

TACTICA

magazine

#12

**READING THE
FIRE WITH
VATRA DORNEI'S
FIREFIGHTERS**

**DON'T RUN
FROM SNIPERS,
YOU'LL JUST
DIE TIRED**

**BLACK SEA
ROTATIONAL
FORCE**

**SIAS'S
SNIPERS**

**SAS
CONSTANTA**

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

BEST OF TACTICA MAGAZINE #0-11



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Tactica's story

I loved the army since I was 5-6 years old. I used to salute the soldiers who marched on the town's streets on their way to the firing range and I always got back a salute and a smile. I wanted to be a soldier when I grew up. But in the communist era, a woman couldn't be a soldier. I gave up telling people that I wanted to be a soldier but never stopped wanting to serve.

Sometime at the beginning of 2013, at about 3 in the night (or morning for some) I was reading Tactical New Magazine and I was sad that we, in Romania, don't have a similar publication. I wondered what if I'll try to make one. I talked to some friends passionate about military and police trying to put together the magazine. Six months later, with my friends still talking about when to meet, I said to myself that I should give it a try on my own. In the middle of the night, again, I started working and, using articles that I had already and my graphic design skills, I created the layout, and in few hours, I had most of the magazine done.

I still needed to handle some details like the name, logo, color scheme. I managed to do all these the next day and so Tactica Magazine was created. The site and social media accounts came along later.

After two years of making the magazine and learning a lot about publishing and running a magazine, I saw that it can go further, that I can do more and that Tactica can grow. First step was to make it in English so it can be accessible to more people. That led to me moving to UK to improve my English. Next step is to restart publishing the magazine, and I have chosen to do this at Invictus Games in Toronto this September because I am a volunteer for Invictus Romania, and the first participation of the Romanian Team to the Games is an important moment for me.

This issue is a compilation of some of the best stories published so far. But this time they are in English so anyone can read them. It also marks a new stage for the magazine, which will be published in English from now on.

Marcella Dragan



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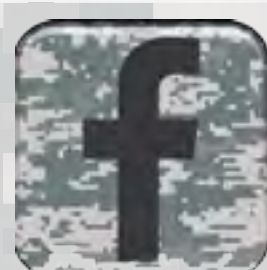


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Black Sea Rotational Force

PLATINUM
LYNX 15.1

text & photo: Marcella Drăgan



The multinational Black Sea Rotational Force Platinum Lynx 15.1 exercise with troops in the field and live fire, signified a prime opportunity for the Romanian Mountain Rangers Unit and US Marines to train together.



The latest module, hosted by 17th Mountain Rangers Battalion „Dragos Voda” and held in the Rarau Mountains and Rotunda Gorge, brought together servicemen from 61 Mountain Rangers Brigade „General Virgil Badulescu” - 22nd Mountain Rangers Battalion 22 „Ciresoia” from Sfantu Gheorghe and 24th Mountain Rangers Battalion „General George Avramescu” from Miercurea Ciuc – and US Marines from Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment.





The servicemen from the two partner countries trained together for nearly one week, sharing their knowledge of weapons and equipment, procedures and techniques, and movements, and the combat required in harsh terrains such as forest and mountain environments. The last part of the exercise involved defending a foothold in which Romanian Mountain Rangers and US Marines trained side by side, forming mixed teams



that prepared and led defense operations. The counterattack also involved helicopters from 95 Air Base „Hero aviator Captain Alexander Serbanescu” of Bacau.

The first day of the exercise focused on soldiers becoming better familiar with the respective armies’ military ranks, technique and armament, the second day signaled the start of the actual training in which US Marines were introduced to mountain and alpine techniques. Once in the Rarau Mountains, they trained with equipment specific



I accompanied the Mountain Rangers from 24th Battalion „General George Avramescu“, with which we went, on the first day of instruction in Rodna Mountains, in a march towards the glacial lake Lala and Ineu Peak. We were led by Sergeant-Major Nicolae Olar from 17th Mountain Rangers Battalion, who guided us on the 15 km route. We reached Lala Lake which is at an altitude of 1,815 meters and the servicemen from the 22nd Mountain Rangers

to military mountaineering and learned from the Romanian Mountain Rangers modern methods of free climbing and rappelling, funicular and rope transportation and MEDEVAC of wounded and military equipment.

