



The State Partnership Program between the Republic of Serbia and the State of Ohio

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The most recent activity in a boosting cooperation between Serbia and the American state of Ohio within the State Partnership Program is the participation of 15 SAF officers and NCOs in the joint exercise with the National Guard of Ohio held between 13 and 23 June. At the Grayling Camp training range, which is among the largest and best-equipped training ranges in the USA, working hours lasted from dawn to dusk.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION WITH THE WORLD

The officers and NCOs of the Serbian Armed forces arrived in Columbus, the capital of the state Ohio, on 13 June 2007 and the very next day they were transported by a US air craft to the Grayling Camp training range where the National Guard of Ohio carries out regular annual preparations for its deployment in peace missions and combat operations. The air force, infantry, engineering service and MP units with approximately 4, 000 troops participated in the exercise.

This first joint exercise was planned within the annual Serbia-Ohio State Partnership Program while the details were agreed during the re-

cent visit of Lt. Gen. Ponos, the Chief of SAF GS, to the USA.

Our team was headed by Col. Petar Cornakov, the Chief of the Training and Military Policy Department, while the coordinator of the activity was Col. Milan Mojsilovic, the Operations Assistant at the SAF GS Joint Operations Command.

Our team met with the Adjutant General of Ohio National Guard, General Gregory Wayt, before the joint activities actually started, when he highlighted the importance of this activity for further implementation of the State Partnership Program, especially for military cooperation where education and training have been determined as priorities.

Throughout these ten days in the mornings, staff procedures for the deployment of units in missions and specific tasks were developed. Our officers had the opportunity to get an insight into the process of mobilization in the USA Armed Forces, training activities, troops' readiness evaluation, introduction and application of the new equipment, provision of logistic support...

They were especially interested in the protection of units during combat operations at the well equipped training range, that is, at the *detached operations base*, where the units complete training for deployment to Iraq. By far working and living conditions on the base corresponded to the actual conditions the USA soldiers encounter in Iraq. The soil is covered with sand, troops sleep and work under tents, while the whole area is heavily secured and one can enter the base on two check-points upon completing strict check-up regulations for personnel and vehicles. All soldiers and officers carry appropriate equipment according to prescribed regulations along with helmets and bullet-proof vests. Even the power supply system relies on aggregates as to create conditions that would correspond as much as possible to conditions in real operations.

STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



“Our cooperation keeps developing very successfully and continuously”, said General Gregory Wayt, the Commander of the Ohio National Guard, in his interview to *Odbrana* magazine at the beginning of our visit to Ohio. “General Ponos and I met here in Ohio several weeks ago

and agreed on the agenda for the upcoming year. As of September, 40 members of the Ohio National Guard are coming to Serbia to take part in a new joint exercise. Thus we are to mark the first anniversary of our successful cooperation which was in mutual interest” General Wayt said.

The chief of the GS of the Serbian Armed Forces, Lt. Gen. Zdravko Ponos gave similar estimates of the cooperation between the two states:

“We have agreed with Gen. Wayt to further develop cooperation in the area of education and training. Achievement of high professional standards in these areas is the investment in the future and the necessary interoperability of the Serbian Armed Forces”, General Ponos highlighted.

The State Partnership Program between the Republic of Serbia and the state of Ohio was established as part of SOFA Agreement signed on 7 September 2006 by the President of Serbia Boris Tadic and the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The US federal states currently have 59 state partnership agreements with countries all over the world. The National Guard of Ohio has been very successful in implementing such programs with Hungary since 1993, and our neighbors also have their partner states-Croatia-Minnesota, Romania-Alabama, Bulgaria-Tennessee, Macedonia-Vermont, Albania-New Jersey and Montenegro-Maine respectively.



PR DEPARTMENTS COOPERATION

During our visit to Ohio, Col. Rade Karan from the PR Department of the Serbian MoD met with Mark Wayda PhD, Director of the PR Department at the National Guard of Ohio HQ.

They both confirmed good cooperation in the exchange of information on the implementation of the State Partnership Program so far, and taking into consideration a growing number of planned activities it will keep developing in the future.



In the afternoons, activities were carried out on that and other training ranges with an aim to evaluate troops' readiness for accomplishing set tasks.

