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Ireneusz Bieniecki

Pomeranian University in Słupsk

e-mail: bieniecki.ireneusz@vp.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-0021-8742

Izabela Szkurlat

Pomeranian University in Słupsk

e-mail: izabela.szkurlat@upsl.edu.pl

ORCID:0000-0001-6320-8421

**SECURITY SUBSYSTEM FOR THE EASTERN BORDER
OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF POLAND BY THE BORDER
PROTECTION FORCES AND ITS IMPACT ON STATE
SECURITY IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY.
SELECTED PROBLEMS. VOL. 2**

**PODSYSTEM ZABEZPIECZENIA GRANICY WSCHODNIEJ
POLSKIEJ RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ LUDOWEJ PRZEZ WOJSKA
OCHRONY POGRANICZA I JEGO WPLYW
NA BEZPIECZEŃSTWO PAŃSTWA W DRUGIEJ POŁOWIE
XX WIEKU. WYBRANE PROBLEMY. CZ. 2**

Abstract: The subsystem for the protection of the eastern border of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) (with the USSR) was one of the four subsystems for the protection of the Polish state border, which in the years from the end of World War II to the dissolution of the Border Protection Forces (WOP – 15 May 1991) ensured the protection of this section. The first part of the article discusses such issues as: tasks performed by the WOP, organization and changes in the border protection system of the

Polish People's Republic in the years 1945–1991, forces and resources of the WOP participating in the protection of the border of the Polish People's Republic until the mid-1980s and the division of the border as well as crimes committed on the border and on the border of the Polish People's Republic and the USSR.

Zarys treści: Podsystem ochrony granicy wschodniej Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej (PRL) z ZSRR był jednym z czterech podsystemów ochrony polskiej granicy państwowej. W latach od zakończenia II wojny światowej do rozwiązania Wojsk Ochrony Pogranicza (WOP, 15 maja 1991 r.) zabezpieczał on ochronę odcinka wschodniego. W części pierwszej artykułu omówiono takie zagadnienia, jak: zadania realizowane przez WOP, organizacja systemu ochrony granicy PRL i zmiany w tym systemie w latach 1945–1991, siły i środki WOP uczestniczące w ochronie granicy PRL do połowy lat 80. XX w. oraz podział pogranicza, a także przestępstwa popełniane na pograniczu i granicy PRL–ZSRR.

Keywords: protection of the border between the Polish People's Republic and the USSR, protection of the eastern border of the Polish People's Republic until 1991.

Słowa kluczowe: ochrona granicy PRL–ZSRR, ochrona granicy wschodniej PRL do roku 1991.

Subsystem for protecting the eastern border of the Polish People's Republic until 1991

According to the arrangements adopted by the management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Polish People's Republic (PRL) regarding the directions of improving border protection in the activities of the WOP until 1980, it was planned to adapt individual sections of the BWOP's official responsibility to the new administrative division of Poland. This was related to the transition to a two-level command and control structure in the relations: brigade – guardhouse and GPK brigade, with the simultaneous elimination of

the border battalion level (except for the battalions in Szklarska Poręba and Świnoujście).¹

Therefore, on 1 June 1976, a new organisational structure of the formation was introduced. From then onwards, the 11th BWOP appeared in its organisation, as the previous WOP branches were reformed into BWOP. The 19th Kętrzyn Division of WOP was dissolved, the 22nd Białostocki Division of WOP was reformed into Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP, the 23rd Chełm Division of WOP into Nadbużańska BWOP and the 26th Przemyśl Division of WOP into Bieszczadzka BWOP.²

In the mid-1980s the longest section of the eastern border between the People's Republic of Poland and the USSR was protected by personnel of three BWOPs: Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP (mp. Białystok), Nadbużańska BWOP (mp. Chełm Lubelski) and Bieszczadzka BWOP (mp. Przemyśl). In total, this section of the state border amounted to 1,101.462 km (100%). Of the three BWOPs protecting this border, the longest section fell to the Nadbużańska BWOP (mp. Chełm Lubelski), which protected a total of 442.476 km, representing 40.2% of the total. A slightly smaller section of the border with the then USSR was protected by the Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP (mp. Białystok), which covered 38.3% of the total border, 421.700 km. The shortest section of the border with the USSR to protect was the Bieszczady BWOP (mp. Przemyśl). It accounted for only 21.5 per cent of the total of this border and was 237.286 km long. This was due to the fact that this BWOP was the only one to protect the border with the USSR (63.77% – 237.286 km) and the then CSRS (36.23% – 134.836 km), as shown in the tables below.

