

THE MULTINATIONAL LOGISTICS COORDINATION CENTRE ROLE IN SUPPORT OF NATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATO LOGISTICS CAPABILITIES

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ABSTRACT:

NATO is looking for new approaches to address existing challenges and to improve cooperation among nations. Development of multinational logistics is one of the key tasks to ensure effective logistic support for NATO operations. In accordance with the requirements and objectives of NATO, it was presented a proposal to establish a Multinational Logistics Coordination Centre, which would allow nations to collectively develop mutual cooperation in the field of logistics.

KEYWORDS: *Logistics, logistic support, NATO, MLCC, multinational operation*

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization currently brings together 28 nations. Other nations support the effort of NATO to maintain peace and stability in the world, and cooperate with NATO under the umbrella of various partnership formats (PfP – Partnership for Peace, MD – Mediterranean Dialogue, ICI – Istanbul

Cooperation Initiative, or PatG – Partners across the Globe).

The Armed Forces of individual nations have different structure of forces and equipment, the different level of preparedness and training. The capabilities of nations vary considerably, including the possibility of joint deployment in operations. Nations have different peace-keeping budgets and

their priorities, while the general trend is to decrease spending on the Armed Forces. Each nation is developing its own logistical capability, which also results into the different level of logistics standardization and interoperability. Nations often rely on limited national logistical capabilities and are more or less dependent on industrial and contracting support [1].

All of this together can affect the ability to effectively deploy the necessary forces. Sustainability of units in multinational operations is a critical issue for many nations. The need for the adoption of effective measures is confirmed by the current situation, when the majority of nations have no other option than to rely on the multinational cooperation to be able to manage the necessary logistics support. For them the multinational logistic cooperation is the only way how to engage in joint operations and to minimize the necessary costs.

Evolving strategic environment, and in particular the current economic situation, are the reason why NATO is looking for new approaches. The experience of conducting joint operations shows the need to increase the efficiency of the logistics support, particularly in the adoption of common procedures and coordination between the various NATO nations. The requirement for the development of multinational logistics as one of the key tasks for efficient logistics support for NATO operations is reflected in the conclusions of the recent NATO summits.

NATO promotes the principle of collective responsibility for logistics in joint operations and supports multinational cooperation with the intention to reduce the costs of logistics support. The principle of collective responsibility for logistics requires that NATO and nations cooperate in the development of logistic support capabilities in order to eliminate the deficiencies. One of the fundamental assumptions is timely and collaborative logistic planning and prepared multinational logistics. Multinational

cooperation in operations should allow the reduction of the number of logistic resources in the area of operations and the cost of the provision of services, to minimize duplication of support capabilities and increase the effectiveness of support [2].

NATO nations have discussed the common responsibility for logistics for many years, but the practical implementation has been very slow, despite the fact that the multinational approach to the implementation of the logistics support for current and future operations is a key task to optimize logistics support, improve efficiency and achieve significant savings [3].

1 Background of the MLCC Establishment

In the past, there were various proposals raised with the aim to improve the logistic cooperation and to streamline logistics command and control structure. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the most operations are directly dependent on the quality of provided logistic support, none of proposals delivered tangible results.

1.1 NATO Objectives

In the key NATO logistics document “NATO Logistics Vision and Objectives 2009-2018” one of the strategic goals is focusing on increasing of the availability of capable and interoperable logistics forces. Supporting task of this strategic goal is aiming to improve multinational logistics and to enable national contributions to the theatre logistics support, in particular [4]:

- by the integration of smaller logistic contributions of Alliance and partner nations in operations,
- by identifying and proposing measures to eliminate the facts to prevent multinational contributions of nations, and
- by contributing to the process of planning and force generation, with the aim to facilitate the multinational and smaller national contributions.

1.2 Working Group for the Multinational Cooperation

In autumn 2008, in line with NATO requirements and objectives, the Czech Republic proposed to create a multinational logistics coordination centre, which would be based on the common efforts of the contributing nations. The proposal was positively received, and under the SGPLE (Standing Group of Partner Logistics Experts) was created the multinational working group lead by the Czech Republic. The Working Group had several tasks:

- to analyse the existing ways of multinational logistic cooperation,
- to discuss current bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects,
- to discover areas for the potential development of multinational logistics cooperation, and
- to discuss possible establishment and the role of the centre for coordination of multinational logistics.

1.3 Prerequisites for the Development of Cooperation

The Working Group identified five areas that need to be improved in order to be able to develop multinational cooperation.

