

## **POLISH BATTLEFORCE JOINS EUROPEAN UNION**

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**Part 1 : MIROSLAWIEC and TOMASZOW MAZOWIECKI, SOKOL and FITTER**

**Part 2 : INOWROCLAW, GDYNIA, PRUSZCZ GDANSKI, DOL EXERCISES,  
NAVY and FULCRUM.**

Part 2 , continuation on the article of the former edition.

### **INOWROCLAW**

At Inowroclaw the 56th Combat Helicopter Regiment (56 PSB Pulk Smiglowcow Bojowych) is stationed. The unit resorts now under the Army Aviation (LWL Lotnictwo Wojsk Ladowych) after a proces of re-arrangement of the command structure whih will be finished end of 2003, which will result in the formation of a specific army-flying unit in two separate corpses. The 56 PSB operates with the Mil Mi-24W Hind-E battle helicopters and various armed and unarmed variants of Mil Mi-2 Hoplite devided among four different quadrooms. The Mi-24 is a tremendous fighting machine with various possibilities of armament and because of its great battle-power not quite pleasant to meet for enemy tank-crews. (Afghanistan) The machine itself has the nickname 'The Flying Tank' . The rotating 4-barrel Yak B-12.7 canon mounted in the nose is the most striking eye-catching detail, and furthermore the wings are equipped with several hard-points for pods with unguided missiles. Standard more or less are the UB-32-pod or the heavyer B8-V20 with 80mm rockets, which are guided optical by the WSO (weapon system officer) , and on the wingtips it's got launchingrails for 4x 9M114 Shturm (AT-6 Spiral) antitank rockets who are radio guided to their targets by a big spherical shaped ball-antenna on the nose.

The flying cannon is comparative firmly big for a battle-helicopter which is not only a disadvantage for it's manoeuvrability but it also makes the Hind a easier target. For autoprotection a Infra Red jammer (L-166V Ispanka, Natocode: "Hot Brick") Has been installed behind the rotor, a facility developed after the Afghanistan war Where lots of Hinds were hit and destroyed by the heat-searching Stingers from the Mudjahedin. Also decoy flare suppliers have been mounted very simple with two metal strips under the tail, in one occasion built in the tail. This concerns a Hind in the 'Afghanistan-configuration' which was given to the Polish by Russia. Other inventions such as special caps over the turbine exhausts to lower the infra-red profile considerable were not delivered to the Polish Air Force. The Mi-24W is also capable to transport for instance 8 fully equipped combatants and drop them behind enemy lines and in this way tasks are combined. Though the Hind has quite 'figured-out' looks, it is less advanced as one should probably think. The maintainance is quite complicated and heavy, everything has to be checked manually and no computers can be used for this purpose because of the lack of digital technologies.

Small inspections can be executed in the work-shop at the base, but next to that every Hind once a year is dismantled to pieces at WSL-1 (Wystawa Sprzetu

Lotniczego-1) at Lodz and the machine is 1 to 1,5 month out of action. The upper cockpit of the MI-24 is for the pilot (and crewchief) and the lower cockpit for the Weapon System Officer (WSO) who communicate with each other by intercom.

In principle the pilot starts his education at the Orliki on teh Air Force Academy in Deblin-Irena where a part of the pilots is selected for helicopterflying. After basic helicopter-training at Nova Miasto the pilots attend to their regiment where at this very moment a choice can be made for Mi-2, Mi-8/17, Mi-24 or the W3 helicopter. The Hind requires a minimum of 40 to 50 hours training before the pilot can take his seat at the WSO chair. Another Hind unit at Pruszcz Gdanski uses for this purpose some special Hind-24D conversion machines. The 'pupil-pilot' remains dedicated to the gunner-cabine for about 100 to 150 flying hours before he can reach for the 'highest trone' . Once a Hind pilot you are a experienced pilot, but the total length of the training-course depends on the personal capacities of the pilot.

The helicopters standard are equipped with IFF and missile warning receivers, but not every single plane has GPS, that's why some pilots every now and then bring their own GPS on board when they have practicing flights. There are no possibilities for 'allweather capability' or nightflights , this leads to limitations of operationality. Polish defence has the need – as the other Eastern-europe Hind users have – to upgrade the MI-24. Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia joined hands to study the modernising of their Hinds to MI-24P standard. Though there is a concrete plan and agreement (Visegrad agreement) there still is some delay because the Russian suppliers definitely want to execute these modernisations in Russia from economical point of view, but the Visegrad countries don't fancy that because it is much cheaper and more logical to them if these modifications can take place under their own 'umbrella'. Negotiations are held at very high level where Poland in the person of defence-minister Jerzy Szmajdzinski tries to overrule his Russian opponent Sergei Ivanow in the plans. Together Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic want to modernise some 100 MI-24 Hinds for an amount of over 500 million dollar, prior in Poland ofcourse.

It is possible that at the moment of reading this article the agreement's compromise situation is already born which will make the upgrading possible at the WSL-1 factories in Lodz. The Mi-24P (P for Pushka-cannon) has a new double-barrel 30mm cannon mounted beside to the cabin, and will be named MI-24PL in Poland.