¹ This is described, inter alia, in his memoirs by a long-time officer of WOP, Colonel Dipl. J. Nikiforow, “[...] It is noteworthy that in 1975, a territorial reform of the country was carried out. The former 16 voivodeships were divided into 49. In. The section protected by the Kętrzyn WOP unit was divided. The section, i.e. the border of provinces, in the future was important for the brigade (Kashubian BWOP-I. B., I. S.), as the section of the border was extended towards the east of Elbląg and Olsztyn, and was the responsibility of the Kashubian WOP Brigade, with the remaining part belonging to the WOP unit in Białystok [...]”. See J. Nikiforow, *W granicznym kalejdoskopie – wspomnienia 1945–2005*, Wydawnictwo DJ Drukarnia, Gdańsk 2007, p. 95.

² Archiwum Straży Granicznej w Szczecinie, DWOP files, ref. no. 2519, vol. 82, Zasadnicze zamierzenia zmian organizacyjno-etatowych w BWOP do roku 1985 (projekt) z 20.07.1983 r., p. 1; See also Z. Jackiewicz, *Wojska Ochrony Pogranicza 1945–1991. Krótki informator historyczny*, Wydawnictwo CSWOP w Kętrzynie, Kętrzyn 1998, pp. 87–88, 95–96, 106, 120–121.

Table 1. Characteristics of the eastern border section of the People's Republic of Poland protected by WOP brigades as of 1985

No.	Brigade WOP protecting eastern border of the People's Republic of Poland	Length of border section total eastern border of border section protected/ percentage of total eastern border	Numbering of boundary markers with adjacent BWOPs	Territorial scope of action BWOP	Boundary strip area	Area border area	Seats of border plenipotentiaries of the former USSR
1.	Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP (Białystok)	421.700 km	2,176 (Kashubian BWOP), 1,346 (Nadbużańska BWOP)	Voivodship Suwałki and Białystok	12,651 km ²	2,530.2 km ²	Kaliningrad – Kaliningrad section, Grodno – Grodno section, Brest – Brest section.
2.	Nadbużańska BWOP (Chełm Lubelski)	442.472 km	1,346 (Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP), 677 (Bieszczady Mountains Regional Operation Unit)	Biała Podlaska, Chełm and Zamosc voivodships	769,912 km ²	1,946 km ²	Brest – Brest section, Lviv – Lviv section.
3.	Bieszczadzka BWOP (Przemysł)	372.122 km of which: border with the USSR – (63.77%) 237.286 km; CSRS border – (36.23%) 134.836 km.	677 (Nadbużańska BWOP), 1/201 (Carpathian BWOP)	Przemyskie and Krośnienskie voivodships.	7,647 km ²	978,5 km ²	USSR m. Lviv-s, CSRS-m. Kosice – eastern Slovakian section.

Source: *Biuletyn dystrykcyjny Wojsk Ochrony Pogranicza*, Wydawnictwo DWOP, Warszawa 1985 (copy in authors' collection), pp. 193, 209, 221.

Table 2. Overall characteristics of the section of the eastern border of the People's Republic of Poland protected by WOP brigades as of 1985

Brigade WOP protecting eastern border of the People's Republic of Poland	Total three eastern BWOP
Length of border section protected/ percentage of total eastern border of border section protected/ percentage of total eastern border	1,236.298 km (of which 134.836 km with CSRS)
Numbering of boundary markers with adjacent BWOPs	2,176 (Kashubian BWOP)-I/201 (Carpathian BWOP)
Territorial scope of action BWOP	Seven provinces
Boundary strip area	8,429.563 km²
Area border area	5,454.7 km²
Seats of border plenipotentiaries of the former USSR	Seven cities

Source: *Biuletyn dyslokacyjny Wojsk Ochrony Pogranicza*, Wydawnictwo DWOP, Warszawa 1985 (copy in authors' collection), pp. 193, 209, 221.

In the eastern border protection subsystem, in the Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP section, there were a total of 19 WOP border subdivisions including: 10 watchtowers (6-cat I – Węgorzewo, Goldap, Sejny, Sokolka, Gródek and Czeremcha, and 4-cat II – Banie Mazurskie, Rutka Tartak, Lipsk and Białowieża), 2 GPKs (Kuźnica, Siemianówka) and 1 reverse watchtower (Augustów). In this BWOP, the longest section of the border, 63 km, was to be protected by the cadre watchtower cat. I in Gródek (14.9% of the whole BWOP section), and the shortest section by the cadre watchtower cat. II in Banie Mazurskie – 19.5 km (4.62%).³

In the eastern border protection subsystem, in the Nadbużańska BWOP section, there were a total of 15 WOP border subdivisions including: 8 watchtowers (3-cat. I – Dorohusk, Hrubieszów and Lubycza Królewska, and 5-cat. II – Janów Podlaski, Terespol, Sławatycze, Włodawa and Dolhobyczów and 1 GPK (Terespol). In this BWOP, the longest section of the border was to be guarded by the cadre I watchtower in Hrubieszów – 80.620 km (18.3% of the total BWOP section), and the shortest section by the cadre II watchtower in Janów Podlaski – 34.877 km (7.9%).⁴

³ *Biuletyn dyslokacyjny Wojsk Ochrony Pogranicza*, Wydawnictwo DWOP, Warszawa 1985 (copy in authors' collection), pp. 194–205.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 210–219.

