



Military Transformation Challenges: Moldova and Montenegro

BY PROFESSOR B.F. GRIFFARD

Small nations are like indecently dressed women—they tempt the evil minded.

—Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, 1964

The dissolution of the Soviet Bloc and the disintegration of Yugoslavia produced 22 new independent governments across Europe and Central Asia. Prior to 1991 these countries were part of integrated economic and military structures where they contributed what was required and shared in the benefits of their closed loop systems. For those smaller entities at the lower end of the viability spectrum, independence, with the resulting disappearance of the economic and defense security blankets, has been more of a cold shower than a warm bath.

In order to survive these countries must develop workable economic and security strategies. Economically, they are reaching out to neighbors and regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), the Nordic Council, and the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO) to build new business and commerce networks. In the national security arena the United States (U.S.) is active in providing assistance in Central Asia, and in tandem with its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, also in Europe and the Caucasus. A key piece in creating a viable security organization for these former Soviet and Yugoslavian states is the development of professional and technically competent militaries

U.S. Army War College Support to the U.S. Combatant Commands

For the U.S., the primary instruments for military transformation initiatives within the former Soviet Bloc and Yugoslavian countries are the Combatant Commands (COCOMs). Under the auspices of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's (CJCS) Joint Contact Team Program, the COCOM's employ innovative military to military programs as part of their individual theater security cooperation plans. Using traveling contact teams (TCT) they actively engage at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

The U.S. Army War College (USAWC) and its Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL) have a strategic communication mission to support the Joint Warfighting and Interagency communities in their security cooperation efforts. Its experienced faculty is a valuable resource for joint military, multinational, interagency, and intergovernmental activities at the strategic and operational levels. Over the past 18 months, it has provided seminar TCTs in support of the U.S. European Command's (USEUCOM) military transformation efforts for Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Estonia, Macedonia, Moldova, and Montenegro. Seminar topics included Strategic Defense Planning; NATO Organization, Operations, and Standardization; Joint Staff Structure; Joint Operations Planning, Roles, and Functions; Role of the Armed Forces in the War on Terrorism; and Strategic Force Planning. During these seminars the security challenges faced by the smaller countries are obvious. Now independent, their militaries have limited capabilities, and cannot, in and of themselves, guarantee the security of their countries. To better understand the security challenges faced by smaller states; this paper looks at the results the USAWC-conducted seminars in Moldova,

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one of the poorest countries in Europe, and Montenegro, the smallest state to evolve from the breakup of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY).

MOLDOVA

The absence of a credible military capability was a specific concern in the countries with underdeveloped or immature economic systems such as Moldova. Wedged between Romania and Ukraine, it achieved its independence from the Soviet Union in August 1991. Moldova's economic outlook is clouded by a lack of manufacturing and energy resources, and the existence of Russian forces on Moldovan territory east of the Dniester River, the self-proclaimed "Transnistria" republic. These economic and political realities resulted in Moldova's Parliament debating in late 2007 the necessity for the continued existence of a Moldovan Army.¹

Today Moldova's leading industry is emigration, legal and illegal, mostly to Russia and the EU. According to the World Bank, remittances from these workers accounts for 27.5% of Moldova's gross domestic product (GDP). Although this is a plus for reducing welfare, such activity provides little impetus to the domestic economy since less than 7% finances business investment.² This absence of a sound economic base impacts heavily on any transformation efforts undertaken by the Moldovan Armed Forces.



Military Forces Transformation

In assessing their vulnerable security situation the Moldovan Ministry of Defense (MOD) is focused on establishing closer relationships with the EU and NATO. A boost in this effort would be the transformation of the National Army into a lighter, deployable force capable of NATO support operations. To support this effort and to familiarize Moldovan MOD staff with the U.S. Military Forces Transformation Process, Professor B.F. Griffard and Colonel Dale C. Eikmeier, USAWC/CSL conducted a Military Forces Transformation Seminar, September 24-27, 2007, in Chisinau, Moldova. As this information was presented it generated discussion of the particular transformation obstacles faced by the Moldovan Armed Forces planners – institutional inertia and the absence of a national-level security document providing the necessary guidance for defense planning.

The Moldovan participants were all knowledgeable of transformation concepts and the processes involved. Many of them had attended NATO or U.S. schools to include two recent graduates of the U.S. Army Command and Staff College, and one graduate of the German General Staff School. As a group they were involved in the development of a transformational command structure for the Moldovan Armed Forces. During the seminar the USAWC team was able to offer some constructive comments and possible innovative approaches to maximizing the use of the limited manpower available for manning the strategic, operational, and tactical staff levels. This session revealed a solid grasp by these staff college trained officers of the subtleties of a transformation effort, and identified this younger generation as the tool to overcome institutional inertia.



Moldova Military Forces Transformation Participants.

Without question, their greatest obstacle is the absence of a national-level security document that provides the necessary guidance for defense planning. Without such national-level guidance developing a concept for the armed forces that includes the necessary capabilities to support national policy is a bridge too far. The participants recognized that working a transformational concept prior to the publication of a Security White Paper could rapidly become an exercise in futility.