1.3.1. Improved communication

Basic prerequisite in order to be able find common cost-effective solution is to understand the existing problems. Nations must understand the basic principles of multinational cooperation. They need to be actively engaged in discussion and openly declare their requirements and capabilities. Only open communication among logisticians at various levels can successfully promote the exchange of knowledge, experience from operations and at the same time to help to eliminate existing barriers.

1.3.2. Improved cooperation

For many nations the multinational logistic cooperation is the most convenient way how to engage in operations. Therefore,

they would like to enhance the existing cooperation in the various areas of logistics. In particular, the smaller nations should share their resources and develop common deployable logistical capabilities and NATO should promote a development of bilateral and multinational agreements on mutual support.

1.3.3. Improved coordination

Coordination of the development of mutual agreements should encourage the optimization of logistical cooperation. Improvement of coordination should help to address the shortfalls and to meet requirements through existing capabilities.

1.3.4 Improved mutual trust

Despite the fact that NATO and nations are promoting the collective responsibility for logistics, most nations are having a problem with sharing their logistics capabilities and also are not willing to rely on the support of others. The identification of barriers and finding of suitable ways how to overcome them is a crucial task. Open communication, supported by various common activities, such as participation in the exercises aimed at the development of interoperability, would be a good start to improve confidence between nations.

1.3.5. Improved support from experienced nations

Experienced nations should be willing to support the development of capabilities of the “smaller” nations and assist in the deployment of their capabilities in operations. The creation of common units should enable better integration of smaller contributions of nations and to allow their participation.

1.4 Requirements of nations

The Working Group analysed the requirements of nations for improvement of the multinational logistic cooperation. The

newer NATO and partnership for peace nations highlighted the need to improve coordination between nations and the centralization of logistics solutions of existing problems, primarily related to the logistics planning, training and exercises. They would welcome an establishment of a single body dealing with complex logistics issues currently handled by too many organizations and agencies.

From the perspective of more experienced nations it is necessary to improve visibility of the existing logistics capabilities and deficiencies, including requirements for development of missing capabilities. They also emphasized a need to coordinate the development of bilateral agreements and the visibility of requested assistance, timely consideration of multinational logistic solutions and early involvement in the logistics planning process. It is also very important to consider the willingness of nations to contribute to the force generation process and to develop missing capabilities, including integration of smaller contributions of nations to joint operations [5].

1.5 Shortfalls in the Multinational Logistics Coordination

At the national level, the multinational logistics is not a priority and the comprehensive overview of national logistics capabilities and deficiencies is missing. In addition, too many organizations or groups are dealing with the same problems, which results in unnecessary duplication. Nonetheless, none of them was dealing with the coordination of multinational logistic cooperation in a complex manner. Existing structures were not able to fully resolve the current shortfalls, due to the fact that they were focused on the partial and specific problems, rather than on a comprehensive solution.

The above findings started an effort to establish a multinational organization, which would allow nations to jointly develop mutual cooperation in the field of logistics.

2 Milestones of the MLCC Establishment

On 28 October 2009, during the meeting of the SNLC (Senior NATO Logistics Committee – today Logistics Committee), the logistics principals of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, Slovakia and the United States by signing the Letter of Intent declared their will to cooperate and participate in the establishment of a Multinational Logistics Coordination Centre (MLCC) in the Czech Republic and to improve multinational logistic cooperation [6].

This initiative was considered as the significant success and it was appreciated by many national and NATO representatives, including the Assistant of Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning.

A group of experts of the Czech Army, supported by the signatory nations, immediately started to work on the MLCC project development.

On 31 January 2010 the MLCC has declared initial operational capabilities and started its work. It was only the virtual capability based on the official MLCC website and software tools for promoting the coordination of education and training. However, despite this fact of virtual existence, the MLCC people began to implement practical activities to develop multinational logistic cooperation.

In March 2010 the MLCC organized its first multinational logistics seminar titled “Logistics Lessons Learned from Forces Development and Coalition operations”. The seminar was a unique opportunity for nations to openly discuss and share experience, particularly in the area of planning and provision of logistic support in expeditionary operations, knowledge and experience from the NATO-led operations (creation of national support elements, a multinational logistic cooperation, contractors support, etc.) and also in the area of development of logistics capabilities.

Concurrently, the MLCC staff initiated the preparation of the field multinational logistics standardization and interoperability exercise Capable Logistician and other important future projects. The work conducted attracted other nations to consider MLCC membership, first of them, the United Kingdom, joined the MLCC on 25 June 2010.

In parallel, the Czech Republic established the MLCC project development working group, composed of all key stakeholders of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff, in order to fully develop the MLCC concept and to manage the project implementation. The effort of the group was successfully completed and on 1 January 2011 MLCC officially moved from virtuality to reality.