In the eastern (and southern) border protection subsystem, in the section of the Bieszczady BWOP, there were a total of 24 WOP border subdivisions, including: 13 watchtowers (5-cat. I – Lubaczów, Medyka, Hermanowice, Lutowiska and Łupków, and 8-cat. II – Korczowa, Ustrzyki Dolne, Wetlina, Roztoki Górne, Komańcza, Jaśliska, Barwinek and Ożenna), 2 GPKs (Barwinek, Medyka) and 1 de-escalation battalion (Sanok).⁵

However, it should be remembered that in addition to the border subdivisions of this formation (watchtowers and GPK), there were 17 organic subdivisions in the three BWOPs on the eastern border of the People's Republic of Poland, which were stationed in Białystok, Chełm Lubelski and Przemyśl (Sanok). Among them were 3 de-escalation battalions (bo), 3 companies (hereafter k.) of communications, 3 k. of protection, 3 k. of technical, 3 k. of renovation and construction, and 3 platoons (hereafter pl.) of the orchestra.

Thus, in total, there were 58 different subdivisions of this formation in the three eastern BWOPs, which had significant numbers of soldiers, as presented in the table below.

Table 3. Subdivisions stationed in the three eastern BWOPs as of 1985

No.	Type of subdivision in BWOP	WOP Brigade			Total in the three BWOPs
		Podlasko-Mazurska (Białystok)	Nadbużańska BWOP (Chełm, Lublin)	Bieszczady BWOP (Przemyśl)	
1.	Reversal Battalion	1	1	1 (Sanok)	3
2.	C. retreat	–	–	1	1
3.	C. command	–	–	1	1
4.	C. school (ZOMO)	–	–	1	1
5.	C. communications	1	1	1	3
6.	C. protection	1	1	1	3
7.	C. technical	1	1	1	3
8.	C. renovation and construction	1	1	1	3
9.	Band platoon	1	1	1	3
10	Cat I watchtower	6 (Węgorzewo, Gołdap, Sejny, Sokółka, Gródek, Czeremcha).	3 (Dorohusk, Hrubieszów, Lubycza Królewska).	5 (Lubaczów, Medyka, Hermanowice, Lutowiska, Łupków).	14

⁵ Ibidem, pp. 222–233.

No.	Type of subdivision in BWOP	WOP Brigade			Total in the three BWOPs
		Podlasko-Mazurska (Białystok)	Nadbużańska BWOP (Chełm, Lublin)	Bieszczady BWOP (Przemyśl)	
11.	Cat II watchtower	4 (Banie Mazurskie, Rutka Tartak, Lipsk, Białowieża).	5 (Janów Podlaski, Terespol, Sławatycze, Włodawa, Dołhobyczów).	8 (Korczowa, Ustrzyki Dolne, Wetlina, Roztoki Górne, Komańcza, Jaślicka, Barwinek, Ożenna).	17
12.	GPK	2 (Kuźnica, Siemianówka)	1 (Terespol)	2 (Barwinek, Medyka).	5
13.	Diversiónary watchtower	1 (Augustów)	–	–	1
Total of all subdivisions in the Eastern BWOP		19	15	24	58

Source: *Biuletyn dyslokacyjny WOP*, Wydawnictwo DWOP, Warszawa 1985 (copy in authors' collection), pp. 193–233.

In total, the three eastern WOP Brigades were assigned to protect the border with the former USSR: 3 de-escalation battalions, 1 de-escalation company, 1 de-escalation watchtower, 3 communication companies, 3 security companies, 3 technical companies, 3 repair and construction companies, 3 orchestra platoons, 13 cadre cat I watchtowers, 16 cadre cat II watchtowers and 4 Border Control Posts, as presented in the table below.

