

ICPS newsletter[®]

Ukraine's Armed Forces: Whither reforms?

The issue of reforming Ukraine's security sector as a whole and its various components in particular has long been on the agenda for both the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian society. Although reform is definitely in process, its scale and pace are not designed to bring the best results. As part of the "Building Support for a Comprehensive Approach to Security Sector Reform in Ukraine" project, ICPS analysts prepared a policy paper called "Security Sector Reform in Ukraine." This excerpt focuses on the Armed Forces by looking at the main directions of reform and reform-related problems facing the government

On 12 February 2007, President Yushchenko approved the National Security Strategy of Ukraine. The drafting and periodic adjustment of this strategy is governed by the 2003 Law "On the basis for Ukraine's national security." The strategic objectives of national security policy include reforming security sector institutions, especially the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

How Armed Forces reform has evolved

The need to rebuild Ukraine's Armed Forces arose immediately after the country gained independence in 1991. The changing geopolitical situation, the change in the nature of security threats, and the impossibility of maintaining Soviet-era military structures all meant that deep qualitative and structural reforms of the armed forces were necessary.

In the first years of independence, the state's policy towards the Armed Forces was far from systematic. When it became independent in 1991, Ukraine had virtually no experience of how to manage the defense sector independently. During soviet times, it did not have its own defense ministry and the only coordinating center was the central MOD in Moscow. The formation of independent Ukraine's military structures lasted until almost 1995. The first strategic document relating to defense reform was the State Program for the Building and Development of the Armed Forces of Ukraine 1997–2005.

The first comprehensive document to take an open look at Ukraine's defense policy was the "Ukrainian Strategic Defense Review to 2015," a report on the results of a defense review carried out in Ukraine published in 2004. An important step

towards strengthening the Armed Forces' transparency and public accountability was the publication of a White Paper on Ukraine's Defense Policy at the start of 2006.

Key objectives of Armed Forces reform

The main priority for defense reform in Ukraine continues to be reducing and reorganizing the forces in order to ensure that they better suit to the threats and challenges faced by the state today. This can only be achieved if the strategic objectives for defense reform are clearly defined, which in turn depends on how well the national security concept as a whole defines priorities and objectives. The inflated list of national security threats in current drafts of the concept make it impossible to focus effectively on the most pressing problems:

- Reducing troop numbers
- Switching to a fully professional army
- Reforming organizational and governing structures
- Destroying surplus weapons and military equipment
- Updating necessary military equipment
- Developing new military technologies and supporting the defense industry

Reducing troop numbers

Various estimates place the number of service personnel in Ukraine in 1991 from 700,000 to over 1 million. Since then, troop numbers have been gradually reduced. Further reductions are currently being hindered by the need to maintain a large number of troops to protect and service

surplus weapons and equipment that are awaiting destruction. The plans for further reductions also envisage introducing the concept of outsourcing to Ukraine's Armed Forces.

This has the potential to reduce the number of employees and troops in the Armed Forces by about another 20,000. However, this will only be possible if the Government maintains the financial commitments made in the State Program for the Support of the Armed Forces through 2007 to 2011.

Switching to a fully professional army

The President has set a deadline of 2010 for the Army to switch to a fully contract-based system. One of the main objectives is the selection of personnel that meet the requirements of modern service: a high degree of professionalism, patriotism and discipline.

However, though this policy is appropriate, simply switching to contract-based employment will not automatically raise the professional or ethical standards of Ukraine's troops. This requires the development of a human resource policy to encourage young, well-educated people with strong potential to join the Forces. Realistic, effective systems need to be developed to improve the professionalism of the nation's troops and to offer suitable conditions for both work and rest.

Unfortunately, the absence of a clear policy makes it less likely at this time that simply switching to contract-based employment will lead to any serious qualitative changes within Ukraine's Armed Forces.

Reforming organizational and governing structures

Defense reform cannot ignore the issues of organizational structure and governance in the Armed Forces. In 2004, amendments to the Law "On the Armed Forces of Ukraine" switched the country from having four types of Armed Forces to three: Ground Forces (Army), the Air Force, and the Navy.

The Armed Forces can be divided into three structures and functions:

- **Combined Rapid Reaction Forces (CRRF)** to react instantly and localize threats and armed conflicts;
- **Main Defense Forces**, to reinforce the CRRF in order to end an armed conflict and to withstand aggression in the case of a large-scale violent conflict;
- **Strategic reserves**, to reinforce the Main Defense Forces and be deployed just before or during violent conflict.

Since these functional divisions do not correspond to the new tasks and likely scenarios for using the Armed Forces anticipated by the MOD, there are plans to change this structure. In particular, specific units that have better trained troops, are better equipped and are more ready for battle if necessary will be taken out of both the CRRF and the Main Defense Forces. It is also planned to form strategic reserves out of this structure.

Another important element of defense reform has been the introduction of a J-structure¹ to improve internal command and control and to bring Ukraine army structures into line with those of NATO member states.