The training of the National Guard reserve lasts at least two weeks in the summer and one weekend per every month. Citizens show big interest in joining the Guard due to many attractive perks they are entitled to, such as fully covered college fee (app. 35,000\$), better employment opportunities, insurance etc.

The people we talked to did not hide those motives, nevertheless, they always highlighted their wish to serve the nation, their patriotism and sense of pride...

High motivation and dedication of both officers who conduct the training and soldiers are the most impressive qualities of the Ohio National Guard troops. Extremely high temperatures 86°F (30°C) did not diminish their readiness

to carry out set tasks from dawn to dusk carrying full equipment. The Ohio National Guard mainly comprises citizens primarily deployed on relief operations following natural or man-made disasters..

MOTIVATION

For a warrant officer Anthony McGrow, a technician in the Engineering Battalion, Army is the sense of life. He has been a military professional for 27 years, out of which he spent 6 years in the missions worldwide, and overall two years in combat operations. He was in Korea, Panama, Honduras, Africa, Italy, Hungary and Iraq. Nothing can replace the feeling of closeness with his fellow soldiers, McGrow claims, admitting his life is one big adventure dedicated to his country.

GRAYLING TRAINING CAMP

The Grayling training camp is situated in the State of Michigan and is one of the largest and best-equipped US training camps where the US Armed Forces and members of the National Guard have been conducting trainings for almost 100 years up to date. The Michigan National Guard conducts there complete training, while the National Guard of Ohio utilizes this training camp for various activities as it is in its vicinity and the US Armed Forces come here for more complex types of training.

The central compound is the base situated on the shores of Lake Margareta in a very colorful landscape with all facilities that meet the needs of troops and officers in their everyday life and work. The training premises are well-equipped; the residential facilities are very functional, with all the necessary amenities, such as the cafeteria, restaurants, stores, laundries

etc. Some officers who are deployed on the base, live there with their families and their children have organized bus transport to neighboring schools.



In 1913, Rasmus Hanson, a local lumber baron donated this large compound to the USA Armed Forces, while the first military exercises on the furnished training range were conducted in 1914. The Grayling Camp was named after a trout-like fish called *grayling*, which lives in clear waters of the surrounding rivers. The compound covers a vast area while different training ranges are several dozens kilometers away from each other. The range offers exceptional conditions for the training of all military specialties, with equipped shooting ranges for shooting from infantry and artillery weapons as well as from helicopters.

The compound also encompasses a large air field where the US Air Force cargo and fighter planes can land.



OHIO NATIONAL GUARD

A total of 10,000 Ohio Army Guard and 5,000 Ohio Air Guard personnel numbers 16,000 troops in total. There are over 3,000 officers, NCOs and civilians who are full-time employed performing 30 different professions. The remaining personnel is engaged on part-time basis, during regular trainings or on other occasions. Currently over 1,000 troops are deployed at more than 10 locations worldwide and in the USA, while 9,000 ONG troops supported the global war against terror.



Warrant officer, Peggy Herzog, has been serving in the Ohio National Guard HQ for 23 years. She had studied music, however under the influence of her father, a US colonel, she dabbled in a military professional. She works on IT systems development and protection having not neglected her passion for music. She still occasionally performs, on the piano or the flute, at some important events. Being one of only two women in the National Guard of Ohio with the highest NCO rank speaks volumes about her successful career.

Sergeant Monica Paton has been working in the HQ for ten years and admits that she joined the Guard because of an attractive remuneration package.

Lt Col Barbara Buckmyer joined the Guard because she loves military profession. Unlike the people mentioned above, who are full-time employed in the Guard, she has successful law practice in civilian life, nevertheless she has been serving in the reserve corps of the Ohio National Guard for 27 years. She is appointed as one of Support Brigade Assistant Commanders.

Post officer, Josiah Martin, has also joined the Guard. He was promoted to the rank of specialist, which is one of senior military ranks, very soon as he decided to spend a year in combat operations in Iraq. "It was hard, more than hard and dangerous, too", Martin says, "but I had to do it

for my country". Upon his recent return from the mission in Iraq, he got married and is now continuing his training with the National Guard, however, he does not plan to join overseas combat operations in the near future.