The next two days were the most intense for both the US and the Romanian servicemen, as in these two days they conducted the live-fire exercises and the mountain marches, each of the two Mountain Rangers Battalions taking half of US Marines.





with a 120 mm caliber mortar, joined by the 81 mm mortar platoon of the US Marines. Fighting simulation continued with the introduction of scouts who rappelled into locations from IAR 330 Puma SOCAT helicopters. The soldiers were successful in their mission, which was to secure a command point, then to install and secure an observation post.

The next assignment was the installation of the support point

Battalion „Ciresoia”, who made the trail the next day, arrived at Ineu Peak (elevation 2279 meters).

The fourth day of the exercise brought the Romanian and American servicemen in Rotunda fire range, to conduct a field exercise with troops and live-fire. Following a tactical scenario, a support company executed fire





and fighting devices. Using the horses from the hypo company of 22 MT Battalion „Ciresoaia”, the AG-9 grenade launchers and 82 mm mortars were transported to the firing positions, and fire was executed against enemy positions. Romanians were joined by the 81 mm and 60 mm mortars of the Marines, covering the flanks of the Mountain Rangers Company. Air support was requested, and the helicopters from 95 Base returned to attack



enemy positions. During this time, the Marines succeeded in stopping and destroying the enemy's infiltration into the defense positions. After stopping the enemy, the US military joined the Mountain Rangers boarded on the MLVM (combat vehicles specific for Mountain Rangers) for the final counter-attack. The last point of the exercise included



again the helicopters from the 95 Base, which executed a MEDEVAC mission, evacuating the wounded from the battle field, action that completed the exercise.

For the Romanian military, trainings in mountainous areas are a regular task. But for the US Marines the simulation was a novel experience that gave them the opportunity to learn new things and share their knowledge. „Many of the Marines learned from Romanian Mountain Rangers rock climbing techniques and modern methods of free climbing and rappelling, funicular transport of wounded and military equipment. They also taught us mechanized infantry tactics. We showed them our method of engagement by sharing methods of conducting fire and maneuver,” said Captain Matthew Deffenbaugh, Weapons Company Commander, 2d Battalion, 2d Marines, Black Sea Rotational Force.

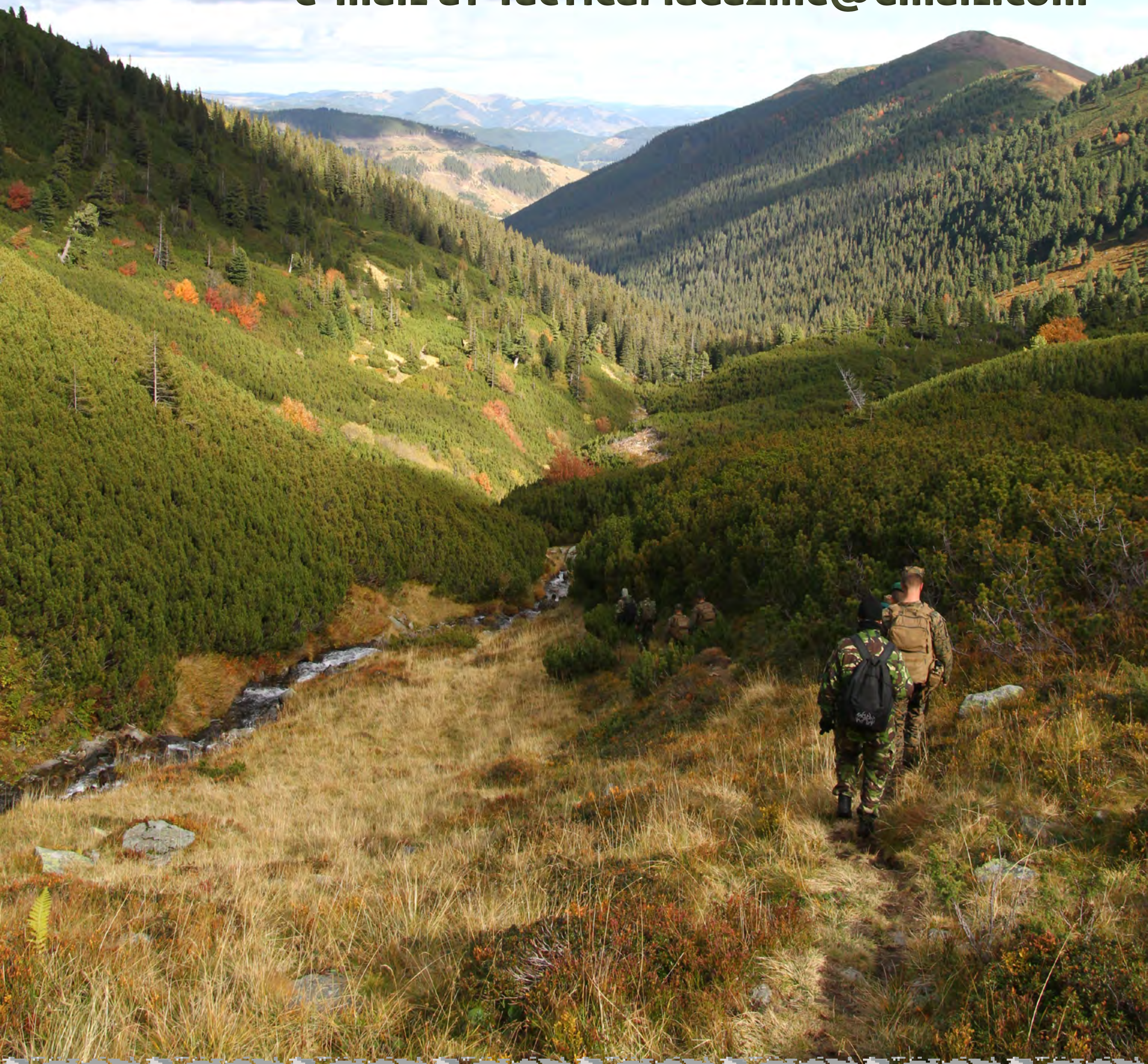
The last day of the BSRF brought together all the participants, this time not for training, but for a cultural program that showed them some of the attractions of Bukovina: Cacica Salt Mine, Moldovita Monastery and the International Painted Eggs Museum from Moldovita.



