

Supporting the Development of Hungary's National Resilience with Special Operations Forces

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The ever-changing security environment and the experience of the war in Ukraine not only underlined the importance of a strong defence force but also highlighted the need for effective national resilience. The development of national resilience, the building and operation of the system cannot be imagined without the support of the Hungarian Defence Forces. At the same time, the use of conventional military capabilities takes resources away from training and preparation that can be highly photogenic in the execution of the basic tasks of the force. At the same time, special operations forces can be an appropriate solution for building national resilience. Effective national resilience can also be a deterrent to conventional armed conflict. Recent legislative changes will make the policy-making process simpler, more transparent and faster and will allow for the effective development of national resilience.

Keywords: national resilience, Special Operations Forces, legislation, whole-of-society approach

Introduction

The ever-changing global security environment, terrorism, mass illegal migration, hybrid threats, sub-threshold conflicts, war with conventional forces underscore the need to redefine threats. These threats are now simultaneously multifaceted, affecting the individual, the small community, the state, the region and spilling over into the global space. Moreover, post-modern open societies are more vulnerable to such challenges, which requires addressing the political, military, economic and financial, social, legal and environmental dimensions of security together. The changes already mentioned have also underlined the fact that the role of the military has also changed, because a coordinated political, economic and military response is needed to establish and maintain security.²

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² 1035/2012. (II. 21.) Korm. határozat Magyarország Nemzeti Biztonsági Stratégiájáról [Government Decree 1035/2012 (II. 21.) on Hungary' National Security Strategy].

Csaba Vida distinguishes between the military, political, diplomatic, economic, financial, industrial, commercial, human, social, environmental, health (epidemiological), legal, public security, national security (intelligence) and demographic dimensions.³ This finding further underlines the need for a whole-of-society approach and underlines the new demands on military capabilities.

At the same time, it is important to note that the capabilities of the armed forces – be it structure, equipment, procedures – are basically designed for the armed defence of the country, so their involvement in strengthening and supporting the non-military segment can only be interpreted within certain limits.

The special operations capability can break through these barriers. Its structure, equipment, training, experience gained in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its regionally extensive network are different from conventional forces. This enables it to effectively facilitate civil–military dialogue, train civilian capabilities and support the development and application of national resilience.

In my study, I argue that Hungary's Special Operations Forces have the capabilities to significantly enhance national resilience, which have already been demonstrated during operations, training sessions and the illegal migration crisis of 2015. At the same time, the proper deployment of these capabilities requires further work to develop the legal framework, to establish a system of cooperation and to allocate resources appropriately.

The concept of resilience

The concept of resilience is not easy to define, as the original term has been taken from other scientific fields and has been given newer and newer meanings. It was in engineering that the concept first became known. It described the ability of materials to retain or regain their original shape despite mechanical stresses. In ecology, it refers to the building up or adaptation of an ecosystem generated by a significant environmental change. In psychology, it refers to coping mechanisms that enable individuals to cope with stress and other negative challenges.⁴ Pál Kádár underlines that the concept has generated some confusion about its meaning due to its transfer from several disciplines. He stated that resilience as a concept has become a fundamental principle of security policy thinking, which is primarily understood as the preparedness and resilience of states and societies against various threats.⁵ In his study, he also underlines that a well-built societal resilience is also a deterrent, as the aggressor must expect to face resistance outside the military defence that will lead to the failure of the aggression.⁶

NATO traces the principle of resilience back to Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty – our accession to NATO and the text of the Treaty were promulgated in Act I of 1999 of the Republic of Hungary – which states:

³ VIDA 2013.

⁴ MENKHAUS 2013: 2–3.

⁵ KÁDÁR–KESZELY 2022: 5–6.

⁶ KÁDÁR–KESZELY 2022: 7.

“In order to more effectively achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.”⁷

This principle places military and civilian preparedness under national responsibility. However, in the context of resilience, the NATO context refers to a national and collective capability that can comprehensively address the full spectrum of threats. This includes preparedness, response, resilience and, if necessary, rapid recovery. In a simplified understanding of the Alliance, resilience is understood as the ability of Allies individually, or the Alliance collectively as NATO, to deter threats, to recover from the effects of adversity and to maintain continued operational capability in the face of adversity. At NATO Headquarters, the Resilience Committee, NATO’s lead advisory body, was established in 2022 to lead and coordinate tasks at Alliance level.⁸

In a declaration issued at the Alliance’s Warsaw Summit (8–9 July 2016), NATO expressed its commitment to strengthening resilience and agreed on seven core requirements.⁹

1. maintaining the continued functioning of government
2. maintaining uninterrupted utility services and energy supply
3. managing uncoordinated mass movements of population
4. the continuous provision of basic food and drinking water
5. mass casualty care
6. the maintenance of the national media and electronic communications, and the continuous provision of the IT network
7. ensuring the continued operation of transport and transport infrastructure¹⁰