One of the highlights of our visit occurred when we accidentally came across Bojan Dikic in front of a shop at the Grayling Camp. He was born in Kosovska Kamenica, in Kosovo, in 1981; however, since 1992, he has been living in Ohio with 200,000 inhabitants of Serbian origin. Bojan joined the Guard as a reserve soldier and signed a three-year contract with an aim to provide funding for his criminology studies as he wants to become a police detective. However, he is not sure if he is going to expand his contract with the Guard after its expiration, and he said he knew many people who remained with the Guard until retirement.

SHARING EXPERIENCES

Our officers took an active role in the activities of the brigade team which was dealing with preparation and evaluation of units throughout this annual exercise. They used this opportunity to exchange experiences, as the American officers wanted to know what solution we apply in similar situations.

In addition, the members of our delegation had an opportunity to be transported by different types of aircrafts and

MUTUAL BENEFIT

“The purpose of the visit is to help Serbia to achieve necessary standards for NATO accession,” as estimated by Col. Glen Hammond, Commander of the Ohio National Guard Engineering Brigade, who hosted our team during the joint exercise. “This is why this cooperation is developed gradually per stages to achieve that goal. We are going to work together at several levels, cultural, social and of course, military level, because all these aspects are important for officers. We will learn from each other and thus enrich our cooperation what will result in better organization of the Serbian Armed Forces. We assure you that we will present you all our experiences and knowledge”, Col. Hammond told us during the SAF visit.

An annual budget amounting to 415,000,000\$ is allocated for funding the above mentioned activities. Out of which 13,271,271\$ are allocated from the Ohio state budget, and 403,383,758 \$ from the federal budget (for Ohio Air Guard 212,685,153\$ and for and 190,698,605 \$ for Ohio Army Guard).

The Ohio Air Guard has at its disposal 61 aircrafts, out of which 35 F-16s, while the Ohio Army Guard has at its disposal 22 helicopters. The Ohio National Guard has over 2, 000 vehicles at its disposal and app. 13, 000 pieces of various weapons.

With its overall force and significance, the Ohio National Guard is among the USA top five, after the Guards of Texas, New York State, Pennsylvania and California.

Throughout the American history, the ONG was deployed among the first in all combat operations worldwide. In WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

to try out a helicopter-mounted missile launcher, mortar and a heavy machine-gun. They showed great skill, which was highly commended by the hosts. Another highlight of the visit worth mentioning was the use of simulators for the training of troops, small units and teams, which our officers had a chance to test. One of the most complex situation was the movement of a convoy of vehicles in urban areas with the surveillance of the surroundings, response to potentially dangerous situations and various incidents and convoy assault...

Throughout the visit, our officers got an insight into actual training process of the USA Armed Forces covering all its stages. Even though the training is similar in all armies, many new solutions were presented, especially in terms of countering the contemporary security challenges. The USA Armed Forces very much insist on that and based on their everyday experience from operations all over the world, their training has constantly been improved. This is why all armies worldwide, including ours, are interested in getting an insight on the spot into practice of the most powerful army in the world.

The head of our delegation, Col Petar Cornakov, highlighted the professionalism of the members of the Guard as well as their openness and commitment to the State Partnership Program between Serbia and the State of Ohio.

“We were predominantly interested in training, especially in terms of planning and management, evaluation of readiness of troops and officers for conducting combat tasks, application of simulators and simulation in training, immediate training and shooting organization and provision of logistic support throughout camping and training” Col. Cornakov said, adding that he was truly impressed with the status of an NCO which is reflected in the existence of NCO corps. As in many other armies in the world, NCOs have a central role in terms of motivation, meeting troops needs and actual conduction of training in the National Guard of Ohio.

“One would expect to see officers, where we came across NCOs whose authority impressed me as it was based on their skill and expertise to independently carry out very demanding tasks”, said Col Cornakov.

Col Milan Mojsilovic highlighted the following when estimating the visit:

“All our expectations have been fully met. Our goal has been realized and elaborated in full. We will be able to apply the experience we obtained here in the training of our troops and officer to achieve better communication and interoperability with other armies all over the world.”

Following this exercise, 40 officers and NCOs of the Ohio National Guard are to visit Serbia in September. The training process of our forces is to be continued aiming at their participation in the joint peacekeeping operations worldwide. ■

