
Counteracting Pandemic Threats and Consequences: The Role of the Territorial Defence Forces in Crisis Management

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main aim of this article is to examine the role of the Territorial Defence Forces as a formation supporting state institutions in efforts to combat pandemics and analyze the factors determining the effectiveness of their participation.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The role of the Territorial Defence Forces in countering pandemic threats and effects was examined through legal and institutional analysis and systemic analysis.

Findings: Analysis of the role of the Territorial Defence Forces in counteracting threats posed by the pandemic proved the need to use all resources available to the state to limit its negative consequences. Due to its potential, the Territorial Defence Forces should support the state in ensuring domestic order and strengthening institutions and services performing tasks to counteract and combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The conducted research indicates that the scope of use of the Territorial Defence Forces must be adapted to changing requirements and emerging threats.

Practical Implications: The concept of counteracting pandemic threats and consequences through crisis management using the Armed Forces is the cooperation between various institutions as a critical organizational challenge. Cooperation is understood as multi-level action intended to achieve a set goal - ensuring security.

Originality/Value: The paper's conceptual framework is prescribed by the application of the consilience concept used in the analysis of the action of public institutions by employing various approaches from security policy, security management, public management, praxeology, and human resources management.

Keywords: Security, armed forces, Territorial Defence Forces, crisis, crisis management, pandemic, consilience.

JEL classification: I18, H12, H83, F50.

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1. Introduction

The pandemic has shown how effective an efficient crisis management system is, where the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus undoubtedly embodies such a crisis. The scale of challenges associated with responding to increasingly frequent global cases of infections required countries to undertake several legal and organizational measures and use all available material and organizational resources. Based on an applicable legal framework and supplementing it with necessary solutions, the crisis management system was strengthened to respond efficiently to the potential increase in infections. When responding to the escalation of the epidemiological threat and trying to limit the negative consequences of the SARS-CoV-2 spread, mechanisms stipulated for such situations were gradually engaged.

The critical task of the state in the situation of a dynamic increase in the incidence of disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus was to seek mechanisms for the effective use of all available financial and organizational resources. An example of such action is the inclusion, by the applicable legal order, of the Territorial Defence Forces in actions aimed at counteracting threats arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of participation of soldiers evolves with the development of the pandemic situation and identification of successive areas requiring support from the Armed Forces, including assistance to state institutions, local governments, hospitals, or other medical and welfare units.

The article focuses on the role of the Polish Armed Forces in the crisis management system, emphasizing the role of the Territorial Defence Forces in combating and countering the COVID-19 pandemic. It also analyzes the participation of the Territorial Defence Forces in ensuring order inside the country and strengthening institutions and services performing tasks to counteract and combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Pandemic and the Need for Security

Security, as a prime category from the point of view of the functioning of an individual and society, is inseparably associated with the existence of the state and its new functions. When recognizing security as an inalienable, universal, most revered value, and at the same time a basic human need (Pokruszyński and Piwowarski, 2019; Zdrodowski, 2019), the state is the structure which, owing to resources it has at hand and primarily due to its functions, organizes, orders, hierarchizes and governs individual and group actions to ensure said security in the short and long term. The complexity of factors that affect state security in the internal and external dimension determines and outlines activity of state structures for counteracting and responding to the occurring or likely threats caused by civilization's progress and human activity alike, as well as those resulting from military actions (Zajac, 2009). The resulting right of the individual and the collective to protection against actual and potential threats corresponds with a question about mechanisms and instruments through which the state executes its

obligation. Solutions implemented at the local and national level are intended to satisfy fundamental needs such as security. The newly created and improved systems of protection of the people regardless of their level, are to protect against possible threats of peace and war. Their tasks mainly involve counteracting dangerous incidents, and more, detecting, prevention thereof, protecting, warning, and alerting against them, isolating regions at risk, organizing evacuation, undertaking search and rescue operations, providing necessary medical aid to the injured, and removal of destructive occurrences (Fehler, Piątek, and Podgórska, 2017; Grima *et al.*, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2020).