In January 2011, two nations, Bosnia and Herzegovina (on 18 January) and Poland (on 26 January) joined the MLCC.

On 31 May 2011 the Memorandum of Understanding, the basic legislative document of the MLCC became valid. After this historical date five more nations (as of 30 June 2015) became members of the MLCC. First Georgia (on 22 November 2011), then Croatia (on 4 January 2013), Austria (on 4 April 2013), Spain (on 7 February 2014) and Lithuania (on 3 December 2014). There are other nations, which officially declared their intention to join the MLCC – Bulgaria, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Ukraine and Turkey.

3 MLCC Structure and Operation

MLCC is a multinational military organization located in Prague, the Czech Republic, based on the voluntary participation of nations. Its mission is to build and/or enhance multinational logistics capabilities, reduce logistics shortfalls and costs of the MLCC Members and Non-Members by providing multinational solutions for the logistic support of their forces. The MLCC fully supports “SMART DEFENCE” and “POOLING & SHARING” concepts and is in line with the NATO

“Connected Forces Initiative” in order to build capabilities through multinational approaches and to maintain readiness and combat effectiveness through expanded education and training.

The structure of the MLCC is designed to fit its strategic objectives and effectively accommodate the potential of each of the participating nations. The positions are filled from the Czech Republic as well as from several other member nations (at present from Austria, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). For the MLCC member nations it is not mandatory to send personnel to Prague, their contribution is established on the voluntary bases. The assignment of personnel is arranged on the basis of bilateral agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) between individual nations and the Czech Republic. Other nations have established national point of contact and coordinate their activities from their respective nation. There are also the MLCC nations involved in various MLCC projects (US, UK) and they sponsor primarily partner nations, who would not be able to afford their participation.

The MLCC is headed by the MLCC Director. Due to the multinational composition of MLCC is its management coordinated with the member nations, who meet twice a year at the MLCC Board of Directors meeting (MLCC BOD). The MLCC BOD provides oversight of all MLCC activities and provides governance and strategic policy decisions concerning its administration and operation. The MLCC BOD also provides direction and guidance to the MLCC Director for mission execution. The MLCC BOD operates in accordance with the BOD Rules of Procedure [7].

4 MLCC Objectives and Activities

MLCC is focused to address existing shortfalls in the area of multinational logistics and is trying to improve visibility of national capabilities and intentions. The MLCC is helping the less experienced

nations to understand the NATO requirements and to achieve their objectives in the area of logistics capabilities development. In addition, the MLCC foster mutual cooperation and promotes an increase of trust and understanding between nations. It also significantly contributes to the enhancement of logistics standardization and interoperability. To achieve the MLCC mission, the MLCC BOD approved three main strategic objectives – Development of multinational logistics capabilities, Coordination of logistics education and training and International logistics cooperation. Each strategic objective is supported by several tasks [8].

4.1 Development of Multinational Logistics Capabilities

4.1.1. NATO Smart Defence Projects Management

NATO Smart Defence represents a new approach, which should ensure greater security for less money by involving more nations to the defence cooperation. Multinational cooperation is the most attractive and the most effective options for savings funds (also the European Union is supporting the sharing of capabilities and is seeking broader cooperation among nations through the Pooling and Sharing projects). Approximately 40 projects of Smart Defence are related to Logistics. The MLCC is actively involved in following projects:

- It is leading a multinational project for the acquisition, processing and distribution of drinking water;
- It is leading a multinational project for maintenance and repair of equipment;
- It is leading a multinational project for the security of ammunition storage for deployment in operations;
- In cooperation with France it is involved in the management of international project in the area of fuel handling. France is leading the part focused on the effectiveness of the procedures and

the MLCC is leading the part focusing on training;

- It is involved in the establishment of the Joint Logistics Support Group HQ, contributing to the preparation and training of the logistics personnel for the V4 EU Battle Group.

These projects are focusing on the coordination of development of logistic capabilities and management of training and preparation of logistics personnel in various areas. All projects with the MLCC involvement are exercised during the exercise Capable Logistician.

