular importance and ensuring their functioning,
- 7) carrying out pyrotechnic and radiological reconnaissance of Sejm and Senate facilities,
- 8) facilities used by the President of Poland, the President of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs<sup>24</sup>.

Representatives of authorities are and will be targets of terrorist attacks organised by terrorist organisations. This is why the Government Protection Bureau is a unit responsible for ensuring that the most important people in the country, diplomats, and politicians visiting our country as part of international politics are safe.

The State Fire Service (PSP) operates on the basis of the act of 24 August 1991 *On the State Fire Service*<sup>25</sup>. Article 1.1., stipulates that: *State Fire Service (PSP) shall be created as a professional and uniformed unit equipped with specialist equipment meant for extinguishing fires, countering natural disasters and other local threats*. In section 2 of the same article, the tasks of PSP are defined:

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<sup>24</sup> The act of 16 March 2001 *on the Government Protection Bureau*, Journal of Laws, no. 163 of 2004, item 1712, as amended.

<sup>25</sup> The Act of 24 August 1991 *On State Fire Service*, Journal of Laws of 2013 item 1340, as amended on 29 April 2016.

2. Core duties of the State Fire Service include:

- 1) identifying fire-related risks and other local threats;
- 2) organising and carrying out rescue operations during fires, natural disasters, or countering local threats;
- 3) performing auxiliary specialist rescue operations during natural disasters or when other rescue services deal with local threats;
- 4) training staff for the State Fire Service and other fire prevention units and for common civilian protection programme;
- 5) supervising compliance with fire-prevention regulations;
- 6) conducting science and research work regarding fire prevention and the protection of civilians;
- 7) cooperating with the Head of the National Criminal Information Centre to the extent necessary for performing its statutory tasks;
- 8) cooperating with fire services and rescue services of other countries and with international organisations under international agreements to which Poland is a party or under separate provisions of the law;
- 9) taking other steps following from international agreements to which Poland is a party in line with the rules and to the extent provided for therein.

On an everyday basis, the State Fire Service performs projects aimed at protecting life, health, property, and the natural environment against various types of threats and related to rescue operations. Those take place on the basis of the national rescue and fire-extinguishing system functioning under the Act of 24 August 1991 *On fire prevention*<sup>26</sup>. According to article 14 of that act, the purpose of that system is to protect life, health, property, and the natural environment by means of:

- combating fires and other natural disasters,
- technical rescue operations,
- chemical rescue operations,
- ecological rescue operations,
- medical rescue operations,
- cooperating the State Medical Rescue Operations system.

The Chief of State Fire Service, the voivode or starost for the country, voivodeship, or powiat, as the case may be, shall define tasks within

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<sup>26</sup> The act of 24 August 1991, *On fire prevention* (consolidated text: Journal of Laws of 2002, no. 1476, item 1229, as amended).



the national rescue operations and fire-extinguishing system<sup>27</sup>, coordinate its functioning, and monitor the performance of tasks following from it; under extraordinary circumstances, when there is a threat to life, health, or the natural environment, they also manage the system. The voivode and the starost perform their duties with the use of, as the case may be, a voivodeship or powiat crisis response team functioning on the basis of regulations regarding natural disasters. Borough leader (mayor or president of a city), in turn, coordinates the operation of the national rescue operations and fire-extinguishing system within the municipality (*gmina*) to the extent defined by the voivode and handles that responsibility with the help of that municipality's chief of fire prevention if the municipality employs such a person.

The role of State Fire Service is crucial as far as neutralising the consequences of terrorist attacks is concerned. It organises rescue operations and carries them out and it handles preventive measures during fires, natural disasters or the removal of local threats. Activity of PSP is aimed at protecting the life and health of people, protecting property, national heritage, and the natural environment by means of conducting rescue operations. During occurrences involving hazardous materials, State Fire Service identifies threats related to pollution with chemicals, biological substances, and radiation pollution. Units of State Fire Service have equipment for decontaminating people to a limited extent (preliminary decontamination) and for decontaminating equipment used as part of operations to the full extent<sup>28</sup>.

It is indisputable that terrorism is and will remain the most important security threat both internationally and domestically. In 2003, the Council of Europe approved a document defining main threats to European safety. Terrorism is listed close to the beginning of their list. *Europe is both a target of and a base of operation for modern-day terrorism, particularly driven by religious fundamentalism*<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> The structure of the national rescue operations and fire-extinguishing system is defined in the *Regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration of 29 December 1999 regarding detailed principles of organisation of the national rescue operations and fire-prevention system* (Journal of Laws of 1999, no. 111, item. 1311, as amended).

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.antyterroryzm.gov.pl/CAT/antyterroryzm/institucje-i-sluzby/panstwowa-straz-pozarn/567,Panstwowa-Straz-Pozarna.html> – accessed 23.07.2017.

<sup>29</sup> T. R. Aleksandrowicz, *Świat w sieci. Państwa, społeczeństwa ludzie. W poszukiwaniu nowego paradygmatu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, Warszawa 2014, p. 143.

It cannot be questioned that Poland, being a Western state in terms of its culture and actively participating in the anti-terrorist alliance, runs and will run the risk of a terrorist attack. We should not hope that Islamists will simply forget our participation in the military operation in Iraq and our military involvement in Afghanistan. The fact that Islamic fundamentalists have not organised a terrorist attack in our country yet does not mean that they have forgotten about us.

Units subordinate to the Minister of the Interior and Administration are charged with very important tasks as far as preventing and combating terrorist threats are concerned. Being authorised to carry out operating and reconnaissance activities, the Police and the Border Guard are important sources of information about terrorist organisations and people who could be planning a terrorist attack. As far as counter-terrorist activities are concerned, the Police has a statutory role assigned to it: to be prepared for and to carry out such activities. Active steps, related to anti-terrorist prevention, are taken by both the Police and the Government Protection Bureau. As far as reacting to crises and removing the consequences of a terrorist attack are concerned, the most important part is played by State Fire Service. If that units are to properly fulfil their obligations, they need to be prepared: trained and equipped. It is up to the authorities to ensure that it is so.

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