In Poland, the first coronavirus case was noted on 4 March 2020, a few months after the outbreak in the Chinese Wuhan and a few weeks after the pandemic situation escalated in Europe. Bearing in mind the experience of other countries affected by the pandemic, the government promptly initiated actions to limit the spread of the virus (Table 1). At the same time, independent of these efforts, all shortcomings got revealed relating to the organization of the system of protecting the people against threats that thus far had been seen as secondary. The dynamic spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the related consequences, even those concerning the operation of the health care system, motivated nation-wide and local state institutions to search for ways to respond to the unprecedented situation, new in recent history. Leaving out the (mainly political) discussion on the pace of implemented solutions, their nature and efficiency, and the use of the support of Poland's Armed Forces in line with relevant applicable laws was an essential element of action.

Table 1. *Coronavirus in Poland. Statistical data for the period 04.03.2020-01.02.2021*

Date	infections	deaths	recoveries
04.03.2020	0	0	0
01.04.2020	2554	43	0
01.05.2020	13105	651	3491
01.06.2020	24165	1074	11449
01.07.2020	34775	1477	21791
01.08.2020	46346	1721	34374
01.09.2020	67922	2058	47030
01.10.2020	93481	2543	70401
01.11.2020	379902	5783	146595
01.12.2020	1013747	17599	597589
01.01.2021	1305774	28956	1046281
01.02.2021	1515,889	37222	1276636

Source: Zasięg koronowirusa COVID-19, <https://cutt.ly/vkEtGBy>.

To carry on with the reflections, it must be emphasized that the pandemic made many aware that current non-military threats are equally dangerous in their consequences for society as wars and armed conflict. The effects of the pandemic in the social and economic dimensions are, due to their scale, equally severe (or almost identical) as those associated with military actions. Therefore, current security-related efforts must encompass the capacity to protect society against non-military threats (Jakubczak, 2004).

One of the state's most important functions is to provide citizens with primary conditions for protection against possible or actual threats, which means that a coherent system for preventing extraordinary threats must be designed (Piątek, 2019). This system should consider a broadly understood subject matter of counteracting occurrences of crises, and by recognizing threats, it should ensure efficient use of relevant forces and measures to eliminate the effects of the danger. Moreover, it should ensure coordination of all involved services, guards, or inspectorates in assisting those affected by said dangers. Various forces and structures, including those resulting from the potential and resources at the state's disposal, should be ready to combat a crisis (Stefaniuk, 2017).

Such actions must include the capacity to protect the people against threats and effects of all factors that exhale a sense of insecurity and cause it to climb from the local community level to a higher, state-level (Piwowarski and Rozwadowski, 2016). When referring to decisions and actions taken by the decision-making bodies to respond to a crisis and overcome it, several factors must be considered, which may affect the efficiency of those operations. Since a crisis entails distortion to a regular operation of organizations and society, which negatively affects the operation of the state as a structure, and what is more, poses a risk to the satisfaction of fundamental needs of an individual and entire social groups, efficiency of a crisis management system is paramount to guarantee uninterrupted functioning of a state as an organization (Dayton, 2009).

A pandemic is a moment of a global crisis that necessitates a revision of existing needs and capacities. No matter the countries, the degree of their readiness to counteract and respond to non-military security threats, and finally, their experience related to situations of a similar nature (not scale) in the past, the situation took everyone by surprise to some extent. This happened irrespective of the fact that the discussion and research on security now feature more and more non-military issues, such as infectious diseases, environmental degradation, or humanitarian disasters, which pose a significant risk to the world order (Nowicka and Kocik, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us realize quite brutally that contemporary societies have found themselves in entirely new circumstances resulting from the global nature of the threat that individual countries are faced with. Even though such an occurrence has been forecast and seen in the recent past, this global nature of the epidemic has become the most critical challenge in decades, at the international, national, and local levels. These are the categories in which the task the state institutions in Poland need to face must be perceived; institutions which, according to their obligations in terms of crisis management, should counteract threats, respond to them, and maintain or restore stabilization at all levels of state organization by involving specialist organizations, inspectorates, guards, and society.

