

Relevant Issues and Challenges Facing the Defence Policy of the Republic of Bulgaria

Lecture delivered by Mr. Anu Angelov, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria, at the opening of academic year 2011/2012 at G. S. Rakovski National Defence Academy
Sofia, 1 September, 2011

Dear Generals, Admirals and Officers,

Dear Cadets, Students and College Men,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to welcome you on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the jubilee academic year 2011-2012 and to introduce you to the relevant issues and challenges facing the defence policy pursued by the European-oriented Government of the Republic of Bulgaria since it took office in July 2009.

At last year's opening ceremony, I gave an overview of the key priorities of the Ministry of Defence resulting from the Government's programme. Where do we stand now, a year later?

Today the majority at the National Assembly, the Government and the leadership of the MoD have a clear, well-grounded, and thus, realistic strategic vision not only with regard to defence policy but also in the field of national security.

All branches of the authority in Bulgaria have available to them the National Security Strategy, the National Defence Strategy, the White Paper on Defence and Armed Forces and the Defence Policy Guidance 2011-2014, which have brought the national concept base in line with NATO's new strategic concept and the key principles of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU.

We have updated the laws and regulations constituting the legislative framework for the reforms introduced, and have taken steps to counter corruption in all its forms. We will finalise drawing up the laws and regulations as early as this

year with the law on the Reserve of the Armed Forces and the Law on Military Intelligence.

As a result of the decisions made and the actions taken by the Government and the leadership of the MoD in 2010, the defence system was stabilized and the accumulated imbalance between the financial resources allocated and the huge liabilities undertaken by the previous government towards Bulgarian and foreign contractors and suppliers was surmounted to a significant extent.

We have taken steps aimed at completing the process of integration and consolidation of the administrative structures of the MoD and at elimination of possibilities of duplication and overlap of functions. Today the MoD, having reduced the staff of its administration by nearly 50 % (from 1,432 in 2009 to 794 as of 1 July 2011), is not only successfully performing its tasks, but also being even more efficient than before. We can say that the reform in the administration, entailing a substantial number of staff redundancies, has been carried out successfully. This allows us to relocate financial resources thus saved this year and the coming two years mainly towards increasing the share of the capital expenditures and towards combat training, as the payroll will be reduced. I believe that by the end of the mandate, one year ahead of time, we will be able to achieve resources distribution at a ratio of 60-25-15, as set out as a goal for 2014 in the White Paper. In this way we will be creating conditions conducive to the gradual evolving of the Bulgarian Armed Forces over the years from 2013 on.

For the first time in many years the process of planning, programming, budgeting and implementation of the policies and programmes has been done on the basis of specifically defined required defence capabilities, where a conceptual strategic framework and clearly defined national interests and national level of ambition in the field of defence are available.

The Doctrine on the Employment of the Armed Forces is being elaborated at the moment, one of the main accents therein being the Doctrine of the Training and Use of the Battalion Battle Groups of the Land Forces. The rest of the doctrinal and conceptual documents will be elaborated concurrently. We are envisaging

amending the Manual of the Armed Forces and the combat manuals. Of great importance to such activities is the contribution of the scientific potential and of the lecturers from the Defence Academy and it is my firm belief that the Defence Staff will use this potential to a 100%.

A short-term task is the improvement of the institution capacity. We need to eliminate the delays in procedures aimed at the supply of goods and services, to remove omissions in the preparation of the documentation for the procedures. The mechanism for disposal of surplus real estates and materiel needs to be substantially improved, which in turn will lead to adding to the revenues of the budget. To this end, we will be looking for innovative approaches within the purview of the law in order to improve internal ministerial procedures and documentation. We will be enhancing the administrative capacity through training civilian personnel so that they can acquire and upgrade their qualifications and degree of education. This is where the Defence Academy will play a role by preparing a system of courses allowing for short qualification and retraining courses to be taken by each newly appointed civilian employee taken on by the administration.

Since 1 July 2011, we have introduced a new command structure at the operational level. By the end of 2012 we are planning to achieve full operational readiness.

At the same time, the Joint Force Command (JFC) and the three services of the Armed Forces have acquired the status of legal entities which are second-level budget spenders. This status provides the Commanders with new opportunities to make quicker and more effective decisions with regard to issues related to provisioning for daily military life and combat training. In addition, those structures are given new responsibilities regarding administration of real estates, management of supplies and repair works, maintenance of the equipment and facilities available, disposal of surplus property.

All this requires building specific expertise in the Armed Forces, as well as additional knowledge to be acquired by the commanders in the areas of law,

economics, logistics, etc. This is another venue where the Defence Academy will play a leading role.

The main challenge facing the defence policy by the end of the term of office of this Government, is restructuring the combat, logistics and support units, i.e., the tactical units of the Bulgarian Army. The objective set out in the white Paper and the plan for the Development of the Armed Forces is to have a single set of forces under a single command, prepared to the same degree for all three logically integrated missions: defence, international peace and security support, and contribution to national security in peace time.