The European Union has already used the strategic approach as a principle in its Internal Security Strategy in 2010. This has more similarities with the internal content of what is currently known in terms of resilience.¹¹ This was followed in 2012 by conclusions on resilience in the context of the African food crisis, and in 2013 by a European Council Communication on the resilience approach. The first paper on resilience in the European Union was the Strategic Foresight Report 2020. This report identified resilience as the new compass for EU policies. The report defines resilience as:

“The ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges but also to undergo transitions in a sustainable, fair and democratic manner.”¹²

This formulation adopts a multidisciplinary perspective and a broad 360-degree approach. It sees strengthening shock absorption mechanisms and enhancing the capacity to adapt and transform as the basis for a more resilient society. The 2020 Strategic Foresight

⁷ 1999. évi I. törvény a Magyar Köztársaságnak az Észak-atlanti Szerződéshez történő csatlakozásáról és a Szerződés szövegének kihirdetéséről [Act I of 1999 on the Accession of the Republic of Hungary to the North Atlantic Treaty and the Promulgation of the Text of the Treaty].

⁸ NATO 2023.

⁹ NATO 2016; NATO 2024.

¹⁰ NATO 2016.

¹¹ KASSAI 2023.

¹² European Commission 2020: 2.

Report focuses on four interconnected dimensions: social and economic, geopolitical, green, digital.¹³

In the Hungarian context, the National Security Strategy and its annex set out basic tasks for national resilience. Although these tasks are not detailed and are not explicitly defined for the different organisations, the described tasking framework identifies areas where the special operations capability can play a role in building national resilience. Point 124 of the National Security Strategy mentions illegal migration, hybrid threats, terrorism and mass health emergencies, among others, as priority security risks.¹⁴

The government resolution also describes the threats in more detail. In paragraphs 57 to 58, it mentions uncontrolled, mass and illegal migration, with its attendant health, terrorism and destabilising effects on the functioning of states.¹⁵ The migration crisis of 2015 required the deployment of a military response in which the Special Operations Capability carried out significant tasks. The management of irregular migration, hybrid threats and terrorism in a broader sense, and in this regard the support of internal security agencies and police forces could be a clear task for the special operations capability.

The capability to provide mass casualty medical care appears under subsection 174 dealing with disaster risk reduction,¹⁶ which does not fully correspond to NATO's concept of mass casualty care, because it does not narrow the threat down to those arising from a disaster situation alone but rather focuses on the casualties of armed conflict. The care of the injured in armed conflict requires specialised skills, particularly in trauma care, which the special operations capability possesses, as it has demonstrated on several occasions in Afghanistan under the ISAF SOF operation.

The resilience of civilian communication systems, detailed in paragraph 119, which follows in the list of resilience requirements, can also be identified as part of the objectives set out in the strategy document in the context of protecting government and other key information communication systems.¹⁷ A special operations capability equipped with advanced assets can also effectively support national resilience in this segment in the event of civilian service paralysis.

For the special operations capability to provide effective assistance in the cases listed above, it is essential to conduct joint training and preparation exercises.

To summarise the NATO, EU and Hungarian national approach, national resilience is based on a strong state (including a strong economy, social cohesion, governance, modern and effective armed forces, law enforcement, disaster management, healthcare, etc.) and the commitment of citizens. National resilience can therefore only be understood in a society-wide approach.

¹³ European Commission 2020: 8–29.

¹⁴ Government Resolution 1163/2020 (IV. 21.).

¹⁵ Government Resolution 1163/2020 (IV. 21.).

¹⁶ Government Resolution 1163/2020 (IV. 21.).

¹⁷ Government Resolution 1163/2020 (IV. 21.).

A whole-of-society (comprehensive) approach

As challenges and risks do not occur in isolation, but rather in a mutually reinforcing way, it is necessary that the response to them is also implemented through an integrated application of all capabilities. As Tokovicz says: “Complex response to complex crises” – a comprehensive approach is needed.¹⁸ This of course implies the assumption that the development, training and deployment of all areas must be managed in a coherent way. This requires the full cooperation of governmental and non-governmental organisations. However, it should be kept in mind, that different organisations bring different professional cultures and organisational specificities to the joint effort, not to mention society itself, which, with its diversity, can be an obstacle to cooperation.

Keszely highlights the complexity of threats and crises when he states that in a highly complex social environment, the crises and challenges affecting society are also complex in nature.¹⁹ He also refers to the findings of Stern, who distinguished between five complexities in his work *Crisis Decisionmaking: A Cognitive Institutional Approach*, such as political complexity, institutional complexity, historical complexity, information complexity, problem complexity.²⁰ Considering these complexities, the resolution of a crisis requires the involvement of many institutions, organisations and individuals, which can only be addressed on a societal scale, using a comprehensive approach.

In terms of the overall approach, two different models can be distinguished such as integration and coordination. The difference between the two is that integration brings the participating organisations together in a single hierarchical structure, while coordination involves cooperation and direction-setting at the strategic level. When Keszely wrote his study, he saw three different levels of cooperation. These are the inter-organisational level, the intra-organisational level and the intra-national level.²¹ Today, the international trend is integration.