Given that crisis management rests with public administration, which involves preventing crises, preparation to take the reins in them through planned actions,

responding to occurring crises, removing their effects, and recreating critical infrastructure resources, the importance of public administration must be noted (Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007). Since it is responsible for the efficient operation of the state system, public administration uses available resources, including the organization of the entire activity of all detachments that respond to crises and strive to take actions when effective counteracting of threats is impossible. It needs to be noted that the scale and nature of threats resulting from the current crisis determine the adequacy of forces and means involved to ensure state security.

In the context of an epidemiological threat, one must note the complexity of the pandemic-related situation that prejudged the use of all available resources, including individual components of Poland's Armed Forces. This was dictated by both the dynamic nature of the situation and its implications from the perspective of citizens' health and life, effectiveness, and efficiency of stakeholders involved, including most health care institutions. Having the necessary staff, technical and organizational potential, and having experience in crises was supposed to serve as support to civilian services and institutions engaged in counteracting and limiting the spread of the virus.

3. Crisis and Terminological Matters

Further analysis requires a conceptualization of critical crisis- and crisis situation-related terms. We live in an uncertain environment in which positive values walk along with negative ones, which causes a state of internal imbalance (Mazur, 2003). Various definitions of a crisis are circulating in public use. A crisis is a part of life, it affects us all regardless of where we live and the structures and circumstances we operate in. It is defined through the prism of a situation that poses a threat to the state as a whole or its components. It is a sudden event that poses a threat to life, health, property, or the environment, which requires a response by use of forces and measures available on the local or national scale (Fehler, Piątek and Podgórska, 2017). What is essential, a crisis is not a one-off event, it is a situation that is a consequence of a specific occurrence or a series of occurrences that bring a significant threat to people's security, while at the same time it severely restricts the operation of state structures and social bonds and distorts the functioning of institutions and organizations. Crises, as internal states that deviate from the normal undisturbed situation, may be caused by external factors (e.g., one's incompetence) and internal ones (e.g., a conflict with another actor). They may be an after-effect of random events, e.g., natural disasters or catastrophes (Koziej, 2011).

A crisis may, in effect, cause threats and may ultimately lead to a breakdown or significant infringement of social bonds while distorting the operation of public institutions. As a result, no organization or institution can prepare itself comprehensively for any crisis, and often it is the paralysis or limitation of their operation that is a crucial element crippling effective prevention of the occurring crises (Gryz and Kitler, 2007). A crisis is a state of increasing destabilization,

uncertainty, and social tension, which is an effect of the threats and leads to far-reaching restrictions for the state, society, and individual (Fehler, Piątek and Podgórzńska, 2017). In other words, it is a situation that negatively impacts the level of security of the people, property in significant amount or the environment, that causes notable limitations in the operation of relevant public authorities owing to their inadequate workforce and resources (Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007).

4. Legal Basis of Crisis Management in Poland

For a long time, Poland had no regulations governing how institutions should behave or specifying the duties of decision-makers and post-holders who acted to solve crises. Today numerous legal norms and documents address these issues, and even though they cannot fully define or pinpoint the likelihood of a crisis, they can undoubtedly outline the role of relevant institutions, their interrelations, rules of cooperation, and conditions that must be met so that the system of crisis management fulfils its functions.

The actual act in the Polish legal order dealing with security concerning crisis management is the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997 (Dz.U. (Journal of Laws) 1997, item 78, 483). The highest-rank act enumerates three types of extraordinary measures: martial law, a state of emergency, and a state of natural disaster (Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek and Krynojeski, 2010). Leaving out a detailed analysis of legal validity and circumstances accompanying the introduction of any of the extraordinary measures, it must be noted that when it comes to a natural disaster, not all of them require that the state of a natural disaster be announced. It is because to do so, regular constitutional measures must be deemed insufficient to protect tangible (tangible resources) and intangible values (human health and life, public order) that are at risk (Karpiuk, 2015).

The critical aspect regulating actions in crisis management is the Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007. This statute specifies responsible bodies, structures, and organizational, logistic, or financial tasks. Thus, the said act creates foundations for a crisis management system whose operation must comply with the Polish Constitution. Under the act, responsibility for crisis management throughout the Republic of Poland lies with the Council of Ministers.