Destroying surplus weapons and military equipment

The large number of troops stationed on Ukrainian territory during soviet times was matched by a large quantity of weapons and military equipment. Since independence, however, much of this has become surplus and needs to be destroyed. The main problem is that the state lacks organizational and physical resources to destroy weapons and equipment at the same pace as they become obsolete. This is a threat to both the environment and the physical safety of people living near these stockpiles.

The Emergency Ministry is currently responsible for the destruction of ammunition. In January 2007, the Ministry began to destroy ammunition in controlled explosions at the 275th Artillery Base in Novobohdanivka in Zaporizhzhia oblast. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian government is not able to keep up the pace of destroying weapons and ammunition for institutional and financial reasons. This problem can only be solved through much greater cooperation among different ministries and agencies, the legislature and international donors.

¹ The J-structure is an organizational approach that centers on the function of each 'J' or Joint Element. These elements are different operational structures, such as J-1 (personnel) and J-2 (reconnaissance).

² The *Pivdenne* construction bureau has designed the *Hrom* tactical missile units and the *Korshun* cruise missile. These tactical missiles units are considerably cheaper than planes, yet are equally effective in defending both land and air space.

Updating necessary military equipment

Since little money has been spent on technology in the last decade, the majority of the Armed Forces' weapons and equipment will need to be replaced in the next few years. The situation is particularly complicated with types of weapons that are decisive in modern armed conflicts:

- Most of the Air Force's fighter planes and missile units will be obsolete within five years;
- More than 60% of the country's anti-aircraft artillery has been in use for more than 20 years;
- In the next five to seven years, most of the Air Force's missiles and launch systems will be worn out.

Defense Minister Anatoliy Hrytsenko has stated that updating military equipment is one of the most important challenges facing the Armed Forces. Ukraine needs to begin planning this now. Otherwise, he says, "in one to two years, about 50% of the equipment will stop working, and within three to five years, 30% – even 50% by some estimates – of the Combined Rapid Reaction Forces will not be combat-ready." This would devastate the military effectiveness of Ukraine's Armed Forces.

Developing new military technologies

Since the first years of independence, there has been a sharp drop in MOD orders for the domestic defense industry. This has led to the collapse of many designers and manufacturers of defense equipment.

The MOD currently makes up no more than 3-5% of orders for the defense industry. In order not to lose this industry and its related potential, Ukraine needs to draw up a policy for comprehensive reform of the industry as well. Among other things, this would make the industry more relevant to the needs of the country's own Armed Forces.

Ukraine still possesses a number of leading technologies and designs, which could be used not only for export but to re-equip the national army—provided that there was a suitable state policy towards defense production in place.² However, the miserly sums that the state can afford to pay for weaponry means that the internal market in Ukraine is in collapse.

By the way...

- A roundtable called "How to Lower Housing Prices: The Law on public debate" took place on 16 March 2007, organized by ICPS and the Ukrainian Construction Association. The goal of this roundtable was to organize meaningful public dialog involving government bodies, builders and the public to discuss the issue of public debates in the process of planning and developing properties and their impact on housing prices.
- Public consultations continue as part of the "Public Consultations and Information Campaign on Political Reform in Ukraine" project being jointly implemented by ICPS and the Center for Ukrainian Reform Education (CURE). The essence of political reform and its impact at the local level was discussed in Simferopol on 15 March, in Mykolayiv on 6 March and in Dnipropetrovsk on 5 March. During these hearings, ICPS Director of Political Programs Viktor Chumak made a presentation called "Political Reform in Ukraine: Its Essence and Impact at the Local Level."

Needed: A clear vision of the Armed Forces

Without a clear analysis of the military threats facing Ukraine, defense reform cannot be fully effective. Ukraine does not face any obvious short-term military threats. In this situation, it is particularly important to have a clear understanding of the role of the Armed Forces and the challenges they face. Such a vision would help to ensure that efforts to carry out defense reform are properly targeted.

It is also necessary to protect the reform of the Armed Forces from the ongoing political battles in Ukraine. In most developed democracies, changes to the political or military leadership rarely lead to an immediate change in the military's key goals and priorities. Any changes are more likely to happen with regards to medium- and long-term planning, but radical changes are usually avoided.

You can read the English version of the "Security Sector Reform in Ukraine" study online at <http://www.icps.com.ua/eng/project.html?pid=115>. For additional information, contact ICPS government policy and European integration analyst Oleh Myroshnichenko by telephone at (380-44) 484-4400 or via e-mail at omyroshnichenko@icps.kiev.ua.

icps newsletter is a weekly publication of the International Centre for Policy Studies, delivered by electronic mail.

To be included in the distribution list, contact the ICPS publications department at marketing@icps.kiev.ua or call (380-44) 484-4400.

icps newsletter editor Olha Lvova (olvova@icps.kiev.ua). Phone: (380-44) 484-4400.

English text editor L.A. Wolanskyj. Articles may be reprinted with ICPS consent. **icps newsletter** on the web: <http://newsletter.icps.kiev.ua>