1. Bohlen, Celestine, "Letter from Moldova" *International Herald Tribune*, 11 December 2007.

2. IOM, *Migration and Remittances Survey 2006*, <http://www.iom.md/migration&development.html>.

An Unclear Future

Moldova exists in an environment of uncertainty surrounded by covetous neighbors. It needs the protection of powerful allies to ensure the economic and political stability necessary to reach maturity. The lack of defined roles and missions for the armed forces lessens the impact of military to military efforts focused on modernization and professionalization, thus delaying the achievement of NATO partnership capability.

MONTENEGRO

In June 2006 Montenegro became the sixth Balkan country generated from the collapse of the SFRY. Today, after two years of autonomy, it appears to have benefitted by studying the difficulties of those States that preceded them on this path. Its history is a major contributor to the smoothness of the transition. Since its founding in the 15th century, Montenegro maintained independence from the Ottoman Empire, an advantage not shared by its Bosnian and Albanian neighbors.

In contrast to Moldova, at independence Montenegro's economic situation was viable. It had severed its economy from federal control and from Serbia during the Milosevic era.³ Since that time Montenegro maintained its own central bank, using first the German Mark, then the Euro (since 2002) instead of the Yugoslav Dinar as official currency; collecting customs tariffs, and managing its own budget. The dissolution of the loose political union between Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 led to separate membership in several international financial institutions, as well as a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union in anticipation of eventual membership. Though unemployment in the region is a problem, Montenegro's economy is supported by a large aluminum complex, an operating financial sector, and foreign direct investment in the tourism sector.⁴ This stable economic base provides resources capable of supporting the transformation of the Montenegrin Armed Forces.



Armed Forces Modernization and Professionalization

With the separation from Serbia, Montenegro inherited trained and disciplined in-place ground and naval forces. Their goal is to transform these units into a NATO compatible force consisting of a light infantry brigade, a helicopter-based air force and a navy capable of coastal patrolling, search and rescue (SAR), and counter-terror operations. As with any modernizing force the two major challenges are personnel and equipment. With independence came the end to conscription so the development of both a solid non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps and an officer development system are areas of emphasis. Major equipment projects include the replacement of its JNA (Yugoslav Army) soviet-era aircraft with modern helicopters, and the conversion of its existing blue water frigates to patrol craft.



COL Cedomir Marinovic, G1, Armed Forces of Montenegro summarizes personnel transformation discussions.

In support of USEUCOM and the Montenegrin Armed Forces modernization and professionalization initiatives, the USAWC provided a TCT to Montenegro July 15-17, 2008. The USAWC team consisted of Professor Bernard F. Griffard, CSL, and Colonel William R. Applegate, Department of National Security and Strategy (DNSS). On the Montenegrin side, the seminar co-chair was Colonel Cedomir Marinovic, G1, Armed Forces of Montenegro. Other key participants included the Deputy Infantry Brigade Commander, the G3 Operations, the G3 Training, and senior logisticians. Prior to the start of the seminar goals and objectives of the event were discussed with the Chief of Staff of the General Staff, General of Division, Milosavljevic.

3. Slobodan Milošević was a dominant and controversial political figure in Serbia as President of Serbia and later Yugoslavia during the 1990s until his overthrow in 2000, *Wikipedia*.

4. *Moldova*, World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, 2008.

A requirement for NATO integration is the establishment of an operating Joint Force headquarters. To assist in this effort the TCT, using the U.S. Joint Staff structure as the model, presented a joint staff concept that included staff integration and communication techniques designed to ensure staff situational awareness and access to relevant information. Given the small size of the armed forces (projected to be 2400) and the limited population base (approximately 678,000 people) from which they draw, the importance of leveraging personnel (officers, NCOs, & civilians) was stressed throughout the seminar.



Montenegrin officers discuss Joint Staff Structure.

Adriatic Outlook

In its two years of existence Montenegro has overcome or avoided many of the self-destructive tendencies of its neighbors. It has maximized the attraction of its Adriatic coast with a thriving tourist trade and the infrastructure to support it. If the Montenegrin government manages to keep its economy on track, the Armed Forces of Montenegro should achieve its modernization and professionalization goals. Qualifying for NATO integration is attainable, providing national sovereignty guarantees not achievable by a standalone Montenegrin Army.

Strategic Planning: A Necessary Skill

Coming from a culture of central planning and control the new states evolved from the former Soviet Bloc and the SFRY share a common shortfall – they lack an understanding of strategic planning. Operating in a limited resource environment, military planners must be capable of articulating their requirements in the context of national security goals and objectives. The criticality of this skill is well illustrated by the Moldovan example. The development of a strategic planning program TCT that encourages interagency participation and employs workshops to create an actual product will provide the military planners with the focus and skills to compete for the resources necessary for armed forces transformation.

On the plus side the USEUCOM security cooperation efforts in these new states are focused on the right audience – tomorrow’s leaders. Today’s efforts will result in a solid base of professionally trained and educated officers and NCOs who are the future of these countries’ armed forces.

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MILITARY TRANSFORMATION CHALLENGES: MOLDOVA AND MONTENEGRO

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