The Crisis Management Act creates a crisis management system in the event of threats that require specific actions, especially by public authorities or the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in situations which do not meet the requirements for introducing extraordinary measures (martial law, a state of emergency or a state of a natural disaster), but which require the launching of unique mechanisms intended to ensure effective monitoring of the threats and the taking of actions intended to eliminate or at least significantly limit them. The said act is, therefore, a natural supplementation of the matter of extraordinary measures. At the same time, the act is an essential element of steering national security. It aims to improve

general security by increasing the efficiency of the operation of public authorities in crises. The sphere of general security includes protecting citizens' life and health and protecting critical infrastructure. The total of planning activities defined as civilian planning is a tool public authority uses to achieve an adequate level of readiness to act in crises. The proposed regulation describes tasks of public authorities, the Armed Forces, and owners and possessors of critical infrastructure implemented in crises.

These situations are understood as a state of growing destabilization, insecurity, and social tension. Consequently, the state mentioned above poses a risk, particularly to life, health or the environment, and critical infrastructure. Maintaining full readiness to counteracting such threats among professional structures of crisis management by default should involve preventive elimination of their sources, practical cooperation at that, and prompt removal of after-effects of such events (Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007).

5. The Armed Forces in Counteracting Non-Military Threats: Special Position of the Territorial Defence Forces

The tasks resulting from the need to ensure security are carried out by bodies of public authority and health care system, guards, agencies, and inspectorates (Lidwa, 2010). Procedures for crisis response outline specific tasks and courses of action for services, depending on the type of the event, development of the situation, and problems that may surface at the place of the incident. In a crisis where the use of other forces and measures is impossible or insufficient, Poland's Armed Forces may be used subject to specific rules of procedure to support crisis management actions.

To order further discussion, it must be noted that the armed forces of a country should not only ensure the protection of independence and indivisibility of the territory, including security and inviolability of borders, but by default, it should also provide support for foreign policy and vital interests of the state in the international arena. The armed forces increasingly step into various spheres of state operation relating to security, thus making this activity complementary. The armed forces today are also tasked with responding to non-military incidents. An essential task of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland is to support state bodies in ensuring Poland's internal security and providing necessary military aid to relevant self-government institutions and services in responding to threats (Jakubczak, 2004). Through participation in the state crisis management system, the Armed Forces are constantly developing their capabilities to provide support to relevant public authorities and society (Strategia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, point 97). To do so, they keep the necessary military resources ready to counteract or remove causes and effects of internal and external state security threats. In effect, the Polish Army formations must be adequately equipped and trained and must be adequately motivated to the armed combat and protection of internal security alike (Piątek, 2019).

In practice, the armed forces must be able to save people's health where military threats occur and also in the event of non-military dangers. The scale of these tasks for the armed forces may contribute to their qualitative change. As of today, there must be no doubts that the nature of tasks entailing civilian and military cooperation requires that the army constantly adjust the number, structure deployment, equipment, and training of some military detachments for rescue purposes.

The Armed Forces' effective operation in a non-military dimension, including support to civilian authorities and society, using the armed forces, is a basic form of civilian and military cooperation in securing national security, implemented by provisions of the law and established rules and procedures. These actions include allocating and preparing the armed forces to provide necessary aid and coordination of activity with the authorities and non-governmental services and organizations in the event of specific threats and a call for military support. Individual areas of this support, specified using the target criterion, include a generous array of tasks (Gašiorek and Kitler, 2005).

The primary legal act that regulates the tasks of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland is the Constitution. It includes fundamental tasks for the armed forces. Their scope is outlined in Article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which, about Article 5 of the Constitution, further expands tasks for the state, including Poland's Armed Forces, to ensure the freedoms and rights of persons and citizens, to safeguard the national heritage and to ensure the protection of the natural environment. The Constitution of the Republic of Poland quite expressly transfers responsibility for the armed forces onto the Council of Ministers using internal security determinants. Further, through Article 146, the Constitution points out that the Council of Ministers conducts the internal affairs and foreign policy; in particular, it ensures internal security of the State and public order (Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 2 April 1997).