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FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE

EODD

**EXPLOSIVE
ORDNANCE
DETECTING DOGS**



text & photo: Marcella Drăgan

The service dogs in the EODD teams are perhaps the most loved "soldiers" in the Romanian Army and certainly the most popular among children when they take part in public events. And if they could talk, they would probably say that their job is a play.

FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



But their role in theaters of operations is an important one, especially in today's conflicts that are so different from classical ones.

A play that I was able to see on the day I was a guest of the EOD Group 2, 1st Infantry Division "DACICA" that includes the EODD (Explosive Ordnance Detecting Dogs - Detection of Ammunition and Explosive Devices with dog help).

There I met major sergeant Dinca Costin and sergeant major Mocanu Robertino, the first being the handler of Lord, the dog who showed us part of the training they do almost every day. Because, as the two soldiers have explained, there are several factors that influence the daily training of a dog, like his physical condition, his health, and energy, weather conditions, the daily activity being adapted to all that, and can include just walk or play, avoiding drills and identifying explosive materials.

Lord, however, was in excellent shape and did all the exercises he had prepared for that day.

FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



The scenarios of these activities are designed to be as close as possible to situations that may be encountered in theaters of operations. The first exercise was to search a car that might have been at a point of control, entering a forward operating base (FOB) or a military unit. This control is carried out on each vehicle so that it does not contain IED (improvised explosive devices). Then followed a field investigation to find antipersonnel mines. Several

false mines were placed on the ground and only one of them contained a sample of explosives. This is the most used method of dog training, by placing a sample of explosives in different places, such as cars, boxes, bridges, and careful investigation of them by the handler-dog team until the sample is found and then the dog receiving the reward, which most of the time is a small ball and, of course, the love of the handler. The third exercise of the day was the exploration of a bridge, a very



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



common situation in theaters, as in the missions in Afghanistan, where these objectives were checked with great care.

Once the exercise program is over, Lord has received his ball and he started running and playing, giving us the time to talk about how it is to be a soldier accompanied by a dog in Afghanistan. The biggest difference that the servicemen saw was the reluctance of local people due to cultural differences because there dogs are not pets,

and sometimes they are regarded as impure, which made it difficult to thoroughly check the homes of the locals.