Modern warfare does not rely on mass armies. Tasks are concentrated in individual formations. And it is these formations that need to conduct effective training. Modern methods for training through joint trainings and exercises within separate combat or tactical task forces need to be introduced. In order to achieve synergy and enhance the effectiveness of the exercises, it will be necessary to involve other institutions and organizations from the national security system. To this effect, the Army needs a new type of commanders who are highly initiative, able to foresee the development of the situation, capable of making timely, well-grounded decisions and of implementing them. Where else could they acquire such qualities if not at the Defence Academy, building upon the education received at the National Military University. This is a direction that should be included in the new syllabi and curricula which are to be implemented in academic year 2012 – 2013.

A huge challenge is presented by the modernization of the Armed Forces under the conditions of an economic crisis. We have adopted an Investment Plan-Programme of the MoD up to 2020. It provides for investment projects whose implementation may be realized with a high degree of probability from the perspective of resources available, providing that 1.5% of the GDP is allocated on an average annual basis for the defence budget, as endorsed by the National Assembly through adopting the White Paper. I will mention the three major projects included in the plan, which will be most resource-consuming: (1)

improving mobility, independence and level of protection and safety of the formations of the land Forces and building a battalion battle group within the composition of a mechanized brigade; (2) bringing the newly acquired ships and helicopters into full operational readiness and modernization and upgrade of the frigates Class E-71; (3) acquisition of a new type of main combat aircraft and provision of integrated logistic support therefor. We will do our best to distribute the resources allocated for modernization over the next 10 years in such a way that we get a balanced development of the services of the armed forces and the military branches.

It is our understanding that it is not sufficient to simply buy new helicopters, new airplanes, new vehicles and other systems of armaments and equipment. The real challenge in the field of modernization is the life cycle management of the systems and combat platforms – a process that should be defined in principle in line with the Defence Acquisition Strategy. Therefore, we have been elaborating the investment projects in such a way that they account not only for the purchasing of armament and combat equipment systems, but also the operation and maintenance thereof. When taking a resource-related decision of any magnitude, we are guided by the key principle of having priced options available to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the coming years the defence policy will continue to be oriented towards further development of the national defence system as a reliable and predictable ally of NATO and within the EU.

Within the framework of NATO and the European Union, we support and will actively participate both in the building of common defence systems, such as NATO's missile defence in Europe, the Strategic Deployment System, the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system, the cyber defence system. We will use options for multinational solutions with regard to the acquisition of armaments and equipment, maintenance, repairs and overhaul, and personnel training. We will try to make use of NATO's concept of smart defence, as well as the pooling and sharing initiative of the EU. The essence of this is to achieve through common

efforts more capabilities with less resources. A good example of this type of cooperation is the Agreement on Air Policing signed last year with Greece. We prepare similar agreements with Romania and Turkey. There are possible future decisions on joint crew training and joint servicing the fighter aircraft which are on duty, on expanding the exchange of information in the sphere maritime security, joint exercises and training, on optimizing the logistic support in cases of joint participation in operations etc.

The international cooperation plays a key role in the preparation and participation in operations as well. We develop our cooperation with the NATO and EU Allies, where goal is to achieve interoperability, improve the combat capabilities and save resources. We build trust with neighbours and partners through the international cooperation. There are numerous examples illustrating the results of this cooperation. Only a few days ago, we successfully conducted a joint exercise with the participation of the Republic of Serbia at Shabla training range. Our strategic cooperation with the USA is of exceptional importance for the development of capabilities and for our participation in missions and operations. With the American assistance, we implemented a number of priorities like building a battalion combat group whose preparation and certification is planned for the end of 2012. Achieving full operational readiness of the battalion combat group able to equally effectively fulfil the three missions of the armed forces is a thorough test of our capacity to build a combat ready army.

The participation in operations and missions is of substantial importance for the implementation of our national interest. At present, the Bulgarian military contingents and servicemen successfully fulfil their tasks in the operations in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, in the EU monitoring mission in Georgia, and in the operations aimed at combating piracy in the territorial waters of Somalia.

We completed the development of a strategy for our participation in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan. Until the end of the current year, we will preserve our participation in the form in which it is at present. The strategy will include both

possible changes in the nature of our participation there, and stage-by-stage withdrawal of our contingents in the process of handing over the responsibility for the country's security to the Afghan forces depending on the achieved progress. We will coordinate this strategy with our NATO allies and with partners, and in October-November it will be introduced for approval to the Council of Ministers and to the National Assembly. We recognize as a mistake the lack so far of such a strategy for every single operation in which the Bulgarian armed forces take part. A strategy of this type has to be presented to the public even before a Bulgarian contingent is sent to participate in an operation abroad. We will follow this principle as political guidance.