4.1.2 Support to partner nations

The MLCC is supporting the less experienced partner nations by helping them to gain experience and knowledge in the context of the multinational logistics cooperation in order to facilitate the development of their missing capabilities. MLCC is also helping the newer NATO nations during their integration process into the structures of NATO. Furthermore, the MLCC is actively involved in the activities of the Standing Group of Partner Logistics Experts (SGPLE), aiming on the partner nations and supporting fulfilment of their partnership goals and development of logistics capabilities. In addition, the MLCC supports an effort of the NATO International Staff and participates in the logistics staff assistance visits aimed to assist in the development of logistics and fulfilment of the tasks of the national plans of the partner nations (such as Georgia, Serbia, Moldova, Jordan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine). MLCC devoted special support to Jordan, which is the only nation from outside Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council fulfilling the objectives of the partnership and is involved in the development of various projects (such as NATO OCC – Operational Capability Concept). Under the auspices of the NATO International Staff the MLCC supports the reform of logistics in Ukraine and participates in various

support projects (e.g. development of a standardization management system). MLCC also provides focused support to Georgia, enabling participation of Georgian experts in various activities, such as the exercise Capable Logistician 2015.

4.2. Coordination of Logistics Education and Training

4.2.1 Aspiration for the role of the NATO Department Head

NATO has been transforming its system of education and training, and for each discipline and introduced a position of the so called Department Head – the organization that will be responsible for analysis of the educational and training needs and will coordinate their implementation. The reality is that NATO is dependent on nations to volunteer subject matter experts and to take on the DH role outside of the NATO Command Structure, from NATO Education and Training Facilities (NTEFs), Centres of Excellence (COEs), Partnership Training and Education Centres (PTECs), National Training Institutions (NTIs) and Non-NATO Entities (NNEs). MLCC closely cooperate with ACT and prepares for the taking over of the Department Head for the area of NATO logistics education and training.

4.2.2 Management of exercises Capable Logistician

International field logistics standardization and interoperability exercise Capable Logistician is the flag MLCC project. The MLCC plans, develops, coordinates and control this exercise focusing on the development of multinational logistics capabilities and enhancement of logistics standardization and interoperability. This is a very unique project, because NATO does not have sufficient capacity and the ability to organize such large scale field logistics exercises. MLCC supports and complements the capabilities of NATO and enables nations to practice their logistics capabilities

in the multinational environment and to test interoperability. In 2015 the exercise involved about 32 nations. In addition to the logistics cooperation and standardization and interoperability, other key projects were tested during the exercise, such as the NATO Smart Energy project or the European Union project for the sharing of spare parts.

4.2.3 Organisation of logistics courses

The MLCC is regularly organizing the JLSG HQ course to prepare the JLSG HQ staff and augmentees. In addition, in close cooperation with the Czech Defence University in Brno, the MLCC prepares courses focusing on assistance to partner countries. In particular, those courses are focused on the fulfilment of Partnership Goals and the development of logistics capabilities. In the past, Logistics Reconnaissance and Host Nation Support courses were organized; in 2015 the RSOM (Receiving, Staging and Onward Movement) course will be conducted. The MLCC also closely cooperate with the NATO schools and contributes to their courses.

4.3. International Logistics Cooperation

4.3.1. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation

The MLCC builds close working contacts with NATO, the EU and other organisations and agencies dealing with logistics (e.g. NSPA, AMSCC, MCCE, EDA). There is no intention of the MLCC to compete or duplicate their activities, but to complement their efforts and create the conditions for cooperation with nations, which would benefit from their services. Those organizations welcome cooperation with the MLCC and support MLCC activities. The ACO and ACT are seeking formalization of relations with the MLCC (based on Memorandum of Understanding or the Technical Agreement). In addition, the MLCC further develop bilateral cooperation, especially with the partner

nations (e.g. Montenegro, Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Jordan, Ukraine) with the aim to foster development of their logistics capabilities.

4.3.2 Organisation of workshops and seminars, support for NATO

The MLCC organizes, coordinates and promotes international meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences with the aim to enhance multinational cooperation, share experience and knowledge and support development of national and multinational logistics capabilities.

Conclusion

The MLCC activities allow better linkage of the logistics requirements with existing logistics capabilities, development of logistic capabilities and improvement of coordination of logistical cooperation among nations. This improves the ability of nations to contribute and to participate in the joint logistics support of operations, which will lead to a better use of limited resources, the reduction of logistic footprint of individual nations and thereby to reduction of the total cost of the logistics support.

MLCC facilitates easier access of nations to the knowledge and experience from development of logistics capabilities and planning and execution of logistic support in expeditionary operations. MLCC also helps partner nations with understanding of NATO requirements and principles of collective logistics.

Activity of MLCC is based on NATO's requirements, as the majority of its members are the NATO member nations. The MLCC supports and complements NATO effort, especially in the area of logistics education and training and also gradually develops cooperation with logistics structures of the EU and other organizations dealing with logistics.

By supporting the development of both bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the development of the capabilities of the smaller nations and the integration of their smaller contributions, the MLCC helps the NATO command structure and the EU to get more prepared logistics units for the joint operations. On the contrary, it will enable nations to achieve significant economies of scale.

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