When we turn to Hungary, there are many obstacles to building Hungarian national resilience, especially when we talk about integration. One of the problems stemming from the complexities already mentioned is the cultural differences between the actors involved, which makes cooperation difficult. The communication of subsystems within the system, the different terminology is only one of the obstacles to be mentioned, which is due to cultural differences. Another such barrier is the approach to the problem. The same problem is approached differently by different actors, because the organisational culture, whether it is a disaster management officer, a policeman, a soldier, a paramedic or a public administrator, generates a different focus.

Another obstacle, based on my own experience, is competition between collaborators. For example, during the 2015 migrant crisis, despite the common goal of successful implementation of tasks, unhealthy competition between actors in the solution of subtasks

¹⁸ TOKOVICZ 2013: 11–12.

¹⁹ KESZELY 2013.

²⁰ STERN 2003.

²¹ KESZELY 2013: 49.

occurred several times. It is important to note, however, that these obstacles were always overcome and did not prevent the successful implementation of the tasks.

The key to solving the above-mentioned problems is constant communication and joint training, which gives the opportunity to get to know each other better, to adopt the best practices and to standardise them.

Overall, it can be concluded that building national resilience and a whole-of-government – whole-of-society approach, especially in the light of the experience of the war in Ukraine, requires a level of cooperation – cohesion, if you like – that requires rethinking defence and defence-related systems. This must also include military capability, as its role is changing.

The changing role of the military

The experience of the war in Ukraine has shown that the relative advantage of an aggressor with a significant superiority in conventional military capabilities can be forced into a protracted conflict by well-organised defence and social cohesion. Effective defence in this case requires, on the one hand, a capable defence force which can stop an attacking conventional military. This basically focuses on capabilities that were systematically dismantled in the 2000s, especially by European armies. On the other hand, there is a need for capabilities capable of dealing with hybrid challenges and effectively supporting national resilience.²²

The force development programmes launched across Europe, which Hungary started in 2016 ahead of other European countries, are aimed at restoring traditional military capabilities. On the conventional forces side, this will fundamentally define the tasks for the period ahead. These tasks will focus on training personnel and integrating new equipment. At the same time, special operations capabilities are at a crossroad. This is because in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, counterinsurgency or counterterrorism operations were conducted with partner forces, essentially in the framework of military assistance, but the changing challenges of the present era have created a dichotomy with the experience of the war in Ukraine. On the one hand, there has been a renewed focus on special operations support to conventional forces, with an emphasis on traditional special operations capabilities such as special reconnaissance or direct actions. On the other hand, they must continue to be prepared for military assistance and counterterrorism activities in case of hybrid operations.

The above-mentioned changes clearly demonstrate that the role of the military force has changed, especially in the context of the hybrid threat and in the light of national resilience.

Conventional forces will continue to play their part in supporting national resilience, especially in cases where a large general support force or specialised assets are needed. Examples include the 2006 Tisza floods, when 12 military organisations with some 4,500

²² KADÁR–KESZELY 2023: 11.

personnel were involved in the response,²³ or the March 2013 snow emergency, when Hungarian Army tanks and tracked vehicles rescued civilians and first responders on the M1 motorway.²⁴

At the same time, national resilience can only be effectively supported by military units that can react quickly, with the ability to conduct operations in isolation and autonomously over long periods of time. This means that the role of Special Operations Forces and CIMIC, PSYOPS will increase significantly. As part of the defence against hybrid activity, it is to be expected that these special units will be increasingly involved in policing tasks. The basic reason for this is that in the initial phase of a possible hybrid attack, the police will be the first response force²⁵ whose support and reinforcement will be essential. These forces must also be able to play an effective role in preparing society.

Let us look at some examples of the use of special operations capabilities.

In 2023, the Metropolitan Police called in the Special Air Service (SAS) for counterterrorism operations after firearms officers refused to serve in protest because a colleague who shot an unarmed civilian was accused of murder. In response to the request, SAS soldiers were put on standby to be deployed against suspected terrorists if necessary.²⁶

This is not the first time in the history of the SAS that the police have been reinforced. Perhaps their most famous assignment to date was Operation Nimrod on 5 May 1980 when they dealt with a hostage situation at the Iranian Embassy in London. On that occasion they took control of the operation and carried out the hostage rescue at the request of the London Metropolitan Police.²⁷

Operation Temperer which was created in 2015 is another example of military support to police from Great Britain. This is a joint contingency operation to provide military support to the police in extreme national emergency circumstances, such as surge support for a major domestic terrorist attack or threat.²⁸

The ISAF SOF in Afghanistan can also be a good example of how to support the police. Under the ISAF SOF command, soldiers from 26 countries have carried out military assistance missions and built, trained and mentored various special police units attached to the Afghan police.²⁹

The U.S. Special Operations Forces have long been active participants in the Global Health Engagement Initiatives. Under this programme, the U.S. SOF provides health assistance to civilians in areas where health care is severely challenged. Soldiers from the 3rd Special Forces Regiment have provided care to more than 400 civilians in Burkina Faso, and in 2017, soldiers from several countries supported Niger as part of Exercise Flintlock.