The overall provision of our participation in NATO and EU operations will continue to be our imperative task. Practically, we are already introducing the principle of sending regular staff units to participate in missions, and not combined formations the way we did so far. We also changed the principle of establishing, from medical point of view, the servicemen's fitness for participation in missions and operations. Now fit for military service means fit for operations as well.

These approaches require bringing to a higher level the role of the commander in the operation. He has to possess awareness of the military-strategic environment, the risks and the threats. He has to be trained to comprehend the situation, to speak English, to lead and protect his subordinates. All this will let him successfully fulfil his tasks in the context of ever increasing delegation of responsibilities at the tactical levels.

In compliance with the Plan for the development of the armed forces until the end of the current as well as in the following year, we have to seriously work on the planed activities at tactical level, focused solely on capabilities – exemption from capabilities which are no longer necessary, preservation and development of the existing necessary ones, and establishing conditions for gradual and evolutionary building of new capabilities.

Our categorical intention is to redirect the financial resources released in the course of the transformation toward training, combat preparation, maintenance of

armaments and equipment, and last but not least - toward improving the infrastructure of the army areas as well as towards stimulating the personnel.

People are the most valuable defence recourse and a key component of the capabilities. Focusing on the goals in financial terms – stabilization of the budget, decrease in the inherited excessive obligations to foreign and Bulgarian companies reflect, to a certain extent, the slowdown in the development of the social gains.

We are fully aware of the importance of the good living standards of work, education, sports, training, adequate rest and recreation as a motivation factor for men and women in uniform. Heading in this direction, we improved the compensation mechanisms for hard labour conditions, remoteness, and special tasks. We are deliberating on a system for stimulation aimed at encouraging high achievements.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since Defence Staff College G.S. Rakovski is an institution and a leader of our military-educational system, it concentrates and assembles both the traditions of the Bulgarian military warfare and the new modern scientific methods and practices. The college may be an example of transformation and adaptation to the new realities.

The prestige and authority of the Defence Staff College substantially grow on, and today the college attracts wider and wider circle of candidates keen on acquiring new knowledge, skills and experience both in military and civilian specialties. The prestige the institution has earned is a challenge as well – it has to constantly be maintained and enhanced. For this reason, the Force Structure Review exerts its transformation effect on the Bulgarian military education. Today more than ever, it is necessary for it to meet the growing requirements for the personnel preparation of a NATO and EU member country's modern army.

An example in this respect is the newly built Emergency Situations Training Centre. It unites the efforts on training employees of different agencies and organizations in the country i.e. experts engaged with activities related to crisis management and emergency situations. Our ambitions are not limited to the above

mentioned facts. On the basis of our experience so far, making maximal use of the opportunities offered by the military-educational institutions, of Charalitsa National Military Educational Complex, and the opportunities provided by other agencies, we develop a concept on building a NATO Centre of Excellence on Crisis management and assistance in cases of disasters. It will provide expertise and experience in favour of the Alliance. Parallel to this, it will produce an indisputable transformation effect with respect to the military-educational system, and will provide for the participation of the Defence Staff College in the development and application of the most up-to-date tendencies in the military theory and practice.

In the academic 2012-2013 year, the officer candidates, non-commissioned officers (Sergeant-Majors) and privates (sailors) will have the right to apply for and receive regular education at the military schools of higher education. They are entitled to acquire an educational-qualification degree in the professional sphere “Military science” (three years), or qualifications in military warfare (up to 1,5 years) for persons who have already completed their higher education. Besides, they will not be dismissed from the position they occupy. Thus the commanders have the opportunity to provide for the career development of servicemen possessing proved leadership qualities and experience in operations. Apart from this, the profession “officer” will be examined in detail in September by a specialized commission to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science with the goal to include it in the List of regulated professions. With respect to the academic staff and lecturers, starting from 2012, the Defence Staff College and the military schools of higher education will be reorganized in compliance with new job descriptions.

The new emphases in the development of the system for acquisition of military education and gaining higher qualifications will be directed towards:

1. Provision of a closer relation of the military education to the contemporary realities and practices in the sphere of security and defence;
2. Confirming the leadership model of education;

3. Offering educational services in English and French, thus starting from the academic year 2012-2013, separate modules of the specialty “Strategic management of defence and the armed forces”, the “Strategic Course” and the “Defence management” course will be conducted in English.

4. Positioning the military education in a competition environment both with respect to civilian education in our country, and in international perspective by participation in the national and international scientific exchange, opening new prospects and attractive specialties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You face the demanding task to work in a security environment which is difficult to predict and is characterized by new challenges. Develop as professionals who look for and find new effective solutions to the arising problems. Make maximal use of the opportunities which are open before you. You are the future of the Bulgarian armed forces. Be leaders, and prepare yourselves to think in a critical way, to analyse, discover, change, lead, and as a final result – to make the mission possible!

I wish you good health, strength and perseverance to commemorate with the dignity and honour the hundredth anniversary of the Defence Staff College!

Good luck!