EODD (Explosive Ordnance Detecting Dogs)

The EODD Team consists of a conductor, EOD specialist, and a German shepherd dog.

The teams are formed at the Dog Growing, Training and Training Center in Râmnicu Vâlcea, where the training for



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



equipping equipment according to the specific situation, facing the different types of threats, the dog's correct leadership to operate efficiently, including under the influence of various disturbing factors such as gunfire.

The training is continued and refined daily, minimum 2 hours, at the unit where the EODD team is located and is run by the dog conductor, according to a program approved by the unit commander. A few more hours are allocated for dog care, maintaining health, feeding, playing and strengthening dog-handler attachment.

Dog training takes place in places, environments, and conditions as close as possible to the reality of the situations encountered in Operational Theaters, but also in various places and situations in the urban environment, such as means of transport, habituating the dog with noises, the presence of foreign persons and other animals, olfactory environment marked by different specific substances.

In the Operational Theaters, the EODD's main mission is to investigate and detect IED as well as other objects containing industrial or artisanal explosives, possibly in suspected parcels, cars, buildings (inhabited, uninhabited or abandoned), control points, open areas and road sections.

These improvised explosive devices (IED) are located in different places, such as: in motor vehicles and suicide bombers, access to military bases, on road sectors used for the movement of patrols and convoys, in buildings and in their vicinity, in crowded areas.

Training also continues in Operational Theaters through a training module with American



the dog is conducted for a period of 4 months, under the direct leadership of the dog's conductor.

The preparation of the canine team involves both the improvement of the dog's ability to respond promptly

and appropriately to the conductor's orders, as well as the improvement of the conductor's skills to act in accordance with the particular circumstances of the tactical environment, namely the proper use of all

FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE

partners to train dogs to detect new types of explosives encountered in the conflict area and specifically to detect artillery explosives.

EOD (Explosive Ordnance Detecting)

An integral part of the DACICA Infantry Division 2 EOD Group, they are a relatively new element, teams equipped with explosive detection dogs - EODD (Explosive Ordnance Detecting Dogs) - were introduced into the EOD platoons since 2008.

Thus, for the soldiers who chose to be handlers, working with dogs comes as a task in addition to the EOD training. The name of the EOD specialization comes from the abbreviation of Explosive Ordnance Disposal.

Group 2 EOD is a structure dedicated to NATO, subordinated to the Command of the 1st Infantry Division "DACICA", which has the mission to provide EOD support to the forces of the division in the area of responsibility entrusted both on national territory and in theaters of operations.

The 96th Genius Battalion, 2nd EOD Group, was established in 2005 with the overall mission to eliminate or reduce the dangers of unexploded conventional, chemical and biological ammunition, as well as the improvised explosive devices that threaten personnel, objectives, materials, operations, actions and military activities.

On 01.11.2011, Group 2 EOD was subordinated to the 1st Infantry Division "DACICA".