In 2011, a veterinary officer provided assistance in Mali, where he worked with a local Tuareg veterinarian to identify and treat surra, a parasitic disease of economic importance

²³ TUNYOGI-FÖLDI 2007.

²⁴ TAMÁSI 2013: 70.

²⁵ CAVES et al. 2021.

²⁶ DODD-MOHDIN 2023.

²⁷ SOF News 2023.

²⁸ Home Office News Team 2024.

²⁹ SMETHURST 2013.

that affects camel herds living in the border region of Algeria, Niger and Mauritania. The Mauritanian Government has supported the veterinarian with a civilian military support element to continue the work against surra. Building on this success, the 10th Special Forces (Airborne) Group sent its Special Forces medical sergeants to a local veterinary training hospital for rotation. In 2013, other Special Forces groups also participated in the exercise, which included a training module on camel handling to assist groups working with Central African countries where camels are used for patrols (e.g. Chad Special Forces – Border Patrol).³⁰

The U.S. Air Force Special Operations Capability actively supported the emergency response to Hurricane Katrina, with fifteen HH-60G Pave Hawk and 347th RQW (Moody AFB, Ga.) and 16th Special Operations Wing (Hurlburt Field, Fla.) crews on alert. In the first 24 hours of operations, 347th RQW rescue crews rescued 211 people, including children and pregnant women.³¹ Although not all of these examples focus specifically on the development of national resilience, they can be used to draw conclusions about how the role of the armed forces is changing and how special operations capability can be used to build national resilience.

However, there is a problem set which can undermine the effective use of the military. This problem set is the slow and bureaucratic political and military decision-making system. We need to make this system more flexible and faster, which requires a rethinking of the legal framework. It is useless to have military capabilities that can be deployed immediately if the decision to use them takes days or weeks.³² In Hungary, the necessary changes are already underway, changing both the legal framework and the defence administration. This was particularly important in the field of defence management because it was necessary to move from the previous monolithic organisation focusing on military tasks to a complex system that, in addition to military and defence tasks, now includes several areas of civilian crisis management.³³ The legislative changes clarify the framework for cooperation between the military, law enforcement, disaster management and civil protection, and civilian (in this sense, all of society) cooperation.

The legal framework governing the use of military capability

The basic task of the Hungarian Defence Forces is defined in Article 45 of the Fundamental Law of Hungary, which states:

“Hungary’s armed forces shall be the Hungarian Defence Forces. The core duties of the Hungarian Defence Forces shall be the military defence of the independence, territorial integrity and borders of Hungary and the performance of collective defence and peacekeeping tasks arising from international treaties, as well as carrying out humanitarian activities in accordance with the rules of international law.”³⁴

³⁰ KINKEAD 2024.

³¹ U.S. Air Force 2005.

³² DRENT et al. 2015.

³³ KESZELY 2019.

³⁴ The Fundamental Law of Hungary 2011.

The wording clearly defines the management of military threats as the core task of the Defence Forces. The detailed rules concerning the Hungarian Defence Forces are contained in Act CXL of 2021. Article 1 paragraph 1 of this law states: “Defence is a national matter.”³⁵ According to paragraph 2 of the same article:

“In maintaining and developing its national defence and allied military capabilities, Hungary relies on its own strength, including the resources of its national economy, the preparedness and determination of the Hungarian Defence Forces (hereinafter referred to as Defence Forces), the cooperation of law enforcement agencies, national security services and other bodies, the patriotic commitment and sacrifice of its citizens in defence of the homeland, and the cooperation and assistance of allied states and their armed forces.”³⁶

This wording is further reinforced in paragraph 3, which reads:

“All natural persons residing in Hungary and legal entities established under the Act shall participate in the preparation for and the performance of national defence tasks within the framework defined by this Act by providing services, and citizens shall also participate by performing personal service.”³⁷

The wording of these two paragraphs already gives us the opportunity to approach the issue of defence of the country, from a whole-of-government, whole-of-society perspective.

The fundamental law also identifies the cases of state of emergencies and their rules. Until the ninth amendment to the Fundamental Law, six different states of emergence were designated: state of exception, state of emergency, pre-emptive defence situation, terror alert, unexpected attack and emergency.

The Ninth Amendment to the Fundamental Law has significantly helped to make the simplification of the legislation of states of emergency more transparent and flexible. As part of this, the amendment has defined three states of emergency: state of war, state of exception and state of emergency. It also introduces the possibility of responding to threats that cannot be achieved by specific armed action as a new element. These striking changes naturally affect the performance of tasks that can be carried out under normal law and have a significant impact on the Hungarian Defence Forces. Unexpected attacks, terror alert and pre-emptive defence situations, which fall outside of NATO's collective defence obligations, have been removed from the scope of the special legal order. They are thus defined as tasks to be performed under the normal legal order. It also removes the possibility of participation in disaster management, so that all tasks that go beyond the basic tasks of the Hungarian Defence Forces as laid down in the Fundamental Law must be regulated by a separate cardinal law. The Ninth Amendment thus allows, on the one hand, for a degree of gradualism to be introduced into the system and, on the other hand, for the defence, law enforcement, national security and the wider public administration to strengthen the cooperation necessary to carry out their tasks.³⁸

The development and coordination of this cooperation is to be facilitated by Act XCIII of 2021 which regulates coordinated defence and security activities (CDS).³⁹ It is intended

³⁵ Act CXL of 2021.