In practice, a legal act that regulates the use of Poland's Armed Forces in ensuring the state's internal order is the act on crisis management referred to above (Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007). Detachments of the armed forces, relevant to their specialist preparation, may participate in implementing crisis management-related tasks. The tasks of the Armed Forces include, in particular, participation in monitoring threats, tasks related to the assessment of effects of phenomena arising in the area of threat occurrence, performing search and rescue operations, evacuating victims and property, tasks intended to prepare conditions for temporary stay for the evacuated residents in allocated places, participation in protection of property left behind in the threat occurrence area, isolating the threat occurrence area or the location of the rescue operation, securing, rescuing and evacuation works in endangered facilities and historical monuments and buildings, works requiring the use of special technical equipment or explosives from the resources of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, removal of dangerous materials and their disposal by means of services and measures in the resources of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, elimination of chemical contamination as well as biological

contamination and infections, removal of radioactive contamination, tasks related to repairing and rebuilding technical infrastructure, participation in ensuring traffic flow of transport routes, providing medical aid and performance of sanitation and hygiene-related tasks and anti-epidemic tasks (Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007; Ścibiorek, 2017).

6. The Territorial Defence Forces as an Armed Forces Formation Implementing Tasks Relating to Counteracting the COVID-19 Pandemic

Detailed rules for participation of military units and detachments in preventing effects of natural disasters are laid down in the regulation of the Council of Ministers of 20 February 2003 on detailed rules of participation of detachments and sub-detachments of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in counteracting effects of a natural disaster or removal thereof (Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) 2003 item 41, 347) "Plan for the use of detachments and sub-detachments of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in the event of a crisis," drafted in the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, is critical from the formal and legal point of view. This plan is a basis for drafting detailed plans at each level of command. The essence of each detailed plan is its relevance to the threats and specification of an effective manner to use the available services and measures in a crisis (Crisis Management Act of 26 April 2007, art. 25; Kuśmierk, 2014).

There are two main components in the organizational structure of the Polish Armed Forces, which act for the implementation of the State's security policy, that is, the maneuvering component, i.e., operational troops with the function of external intervention and supporting the higher component - the Territorial Defence Forces. This formation was established on 1 January 2017 and is the fifth type of armed forces in the Polish Armed Forces, next to land forces, air force, navy, and special forces. The end of the formation process is planned for 2021 when the number of soldiers in the formation will reach the envisaged 53 thousand, and territorial defense brigades are to be deployed in each province (województwo) (Table 2).

Initially, the plan stipulated four brigades of territorial defense in the following provinces: West Pomeranian, Lubusz, Lower Silesia, and Opole as part of the last, fourth stage (2019-2021). However, due to i.a., the number of inhabitants and the related lesser capacity for recruitment, the Ministry of National Defence changed its plans for the Opole and Lubusz provinces to place battalions in there instead of brigades. The Opole battalion will answer organization-wide to the 13th TDF Silesia Brigade (the first TDF unit is being created in the Opole province).

Due to the general conscription of soldiers and its tactical mobility, this type of armed forces can perform defense and protection tasks within its territory. The Territorial Defence Forces were organized to carry out tasks in individual regions of Poland together with non-military territorial state structures (TDF are linked with the state's current administration) (Michalak, 2017).

Table 2. *The process of creating Territorial Defence Brigades*

Territorial Defence Brigade (TDB)	Place of stationing	Creation
I stage of TDF formation		
1st Podlasie TDB	Białystok	2016
2nd Lublin TDB	Lublin	2016
3rd Podarpacka TDB	Rzeszów	2016
II stage of TDF formation		
4th Warmian-Masurian TDB	Olsztyn	2017
5th Masovian TDB	Ciechanów	2017
6th Masovian TDB	Radom (temporary - Warsaw)	2017
7th Pomeranian TDB	Gdynia-Babie Doły	2018
III stage of TDF formation		
8th Kuyavian-Pomeranian TDB	Bydgoszcz (temporary)	2018
9th Łódź TDB	Łódź	2018
10th Świętokrzyska TDB	Kielce	2018
11th Lesser Poland TDB	Kraków	2018
12th Greater Poland TDB	Poznań	2018
13th Silesian TDB	Katowice	2018
IV stage of TDF formation		
14th West Pomeranian TDB	Szczecin	2019
16th Lower Silesian TDB	Wrocław	2019