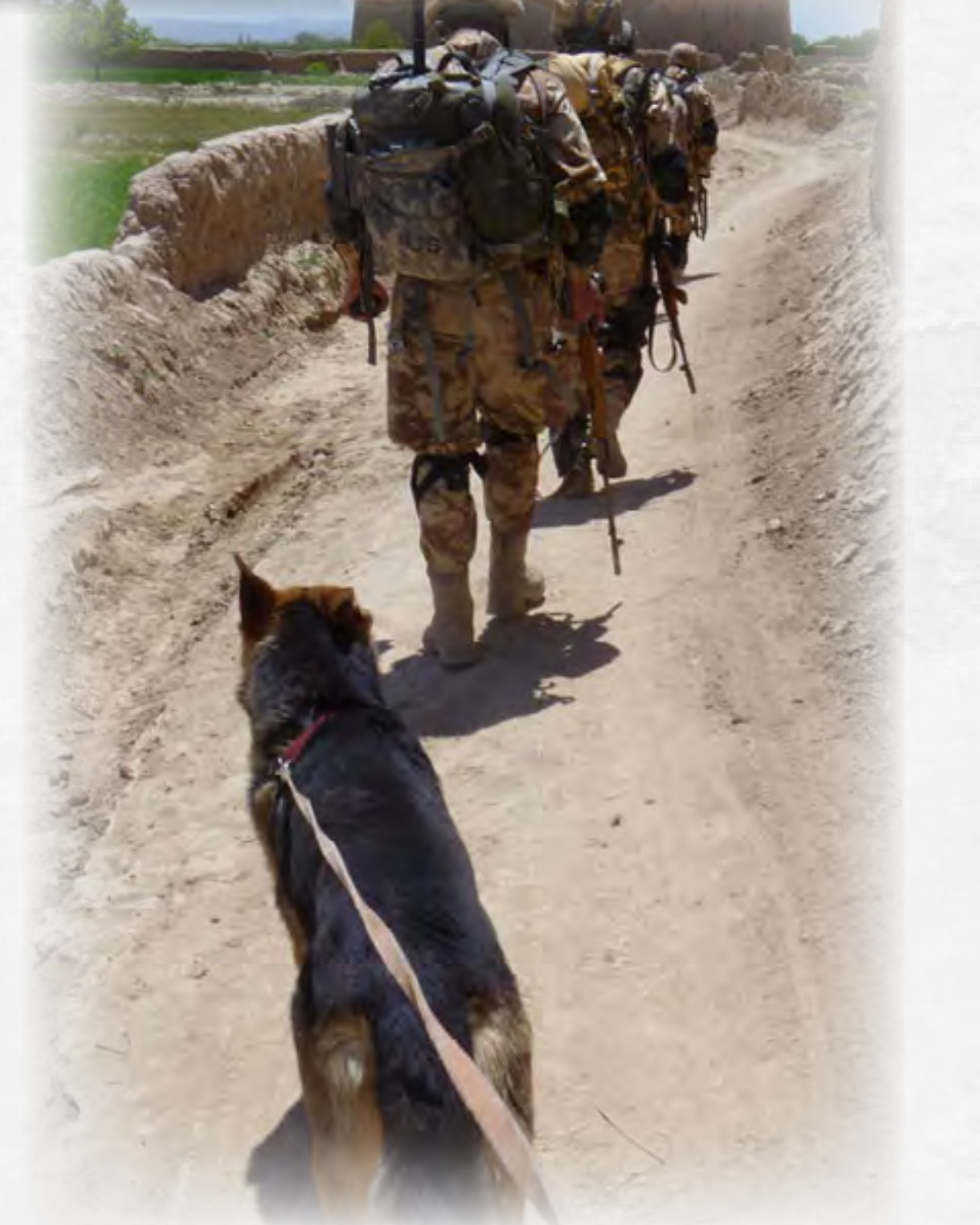
The subunit is made up of specialized forces with high operational, mobile, fast response and short response time to emergency situations, ready to



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



COSTIN & LORD



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



ROBERTINO & BENNY



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE

meet the requirements for which they were established, endowed and prepared.

All EOD Group 2 soldiers attended various training courses for EOD operators and specialization in the country, and most of them abroad (USA, Greece, the Netherlands, Germany).

Annually, each EOD specialist, in relation to the function he/she occupies, participates in training and training conventions at the EOD Training Base, completed with tests for competency assessment and certification according to "Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel - Minimum Performance Standards for EOD Operators".

Since its creation, Group 2 EOD has participated in a wide range of missions and activities. It assisted the EOD during the SUMMIT of the Francophonie in 2006 and during NATO SUMMIT in 2008.

It participated in two practical exercises in the "Post-Conflict Stabilization and Reconstruction Training Courses" organized by the Ministry of Business External in 2010-2011 with participants from different states, training of EOD and C-IED of maneuvering battalions and detachments that were deployed in the Afghanistan Operations Theater, as well as of the soldiers who were selected to participate in UN missions peacekeeping in various post-conflict areas, demonstration exercises on visits of foreign military delegations or festive days.

Equally, Group 2 EOD soldiers have a very good experience of fulfilling missions outside the national territory, participated in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan's theater of operations in the battalions of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, the 2 Mountain Vigor Brigade, the Brigade 1



Mechanized Argedava and 282 Mechanized Infantry Brigade, 2010-2013.

On the national territory, Group 2 EOD provided EOD support during Artillery and Infantry Artillery

Combat Arms, executed by the Military Units of the DACICA Infantry Division, and provided EOD support to Military Units of the GETICA 2nd Infantry Division "And the 4th Infantry Division "GEMINA".