³⁶ Act CXL of 2021: Article 1 para. 2.

³⁷ Act CXL of 2021: Article 1 para. 3.

³⁸ FARKAS–KELEMEN 2023.

³⁹ Act XCIII of 2021 on the Coordination of Defence and Security Activities (CDS).

to be multi-sectoral while at the same time providing for the possibility of intervention at the level of the whole government without imposing the restrictions possible under specific legislation and thus providing a broader mandate than sectoral rules.

The background to the regulation is clearly the experience of the 2015 European terror wave, the crisis caused by mass uncontrolled migration and the subsequent management of the Covid pandemic. These experiences also made it necessary to create the provision according to which the Government may order the Hungarian Defence Forces to participate in the related police tasks in the context of coordinated protection measures. This provision essentially considers the capabilities of the Defence Forces in the performance of non-military tasks in the traditional sense, because the Defence Forces have the capabilities of a high degree of autonomy, a hierarchical organisational structure, a mature command and control system, reliable and sustainable logistical support and personnel that can be mobilised easily and quickly.⁴⁰ As required by the CDS, such tasks must be enshrined in law. Act CXL of 2021 on the Hungarian Defence Forces states the following:

“Article 59 (1) The Defence Forces shall exercise the following functions with the right to use weapons: [...]

(1) contributing to defence and crisis management tasks under the CDS, in particular addressing threats to public order and public security, and coordinated defence activities [...]

(2) The Defence Forces shall perform the following tasks without the right to use weapons: [...]

h) the execution of supporting tasks under the CDS with military expertise and special equipment.”⁴¹

In accordance with the provisions of the CDS, the regulation of the health crisis is governed by Act CLIV of 1997, as amended several times, Chapter XIV of which regulates the health crisis and health emergency response, and paragraph 3 of Article 229 of which defines the tasks of the Hungarian Defence Forces.⁴²

It is important to mention that the renewal of the defence administration in 2014, the 2020 amendment of the Defence Act concerning defence administration, or Government Decree 427/2022 (X. 28.), which formulated the territorial and local rules of defence and security administration and defined specific tasks for territorial defence committees and local defence committees,⁴³ were also important steps in the transformation of the legislative ecosystem. The concept of defence administration is described in detail in Government Resolution 1061/2014 (II. 18.). Based on these:

“Defence administration is a system of tasks and organisations that is part of the public administration, which is an executive activity carried out by the public administration organisation established for the implementation of the defence tasks of the state and designated for this purpose; it includes preparation for states of emergency, as well as all state activities aimed at planning, organising and implementing the tasks of defence, civil

⁴⁰ KÁDÁR 2023.

⁴¹ Act CXL of 2021.

⁴² Act CLIV of 1997.

⁴³ Government Decree 427/2022 (X. 28.).

defence, disaster management, defence economy and public supply in these periods and situations.”⁴⁴

The same government resolution also provided for the development of national defence action plans, which thus form a unified system for the implementation of national defence tasks and military tasks in crisis management.

Even though the restructuring of the regulatory system – a kind of simplification – has made it more effective in building national resilience, there are still obstacles to overcome that are essential to building an effective system.

The change in the defence administration can certainly be a catalyst for the necessary changes supported by the Fundamental Law and Act CXL of 2021. At the same time, the shortcomings of the lower provisions are a problem.

One problem is the lack of regulation of the use of arms. Despite the fact that Act CXL of 2021 contains the basis for this, there is no comprehensive set of rules of engagement which can then be further adapted to the situation. Cooperation with the police may also be hampered by the fact that there is currently no common set of procedures – except perhaps for military police capability – that would make joint service tasks seamless. Since such tasks cannot be integrated into day-to-day training, they must be provided to participating personnel in the context of pre-deployment training. A good example of this was the Temporary Training Task Force in 2015, which prepared soldiers for border service.

A similar problem may arise with the integration of health specialists into the healthcare system, especially during the training and preparation phase, as this raises ethical as well as legal questions.

Overall, it can be concluded that recent legislative changes, even with their shortcomings, provide an adequate basis for the effective use of military capabilities in a coordinated, whole-of-government approach. At the same time, there is a need for a continuous review of the legal framework and a renewal of the lower level of regulation because, as Petruska et al. have noted, the regulation of states of emergency has common features, but there is no one-size-fits-all solution in this respect and therefore no one-size-fits-all solution for all times.⁴⁵

The Hungarian Special Operations capability

In Hungary, the development of a special operations capability began in the early 2000s, when an ad hoc working group at the General Staff Operational Directorate started to prepare the development of the capability. The process accelerated in 2005 when the Special Operations Battalion was born at the base of the 34th Bercsényi László Reconnaissance Battalion.⁴⁶ The amendment of the military organisation’s founding document added the “execution of special operations”⁴⁷ to its scope of activities, which allowed for

⁴⁴ Government Resolution 1061/2014 (II. 18.).