Source: *Ciechanowski, 2020: 32.*

Pursuant to the legislator's intention, the mission of this formation is to maintain general readiness to defend the Republic of Poland, to cooperate with elements of the state defense system, including in particular with voivodes and local government bodies, to shape political and civic attitudes and values among residents and to protect the people against consequences of natural disasters, to remove effects thereof, to protect property, to carry out search and rescue operations or to protect human health and life, and also to participate in the implementation of crisis management-related tasks (Tomaszewski, 2019). Therefore, involvement of this component of the force as supporting public administration in epidemic crisis-related actions in Poland was a consequence of tasks assigned to TDF now of constructing them.

The decision to involve the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in the fight against the spread of SARS-CoV-2 was taken in February 2020. It was related to the pandemic situation in China and the need to organize Poles' return to Poland. Therefore, as early as 2 February 2020, air transport from coronavirus-threatened China was organized, then later also from other regions, including France, Great Britain, Lebanon, or Kuwait. It must be noted that by the decision of the Minister of National Defence on the involvement of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in combating the pandemic, considering the recommendations of the Minister of Health, the model of TDF operation was changed on 13 March 2020 from a training one to an anti-crisis one. Preparations to provide support to civilians began by launching the operation of the Anti-Crisis Action Team in the 24-hour system for seven days a week (24/7), intended to coordinate and allocate tasks to the forces throughout the country which answered to them (Pietrzak, 2020).

Later, the scope of participation of soldiers changed parallel to the development of the pandemic situation and identification of other areas that required the support of the Armed Forces. Hence participation of soldiers in the protection of state borders and support for the Border Guard, supporting the Police in their activity to ensure state security or verifying the introduced restrictions (e.g., ban on assemblies, complying with rules of quarantine). Help for state institutions, self-governments, hospitals, or other medical and care units was also crucial. Using available material (e.g., field hospitals, medical equipment, diagnostic laboratories), organizational and staff resources (military doctors, nurses, paramedics, or psychologists), they supported state and self-government services and institutions in the fight against the pandemic. The help delivered to elderly and sick persons who were left without care in satisfying their basic needs was essential (Gotowość, odzew ratunek. Jedenaście miesięcy walki Wojska Polskiego z epidemią koronawirusa, 2020).

It is worth basing the analysis confirming the level and scale of engagement of the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF) on anti-pandemic actions undertaken by the state in two operational projects under the code name “Immune Spring” and “Lasting Immunity.” Both operations, serving to support local communities, first focused on mitigating the effects of the pandemic crisis. The dynamic increase in SARS-CoV-2 infections in Poland gave an impetus to use all available organizational and material resources to counteract the spread of infections effectively. By analysing how the epidemiological situation developed in Europe and throughout the world, also by forecasting possible scenarios, effective responses in a situation of an expected rise in infections were sought.

TDF involvement as one of the formations dedicated to acting in crises was, by default, to support the functioning of services and institutions. TDF detachments were to provide support for the activity of public administration and mainly to support local communities. The scale of the needs may be evidenced by the number of TDF soldiers participating in various projects. However, it needs to be noted that the number of involved TDF soldiers from individual brigades depended on a few factors, i.e., the epidemic situation in the region of operation, the dynamics of the spread of the virus in individual regions of the country, the size of the detachments themselves that carried out the tasks, as well as the phase of brigade formation.

It is worth noting that some of the TDF brigades were still in the formation stage, so their operational capabilities were limited. It must be observed that one of TDF’s main tasks is to fight natural disasters and remove their effects and protect human health and life and participate in the implementation of crisis management-related tasks. These tasks result from the formation’s mission: protection and supporting local communities (Muczyński, 2020a).

The first of the said operations, “Immune Spring,” began on 19 March 2020, and its launch followed an increasing number of cases in Poland and the need to support public administration in the activity to limit the threat of the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infections. It must be noted here that the most significant share of dynamic forces

was observed for the 13th Territorial Defence Brigade since as many as 97% of soldiers that form this brigade were involved in direct anti-crisis actions. Close to 85% of soldiers from the 14th West Pomeranian Territorial Defence Brigade and 83% of the 16th Lower Silesian Brigade soldiers were engaged in the operation.