EOD presentation from Curierul Armatei 33



Invictus Romania

Romania has announced the team that will represent it at the Invictus Games Toronto 2017. Participating for the first time at the game, after receiving the invitation in September 2016, the Romanian team will count 15 wounded soldiers and veterans, that will participate in 7 adaptive sports: archery, athletics, indoor rowing, powerlifting, road cycle, sitting volleyball, swimming.

Major Laurentiu Serban, Special Operations Component, Bucharest

Sergeant first class Doru Hamza, 300th Infantry Battalion "Sf. Andrei", Galati

Sergeant Bogdan Dragomir, 620th Special Operations Battalion, Buzau

Sergeant major Costel Stanciu, 630th Paratroopers Battalion, Bacau

Sergeant major Costinel Slăniceanu, CBRN Defense Training Base, Campulung Muscel

Master Sergeant Irinel Matei, CBRN Defense Training Base, Campulung Muscel

Lieutenant Ciprian Iriciuc, 17th Mountain Troops Battalion "Dragos Voda", Vatra Dornei.

Master Sergeant Dumitru Paraschiva, "Constantin Brancoveanu" Training Center for Infantry and Mountain Troops, Fagaras

Major Nicolae Grigore, Protection and Security Detachment of the Ministry of National Defense, Bucharest.

Sergeant major Eugen Mănăilă, 620th Special Operations Battalion, Buzau,

Caporal Eugen Pătru, 84th Maintenance Center, Bucharest

Sergeant first class Ionuț Butoi, CBRN Defense Training Base, Campulung Muscel

Colonel Augustin Pegulescu, commander of the Timis Zonal Military Center

Colonel Dorin Petruț, retired

Master sergeant Ionel Eugen Bida, Emergency Military Hospital "Alexandru Gafencu", Constanta.

The Invictus Games were established in 2014 by Prince Harry. It is the only international adaptive sporting event for wounded, ill and injured active duty and veteran service members, inspired by the US-based Warrior Games. The Games use the power of adaptive sport to help wounded warriors on their journeys to recovery.

The inaugural Invictus Games took place in London in fall of 2014. Over 450 competitors from 13 nations attended the Games to compete in a variety of adaptive sports.

In May 2016, the second Invictus Games were held in Orlando, Florida, and built on the excitement of the London Games with more than 500 competitors from 15 nations. 🖱️

INVICTUS
PENTRU LUPTĂTORII NOȘTRI RĂNIȚI
PENTRU CA PUTEM

FII O PARTE DIN
TRICOLORUL ROMÂNIEI LA
INVICTUS
GAMES



FOR OUR WOUNDED WARRIORS



DON'T RUN FROM SNIPERS, YOU'LL JUST DIE TIRED

text & photo: Marcella Drăgan

In Romania, we first heard about the snipers from the American movies. Then we start seeing them at different occasions, like a national celebration, open days' events or Police Day.

Starting from few photos taken at one of those events, I manage to get an interview with one of the police snipers, the chief of the snipers' team from the Romanian Independent Special Actions and Intervention Service (SIAS).

Out of his ghillie suit, the sniper is just one of us, happy, friendly, and open. He responds to all my questions with pleasure and he speaks with passion, the same passion that he had for his job in over two decades of work.

I start my interview with the banalest and simple question of all, and the answer flows for tens of minutes, sometimes answering other questions that I had prepared.

Tactica Magazine: Why did you choose this job and how you started?

Sniper: I loved it since I was a small child. My first encounter with this job was when I was in the fifth grade. I was living close to the border, and I had access, in one open days' type of event at the Border Patrol Headquarters, to a PSL (Pusca Semiautomata cu Luneta - a semi-automatic rifle with scope). From all the weapons that were exposed there, I was fascinated with the PSL. I think that in half of hour I've learned to handle all the weapons that they show me. Every summer, in the holiday, all day long I was on the border, mounting and dismounting weapons. I shouldn't have been giving a weapon, but.... This is what I was doing. When I joined the Army, I used the same rifle.

In the Police force, for a long time, the sniper was like a Cinderella, ignored and misunderstood. Nobody knew what it really meant. There was a guy that was doing this too. He was going to the firing range, fired from 100 m

and if he hit the target and got a 10, he was good. [10 – the central point from a target, +10 is the best score one can obtain with a single bullet]. In reality, being a sniper is way different.