⁴⁵ PETRUSKA et al. 2023.

⁴⁶ SÁNDOR 2024.

⁴⁷ Resolution 22/2005 (HK 7) of the Ministry of Defence.

a change in the mission statement. Subsequently, a further amendment was made to the founding document, detailing the specific tasks that characterise the operation of such an organisation. The new tasks include the three basic tasks such as special reconnaissance, direct actions and military assistance. The founding act also listed additional tasks such as the execution of military tasks in the fight against terrorism, search and rescue and combat search and rescue. A framework task was added to deal with special events requiring the unforeseen use of military force.⁴⁸

The characteristics of special operations justify the way in which the military organisation is set up, the specific structure and equipment, as well as the selection, training and preparation of personnel. The characteristics of operations are set out in the Ált/49 Hungarian Defence Forces Special Operations Doctrine, which includes, inter alia:

- a) “Special operations are focused on complex, politically and militarily high-profile, high-risk tasks (high-value, high-pay off targeting). Special operations are activities characterised by the combined or separate effects of military, diplomatic, economic or psychological effects.
- b) By its very nature, it often requires political, military and national/alliance-level agreement, oversight and support. It requires detailed planning and close cooperation with other commands, services, law enforcement and governmental, state, military and possibly non-governmental organisations of high security importance. [...]
- f) It is often used when the use of conventional forces is not possible, justified or feasible for political or military reasons. [...]
- h) They usually carry out their tasks in isolation from the designated supporting element and, in most cases, from their own troops, requiring covert liaison, adequate means of infiltration and exfiltration, to and return from hostile, prohibited, or politically and militarily sensitive areas.”⁴⁹

The special operations team is made up of soldiers specially trained according to the mission statement, who are also deployed in a structure that is unique, and different from the traditional one. Their weapons, equipment and technical means are lightweight and can be deployed quickly, even by air. Their operations are basically planned at the Joint Force level and are carried out by the teams also at this level. Since one of their basic means of deployment is air transport, which requires cooperation with the air force, joint action is in their blood. Cooperation with partner forces, be they police, intelligence, or partner forces in an international environment, local government representatives, is also a capability of the military organisation at the team level, as has been demonstrated in Afghanistan.

The unit itself and its groups can carry out operational tasks in complete isolation, autonomously and on a sustained basis.

Special operations subunits usually have six teams, of which one team is qualified for high altitude parachute jump, two teams for static line parachute jump, two teams for vehicle mobility operations, and one team for combat diving. The ground movement of the

⁴⁸ Resolution 128/1997 of the Ministry of Defence.

⁴⁹ Ált/49 Hungarian Defence Forces Special Operations Doctrine: 1–5.

group is usually executed by three off-road vehicles, but the military organisation also has armoured vehicles.

The special operations team usually consists of 12 people, commanded by a captain, trained in military decision-making. This means that he can solve complex problems and organise, plan and lead the activities of a subunit (400 to 800 people) up to battalion level.

The assistant team leader is a Warrant Officer and has similar professional qualifications (the Basic Special Operations Course 18A and 180A are practically one course) as the Team Leader. The team NCO is basically responsible for the training and day-to-day activities of the team. The intelligence NCO is responsible for the acquisition and dissemination of reconnaissance information, preparing area assessments, etc., is trained in the handling of reconnaissance technical tools (UAV), equipment. These four people form the senior staff of the team.

It becomes clear from the above that the staff element of a Special Operations Team is capable of planning, organising and conducting complex operations, including long-range patrols as well as high-risk detention operations. In addition, it can plan, organise and execute training missions, as well as conduct field reconnaissance and data collection that supports the higher HQ's decision-making.

The eight other members of the group are as follows. Two weapons specialists, who are not only responsible for the team's weaponry, but are also familiar with the handling of the most common infantry weapons in the world. In the event of deployment, they are responsible for selecting and securing the team's deployment site. The two engineer specialists are essentially responsible for the dual role of demolitions (mainly in the execution of tasks involving the use of explosives) and construction, whether it be a firing position, a bunker or a building. Two medical specialists who have the longest training in the team. Their training makes them professional trauma care providers. The two communication specialists are basically responsible for the team's communication, which includes the management of the available technical equipment and the ability to plan and organise the communication architecture, be it voice and/or data.

As described above, the team has a multi-purpose application in building national resilience. Whether it be training civilians in military, defence or emergency response, technical work to support defence or even day-to-day tasks, medical reinforcement with a particular focus on trauma care in areas where civilian medical assistance is not available, or the development and operation of a communications and information system that can temporarily replace civilian service with military capabilities.