In the period of intensified actions, as many as 5.5 thousand TDF soldiers and military academy cadets participated in the “Immune Spring” operation at the same time. It must be flagged up that from the start of the operation, the activity of services and institutions involved in various types of pandemic-related actions were supported by close to 16.5 thousand TDF soldiers, which is almost 70% of the formation. The activity of TDF soldiers focused on seven major areas: aiding hospitals and sanitation-related services, building individual and social immunity, supporting local governments and non-profit organizations, and supporting the Material Reserves Agency, the Police, Border Guard, and Civil Aviation Authority (Wróbel and Tratkiewicz, 2020; Muczyński, 2020a).

Operation “Lasting Immunity” conducted since 22 June 2020 is a continuation of the operation above, and its primary efforts focus on supporting various actors in the framework of the health care system as well as sanitation-related entities in the implementation of tasks to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining forces in readiness to support anti-crisis actions, supporting local governments and NGOs in supplying food and medical products to those most in need, mainly seniors.

Contrary to the previous operation, this one concentrated mainly on extinguishing SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks, and its actions were directed towards supporting medical care, sanitary services, local governments, and voivodes to control coronavirus transmissions (Muczyński, 2020). Providing support and help to the Police, Border Guard, and Material Reserves Agency was another area of TDF activity as part of the examined operation.

The dynamic epidemic situation in Poland determined a transformation of the TDF operation conducted till January 2020 under the code name “Immune Spring” into a new formula. The rising numbers of infections and the increasingly noticeable need to support the activity of institutions and services involved in the crisis management system determined the need to engage TDF further and reconstruct its existing tasks (Wróbel and Tratkiewicz, 2020).

In line with the decision of the Minister of Defence of late October 2020, not fewer than 20 thousand soldiers of the Territorial Defence Forces and operational troops were purposefully supposed to be involved in the fight against coronavirus. In effect, between November and December, more than 5,600 soldiers were deployed for actions in the autumn stage of operation; Lasting Immunity (as of 14 December 2020), of which 3,130 were TDF soldiers and cadets of military academies. By fulfilling their duties related to supporting organizational units of the health care system, sanitary services, the Police, the State Fire Service, and local government units in the sphere of non-military crisis actions, they significantly contributed to

slowing down SARS-CoV-2 transmissions and boosting state security (Muczyński, 2020b).

The tasks presented above do not exhaust the entire spectrum of involvement of the Territorial Defence Forces in counteracting and fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from direct support, formations of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland conducted information and education as well as preventive activities by organizing helplines (psychological support, support for actors organizing recreation for children and youth, support for social welfare centres and non-governmental organizations that assist the elderly) or training (Wróbel and Tratkiewicz, 2020).

What is essential, TDF activity was a crucial element in the strategy of counteracting the spread of the virus and mitigating its effects in the projected scale of infections in the period of late autumn and winter. The next, third wave of infections, due to its social and economic consequences, required continued military detachments in actions intended to limit virus transmissions and lessen its effects on civilians and the economy. Irrespective of the expected changes associated with general vaccinations, the cooperation of various actors contributed to the efficient implementation of the vaccination plan, which was seen as a critical prerequisite for an effective fight against the pandemic.

7. Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Territorial Defence Forces, due to its potential, should be used to support the state in ensuring order within the country and in preventing and counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic. The case study analysis shows that the scope of their use and especially the implementation of tasks must be adopted to the changing requirements and emerging threats (Zapałowski, 2014). Contemporary threats have a comprehensive nature, and the results of crises place the whole society at risk, which is seen in the example of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire country, including the Armed Forces and their components, should be prepared to stand against those threats. With the absence of compelling forecasting crises, quick mobilization of the army for the fight against a threat may limit its effect.

Military anti-crisis sub-detachments deployed in endangered regions may be the first to act. The participation of TDF soldiers in actions for counteracting and fighting the COVID-19 pandemic may be seen as an example of providing a positive impact for the benefit of society. These actions are a test of the soldiers' training and the security system and policy. The scale and nature of involvement of TDF brigades point to the indispensability of support from the military sectors for actions falling under the crisis management system.

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