Table 4. Forces and resources of WOP in protecting the eastern border of the People's Republic of Poland according to the state 1985

No.	Name of BWOP	Organic subdivisions stationed in the BWOP area	Subdivisions operating in the service area of BWOP
1.	Podlasko-Mazurska BWOP in Białystok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de-escalation battalion, • c. communications, • c. security, • c. technical, • c. repair and construction, • orchestra platoon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff station cat I – Węgorzewo, • staff station category II – Banie Mazurskie, • category I – Gołdap personnel station, • category II personnel station – Rutka Tartak, • cadre station category I – Sejny, • cadre station category II – Lipsk, • staff guard post category I – Sokółka, • category I – Gródek personnel station, • staff guard post category II – Białowieża, • cadre station category I – Czeremcha, • GPK Kuźnica, • GPK Siemianówka, • drainage structure Augustów

No.	Name of BWOP	Organic subdivisions stationed in the BWOP area	Subdivisions operating in the service area of BWOP
2.	Nadbużańska BWOP in Chelm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de-escalation battalion, • c. communications, • c. security, • c. technical, • c. repair and construction, • orchestra platoon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff guard post category II – Janów Podlaski, • category II – Terespol personnel station, • cadre station category II – Sławatycze, • cadre station category II – Włodawa, • cadre station category I – Dorohusk, • category I – Hrubieszów personnel station, • cadre station II – Dołhobyczów, • cadre station category I – Lubyca Królewska, • GPK Terespol
3.	Bieszczady Mountain Operation Unit in Przemyśl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • c. retreat, • c. communications, • c. security, • c. technical, • c. repair and construction, • orchestra platoon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cat I – Lubaczów personnel guard, • cat I – Hermanowice personnel guard, • cadre guard cadre II – Ustrzyki Dolne, • cadre guard category I – Lutowiska, • cadre station II – Wetlina, • cadre guard category II – Roztoki Górne, • cadre guard category I – Lupków, • cadre guard category II – Komańcza, • cadre guard category II – Jaślika, • cadre guard category II – Barwinek, • cadre guard category II – Ożenna, • GPK Medyka, • Sanok retreat battalion
Overall in the three eastern BWOPs:		retreat battalions – 3, retreat battalion – 1, retreat guard – 1, communications battalions – 3, security battalions – 3, technical battalions – 3, renovation and construction battalions – 3, bandplatoons – 3, cadre guards cat I – 13, cadre guards cat II – 16, GPK – 4	

Source: *Biuletyn dyslokacyjny Wojsk Ochrony Pogranicza*, Wydawnictwo DWOP, Warszawa 1985 (copy in authors' collection), pp. 1–242.

Conclusions

Summarising the above, based on the source document, it should be recognised that the Eastern Border Protection Subsystem of the People's Republic of Poland in the mid-1980s comprised a relatively large number of forces and resources dedicated to the protection of this section of the People's Republic's border (58 different subdivisions).

However, between 1945 and 1991, the forces and resources allocated for this purpose varied considerably from period to period. In the last decade of WOP's existence, they were smaller than the forces operating on the other sections of the state border of the People's Republic of Poland (southern, western and maritime). Thus, against this background, the protection of the state border of the People's Republic of Poland with the USSR (eastern border) involved a relatively small percentage of the forces and resources of this formation. This was due to the fact that until the late 1980s these countries were allied states and functioned within

a single political-military bloc, called the Warsaw Pact (UW). The political structures of the UW were not dissolved until 1 July 1991.

It should also be remembered that the activity of WOP coincided with significant socio-political events that took place both domestically and internationally. This could not remain without influence on the organisation of the units, forms of activity, recruitment of professional personnel and soldiers of basic military service (hereinafter: zsw) to this formation, as well as on the organisation of the subsystem of protection of this border, or participation in the tasks of the security organs of the People's Republic of Poland. This formation changed its subordination several times between 1945 and 1991, which also affected the nature of the tasks it performed. However, throughout that period it was assigned to protect the state border, and the change of subordination from the Ministry of National Defence to the Ministry of the Interior resulted in a change in the nature of its tasks from military-defensive to political.⁶

On 19 November 1990, the Acts of 12 October 1990 came into force, "On Border Guard" and "Protection of the State Border." At the same time, work was underway to reform the WOP formation into the Border Guard (SG). On 15 May 1991, the WOP formation was stood down and the tasks of protecting the eastern border of the Republic of Poland were taken over by the current Border Guard.

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Archiwum Instytucji (Centralnych) MON w Modlinie

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⁶ Cf. I. Bieniecki, *Wojska Ochrony Pogranicza w systemie ochrony i obrony granicy morskiej Polski w latach 1965–1991*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pomorskiej w Słupsku, Słupsk 2015, pp. 1–480.

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Archiwum Wojsk Lądowych w Toruniu

Summary

The eastern border protection subsystem of the People's Republic of Poland provided protection of one of the four sections of the state border in the years 1945–1991. The second part of the article presents the organisation of the eastern border protection subsystem of the People's Republic of Poland by the Border Protection Forces (WOP) until 1991 (dissolution of this formation).