Unfortunately, the equipment, technical tactics and procedures of the teams are highly classified and therefore it is not possible to describe the possible use of the teams in full depth in this paper. The team can work as a single unit or split up to cover a larger area with two sections of six.⁵⁰

All in all, the flexible special operations capability, which is essentially based on small subunits, can react quickly and be deployed immediately. Their training and readiness enable them to successfully conduct a wide spectrum of operations, in this case in support

⁵⁰ SoF 2020.

of national resilience, in highly dynamic to changing environments.⁵¹ The technical tools used by teams and special operations operators such as advanced communication systems, data collection, processing, and rapid decision-making capabilities can also support the integrated security of civilian sectors.⁵² Their knowledge of unconventional warfare and their experience in the theatre of war in this regard also make them well suited to support the development and operation of a national resilience capability. The above shows that the Hungarian special operations capability can effectively support the development and operation of a national resilience capability.

Possible tasks for special operations force in support of national resistance

To answer this question, it is worth first identifying the areas where special forces can be effective. Looking at the seven NATO core requirements, four broad areas can be identified: the first is support to law enforcement and national security services, the second is support to training, education and preparation of elements of the national resilience system, the third is support to civilian communication systems and the fourth is support to the healthcare system, particularly in the event of mass casualty incidents.

Law enforcement agencies, national security services

From a law-and-order perspective, public security and the maintenance of public order are not only the protection of the functioning of the state, but also the protection of the state as a system of tasks. This is essentially the responsibility of the police and the national security services, although the capabilities of these organisations can be overstretched in hybrid circumstances. The ability to deal with tasks requiring a larger force in several places at the same time can be a major challenge for law enforcement organisations. In addition, effective use of these organisations has an impact on citizens' perception of security and, through this, on the perception of government and governance.

One good example of this was the illegal migration crisis of 2015, which required the use of military force. The Special Operations Capability, as the Hungarian Defence Forces' Rapid Reaction Interim Contingency Force, was in the operation area within 24 hours of the alert. Thereafter, it basically provided support to the police in areas where there were insufficient police presence, or the necessary reinforcements had not yet arrived. The same unit carried out – in less than 24 hours – the temporary technical closure of the 41 km border section, thus completing the southern border closure.⁵³ For this task, the unit was reinforced with conventional military capabilities deployed in the area. In addition,

⁵¹ DOMINIAK–BASSETTE 2021.

⁵² REZNIKOVA 2022.

⁵³ Mandiner 2015.

the Special Operations Forces personnel on the ground were involved in the “entry” of migrants, screening and information gathering.

Another example is the counterterrorism exercise carried out in Szolnok in 2016. The reason for the exercise was to test the ability of the two organisations to cooperate in a complex situation, as a further step in the already existing teamwork that has been in place between the two organisations for several years. The exercise was set up on the basis of the hybrid threat approach, whereby in the event of a real hybrid attack, terrorist acts are likely to be executed in several locations at the same time or near in the same time, which would “overload” the specialised capabilities of the Counterterrorism Centre, so it is logical that a military organisation with similar training, equipment and professional experience should be involved as a reinforcement.

Support for training, education and preparation of the elements of the national resilience system

One of the core tasks of the Special Operations Forces is military assistance and unconventional warfare. Both tasks involve the training, preparation and execution of an operation by partner forces. During their training, special operations soldiers learn the basic methods of “adult education”, so to speak, which enable them to transfer knowledge appropriately. They can provide not only training, which is essentially practical, but also education, which is still carried out by the personnel of the military organisation today. Training is not only about the transfer of knowledge, as the training carried out by special operations soldiers can also provide psychological and moral support to the personnel carrying out the tasks of national resistance.

Necessary support for civilian communication systems

The Special Operations Unit is currently equipped with the most advanced information technology systems currently available. The system is based on world class radios, which are capable of opened and secured voice and data communications. The devices are, of course, satellite-capable, which, with the necessary accessories, can use civilian satellites. In addition, the teams also have a mobile phone system capable of using combat applications. Several different communication devices are available for the Special Operations Team. Using a team or a split team method, it can provide simultaneous communications in several areas where civilian services may not be available.

Supporting the healthcare system, especially in the event of mass casualty care

The teams’ medical specialists undergo a rigorous medical training before they are deployed. The concrete implementation of their training is laid down in Decree 2/2014 (II. 28.) of the Ministry of Defence, which defines the categories of training level and the

possibilities of intervention of the trained persons. Based on these, the medical specialists of the teams must have a minimum qualification of Operational Medical Specialist. An operational medical specialist means a “soldier without civilian medical qualification who, through specialised medical training in accordance with this Decree, is qualified in Hungary and abroad to recognise various injuries, illnesses, to treat combat casualties, to perform life-saving tasks and to provide general medical care as defined in Annex 3, in the course of military activities in peacekeeping operations and in theatre of operations and for other reasons, in Hungary and abroad”.⁵⁴

The focus of the training is on trauma care, which stems from the basic operational requirements. At the same time, trained personnel can recognise and treat various diseases as necessary. This stems from the requirement for teams to carry out sustained operational tasks in essentially isolated locations where adequate medical care is not available. Their equipment is also assembled in accordance with this requirement. Their capabilities and activities are, without being exhaustive, as follows:

- to perform activities specified in the training requirements independently or in cooperation with others in the course of military duties
- to cooperate with the medical corps and partner organisations, to stabilise and monitor the condition of persons who have suffered acute health damage during direct involvement in military operations, and report on the patient to the person performing the evacuation of the wounded
- adapt the flow and quality of care to the tactical situation
- perform life-saving interventions according to their abilities
- start/carry out primary interventions
- contribute to mass casualty care
- provide instrument-based airway protection in emergencies
- perform wound care according to their level of ability
- act as the first responder unit in a mass casualty incident
- classify the casualties until the arrival of the scene commander
- set up a collection point for the wounded
- provide a peripheral vein
- administer intravenous medication and infusion therapy according to their skills and abilities
- create the conditions for on-site childbirth guidance, prepare the birth attendant for the birth
- if necessary, deliver the baby on the spot
- carry out the first care of a newborn baby
- provide basic veterinary care for working dogs⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Decree 2/2014 (II. 28.) of the Ministry of Defence.

⁵⁵ Decree 2/2014 (II. 28.) of the Ministry of Defence.

As the above list shows, the health specialists in the teams can effectively support the national resistance system and can provide the necessary support if the health response system is “overloaded”. The soldiers have proven their readiness not only in exercises but also in real life.

The risks of using special operations forces in building national resilience

There are risks to be considered when using special operations teams in support of national resilience building. One of these risks is the overloading of the special operations capability. In an armed conflict against a peer, near-peer adversary, special operations teams may have a particularly important role to play in neutralising A2AD⁵⁶ systems, which are essentially focused on special reconnaissance and direct operations.⁵⁷ This requires teams to be highly trained and equipped with the necessary equipment. The development of national resilience and the implementation of and preparations for the above-mentioned mission structure may result in overstressing the limited available teams.

The second risk is that in the absence of a legal framework, during training, preparation or deployment, the implementing soldiers may overstep boundaries that undermine the success of the overall operation. In training and civil emergency tasks this is particularly the case for medical specialists. The execution of an intervention for which there is no legal authority, or the possible occurrence of a complication that can be attributed to the possible failure of the medical specialist without an appropriate legal framework, can undermine the credibility of the capability, the confidence of civil society in the capability and the overall success of the operation. The same problem arises when supporting the police, since without proper rules of engagement, the use of force or the use of firearms becomes questionable. It is important to understand that soldiers and police officers may only have tenths of a second to decide, while their investigation can take months. Without proper regulation, this trend will result in either a lack of courage or hesitation on the part of the officers to make decisions. This can undermine joint action and can pose a problem during the execution of operations.

The third and perhaps the most serious risk is the involvement of special forces in tasks that can be carried out by conventional forces. Unfortunately, I have personally experienced the involvement of special operations teams in tasks that could have been carried out by conventional forces. A good example is the management of the 2015 migration wave. More than once during crisis management tasks, soldiers had to perform simple patrol duties instead of focusing on night deep interdiction tasks where they could have put pressure on the smuggling networks.

⁵⁶ Anti-Access Area Denial.

⁵⁷ BROWN 2022.

Summary

In conclusion, the conditions for building national resilience are basically in place. The necessary legislative reform has started, and the legislative changes made so far provide an appropriate framework for building resilience.

The military capabilities are basically available, but the change in the use of military force, which occurs at the same time as the development of the capabilities of the armed forces, has a fundamental impact on the integration of the capabilities of the armed forces into the development of national resilience.

Conventional forces can still provide the “mass” for support tasks, but any such activity will hinder the possibilities for training and preparation, which may have a negative impact on the primary task of conventional forces to defend the country with combat operations.

The dichotomy in the tasks of the Special Operations Forces can also be an obstacle to the involvement of the Special Operations Forces. At the same time, it is important to underline that the tasks of the Special Operations Forces in support of the national contingency capability are also reflected at the level of the basic mission, so that their execution does not overburden the capability. The structure, training and experience of the available capability clearly support the conclusion that the Special Operations Forces are capable of effectively supporting the development, preparation and operation of national resilience.

To build national resilience, the command-and-control system of the special operations capability and the structure of the SOF organisation itself need to be rethought. The current system is a temporary solution to existing professional and workforce shortfalls, but it is a permanent impediment to the optimal management of the special operations forces. Further progress is needed to reform the education, training and exercise system. The system needs to be much better coordinated with the police counterterrorism centre, the local police, the first responders, and finally with the representatives of defence administration which is the basis for joint action.

The Special Operations Capability should open to both conventional forces and civil society. In this regard, the special infantry training should be relaunched, which specifically targeted the reserve system – through civil society – and which was unspokenly the basis for a reserve Special Operations Capability.

All in all, the changes that have been made are very supportive of the involvement of special forces in building national resilience, but there is still much work to be done to build a successful and effective capability. Unfortunately, the current security situation is not in our favour, so we must make every effort to accelerate progress.

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