There has been investigation about the possibility of mounting Western cannons such as the Cobra and Mangusta have, but this appeared to lead to insurmountable problems because of the lack of digital technology in the Hind. Entirely in the power of the Russian cannon there will still be a attempt in corporation with Western companies to install avionics for 'all weather and nightflight'capabilities, also there is a investigation if Western anti-tank rockets can be integrated in the MI-24 systems.

Though the function of SAR (search and rescue) is possible yet, a part of the helicopters Are to be specialised for the task of CSAR (combat search and rescue, MI-24CSAR) At Inowroclaw a helicopter was found with a new smooth-green experimental paint , which should be going to be the new camouflage color. Defence-staff gave the order for this experiment to spray this Hind in this 'new coat' at Lodz, a color which is named the 'apache-color' by the regular personell. Purpose of this color is to reduce radar-visibility

but it is rather doubtful if the Hinds with their enormous radar-profile will be less visible and it is not expected that the entire Hind-fleet will be provided with this new color. Another reason for thinking this is that the paint bursts too soon because of the vibrations in the frame (flexing). The fact that all Hinds are parked outside can also be a reason for erosion. Investigation is going on to a better quality paint, and also the used color is not yet the definite one, our spokesman at Inowroclaw told us.

Also on the Mi-2 Hoplite this new smooth green paint is used already by experiment. Next to the Mi-24 there are a number of Mi-2 variants based at Inowroclaw, who at the time exclusively were produced for the entire Warsaw-Pact at PZL-Swidnik in service at the LWL. At 56 PSB we noticed - next to the troop-transport version and SAR/ambulance version - also several Mi-2-URN and Mi-2 URP armed Hoplite's. The Ki-2URN has pods with unguided rockets aside the fuselage, and the Mi-2 URP has the possibility to carry the older wire-guided anti-tank missiles. In both cases these missiles are optically pointed with a visor (the pilot is seated left, the WSO on the right). These wire-guided missiles are disconnected right on the spot of their target. Not a quite harmless principle because the wire can hit obstacles or even the rotorblades with all possible imaginable consequences. Mi-2 Hoplites function in tactical way as reconnaissance helicopters for the Mi-24 Hinds who at their turn get conducted by radio to the combat area's.

Though not real tank-killers like the Hind, the armed Hoplite's are very well capable as assault helicopters, to attack for instance enemy colonnes or transport helicopters and also they can lift and deliver 10 soldiers. Staff of 56 PSB specially postponed the flying-practicing for one day to give us the opportunity to picture and witness the exercises. On a central point in the middle of the airfield there is a mobile command and control truck. During take-off and landing from the platforms the landing-gears are checked visually with a large telescope, simple but very effective. At any time or any danger the choppers can be warned in time and they can land in that case on a special crisis-spot on the field, existing from a large pile of old car-tires so the helicopters can eventually land without their landing gear. The Mi-2's have had their longest time now at LWL and approaching the date of the maximal lifetime of the airframe they will disappear in near future. Tasks will be taken over by the W3 Sokol helicopter.

## **MIG-29 FULCRUM**

Talking about attacking potential of the Polish we cannot simply pass by the Mig-29 Fulcrum. This machine actual is a interceptor meant to defend the Polish air-space though also found in the offensive role with rocket pods. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June a treaty was signed between Germany and Poland concerning the delivery of 23 Mig-29 Fulcrums, some of them in duo-seat configuration. The Polish Air Force have ordered F-16 fighters within the frameworks of modernisation for some 3,5 milliard dollars by the Americans. These Fighting Falcons will be stationed at Krzesiny, but can just be delivered at most in 2006. Therefore the deal with Germany to deliver the former Eastern-germany Fulcrums who were produced in Russia. By the way the Polish don't have to worry about sleepless nights concerning the price, they have to pay the symbolic amount of 1 euro a piece, that makes 23 euro in total... Germany itself replaces the 23 ex DDR-Fulcrum interceptors by the new Typhoon Eurofighter. In the past the Polish received already 12 former DDR Fulcrums and 10 from the

Czech Republic. Just like the German Mig-29's the machines in Polish configuration can carry 2x R-27 AA-10 Alamo air to air missiles (reach 5-27 km), 4x R-73 AA-11 Archer infra red guided air to air missiles (to 40 km) and 4x R-60 AA-8 Aphid infra red guided close combat Missiles. The Mig-29's are operational improved with a small package by DASA/EADS in corporation with WSL-2 at Bydgoszcz, a.o. new radar (Thomson CSF/Thales) and GPS. The base Minsk-Mazowiecki, the 23 Baza Lotnicza with the 1 ELT is the base where the Mig-29 and the Mig-29UB (twin-seater) are stationed, fulfilling their interception task above the Warsaw quadrant. The ex-DDR Fulcrums coming from Jager-JG-73 have also been taken to NATO operational level by DASA/EADS with GPS with TACAN (tactical aid for navigation), modified IFF, VHF/UHF communicationsets and collision warning lights. Both current versions however do not have air-to-air refuelling possibilities and only Russian armament-possibilities. To integrate Western weapon systems should take complicated avionics and the cost of such a modification is much to high concerning the few years these interceptors will have to be operational. It so limits the Fulcrums within NATO practicing and excercising.

### **DOL – DROGOWY ODCINEK LOTNISKOWY**

One of the most special and spectacular excercises within the program of the Polish Air Force is the 'DOL', which this year also took place in may. During this exercise take-off and landing excercises are held on the Kliniska road near Szczecin (Stettin) on the border with Germany. This asphalt hardened road – normally a common traffic road – is bound on both sides by high pine-forest. Two days a year this road functions as a reserve airfield where is demonstrated that in case of fall-out of regular home air-bases (for instance a clusterbomb on the airstrip) the activities of a squadron can more or less easily be moved at a simple way. Minimum but complete support from kitchen to communication-module, defence and troops are present camouflaged between the trees. These tactics have always been used within the Warsaw-pact countries and the Russian planes are specially designed for these tasks. The landing-gears of Mig-21 and Sukhoi-22 are in that capacity made so very strong that mimimum conditions of the runway are sufficient for the use by these planes. Using roads not only enlarges the mobility but also gave several forward locations during the 'Cold-War'period. All fighter-squadrons are expected to deliver some pilots for executing this exercise which is not quite very popular among the pilots who attend. Landing on a runway with high trees on both sides next to you and your plane requires extreme concentration, a true specialists-job concerning that the landing speed of Mig-21 and SU-22 is considerably high.

For the spectators ( officers of the Polish Air Force and journalists ) very spectacular to see and witness for you are really only meters away from the roaring starting and landing planes ! When they depart from their improvised parking places the sand is blown into the trees and the wingtips can almost be touched. The planes first collect themselves on the nearby base Swidwin and fly in a tight schedule On Kliniska-road where a handful can be parked on this very small strip on a parallel-road. Communication is via the mobile command and control truck and the tower of Swidwin. The exercise was flown with TS-11 Iskra's, SU-22M4 Fitters, Mig-29 Fulcrums and some Mig-21 Fishbeds, these last mentioned take the most expertise of the pilot. Nowadays the necessity of these road-excercises has no longer priority

one, since Poland now is within NATO structure so it's a question if the 'DOL' exercises will continue the way they are organised this year, or perhaps every two years.

### **POLISH NAVY (Lotnictwo Marynarki Wojennej)**

The Polish navy was visited at Gdynia, where a short time ago the Mig-21 Fishbed squadron was disbanded. The offensive task against sea-targets leaving to the SU-22 Fitters of the Air Force. Some Fishbeds are still in operational conditions. Within the relatively small navy flying-services a considerable number of planes is operational. Important tasks are Search and Rescue by the W-3RM Anaconda and reconnaissance tasks over sea which is fulfilled by the Antonov M-28E Bryza. The M-28E has modern equipment on board such as SLAR (Side Looking Active Radar) to follow ships on surface also para-dropping and Hospital-equipment for this plane is possible and present. Next to that detection of contravention concerning fishery and eco-crimes or threats can be discovered. Next to the Bryza transport tasks are also maintained by the W-3RT helicopter. Funny detail is that on the base there still is a Mi-2 present specially for trainings purposes to give pilots 'training the hard way'. For once you fly the tough Mi-2, you can handle all various types of helicopters... New types are the marine-version transformed Mi-17's (NAVY on the fuselage!) and the from the USA taken over Kaman SH-2G helicopters specially used for actions from fregats in the ASW role (Anti Submarine Warfare ) equipped with magnetic detectors and torpedo's. The last type in this list is the MI-14PS Haze-A for SAR and the MI-14-PL Haze-A against submarines (ASW) who fly from the base Darlowo. This last type can be equipped with torpedo's. The MI-14 ASW-variants lately received a important upgrade in the AWL-1 factories at Lodz, to importantly improve their attacking capacities to surface-ships such as the possibility for Anti Ship Missiles (ASM) and also to be able to fulfill their Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) tasks even better.

### **PRUSZCZ GDANSKI**

Nothing much does suspect that this base is a army base (LWL). Here we find just as at Inowroclav the MI-24 Hind, but in the older MI-24D configuration with a number of conversion-helicopters, and various MI-2 Hoplite variants (a.o. the MI-2 with the generator possibility for smoke-screens ) and red/white SAR MI-2's. Finally we have a look on the transport part of the airforce: At Miroslawiec a Antonov 26 - the working horse of the Polish AF, based at Krakow balice - gave act of presence, with a demonstration. This plane will be replaced in longer terms by the Casa CN-295.

The Polish armed military forces prove now in practice they are going to form a potential part within NATO. Special forces units fought in the Iraqi harbourtown Um Qasr, and it looks like the Polish are going to have a crucial role in the post-war scenario overthere. Meanwhile they earned their international certificate of capability !

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**Wim Das en Kees Otten**

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