This situation was going on long after '89. Then, having more and more contacts with the police forces from West Europe, and seeing what it really meant to do this job, we started to learn and to get more information. The situation really started to change around 1999, when we received two PSG (Präzisions-Schützen-Gewehr), manufactured by HK (Heckler & Koch). It was a huge step ahead. Then we saw that in open field, and at long distances, we cannot fire as we used to. If the wind was blowing or something happened, we missed the target. We wonder why. So, we go on the internet and start researching. This is how we learned. We saw that a sniper uses a ballistic program, that gives him the bullet trajectory taking into consideration the weather conditions and the firing distance.

The first contest that we went to was a turning point. It was an international championship in Hungary, in 2004. To prepare for it, we went in the field and we fire for two weeks, and we write down everything. If there was the sun, the time of the day, the direction of the wind and its speed. How fast was the wind? 5m/sec. How did I fire? I should adjust by 3 clicks. That was our first ballistic program and I still have those papers.

At the contest, when those with a longer experience saw us there, they ask us what were we doing there. "We're in the contest" we answer. "With those weapons?" "Yes" "And with that ammunition?" "Yes". It was normal war ammunitions, and the one used by snipers is different.

"If you say so" they answer us.

We looked at the ones we believed to have more experience, to be professionals. They all have carabiners. The ones with semi-automatic rifles were like us, not necessary from East Europe, some were from the Middle East, some from the Hungarian Army, we all had PSL or Dragunov.

In that year, with our papers, calculating what we had recorded with the situation on the field, we overpass all those that were firing with the semi-automatic rifles. In rest, everyone else beat the hell out of us. At short range, we manage to get some points. But the first day we had zero points. Our boss was black with anger. When the speed and reacting shooting started, we started to collect some points. This is how we beat the ones with the semi-automatic rifles, but we still came on the 70th place.

For us, that was a good experience. We saw what it really means and it should be done. We ask what ballistic program they use and they told us that it is a program made by a Swedish mathematician and that it is free on the web like its creator wanted it. Is the best ballistic program. We found it, we took it, and we ask for weapons. We were given SSG 3000. Not the best but is the top three.

We didn't participate in the contest in the next year but in 2006. We were by now specialists. We had a ballistic program, we learned how to use it, and we get the fifth place, that no one there could believe it. Some of the snipers that we looked at as if they were gods two years back, now came to congratulate us. That was a huge satisfaction. Because they remember us and how we were when we first came and what equipment we had, and they saw our evolution and the jump we did.

This is how we started. We were pioneers with the ballistic part, me, my boss and two other guys. One has died, the other left the system. So, I and my boss had to put together and train a team. We selected few peoples and we started the training. Most of them followed the same training as I did. Because I used the contests to make friends and meet snipers from around the world. They invited us to different pieces of training and classes. Otto Simonyi, one of the best sniper in the world, several times international champion, was one of those who invited us to train. He liked me, used to call me fox because I steal everything I could from him as far as the job goes. So, we went in a couple training in Hungary and he came once in Romania to teach us.

TM: What does a sniper have to know? What is his training?

S: First of all, the fighter has to have a good mental health and be a strong character, to be calm and with a great control. This is the first thing I ask from a fighter. After that, he needs to know the weapon. To feel it when he fires. I, if I fire a shot I know if I hit or if I missed.

Then he needs the how to use the ballistic program, which varies according to the weapon and ammunition. He must have a great physical condition. He must able to train with all the gear that the team uses. Because, after his part, as the sniper job is done, he has to go to support the team just as another fighter. Maybe they need help. I take the assault weapon, like the rest of the guys and I help them. Or there are missions where, because of the terrain, you cannot go in as a sniper. Then I join the team as one of the fighters.

TM: Where do you do your



training?

S: There are some fire-ranges but are too short for me. For me, the fact that I don't have a fire-range is a good thing. Having a fire-range that we can use, me and my team will learn it, and we will make no progress. But, not having a fire-range, I go to different places in the country. I use the Army's fire-ranges or the SPP's ones. Each location is different so I improve. I have the wind from different directions, I have different altitude, I have hills and valleys. And that is a huge advantage for me. In the large fire-ranges, like the one the Army has, I encounter the same real-life conditions as the ones in which I do my job in. I can see if the ballistic program works if the ammunition that I use is good or

not. Because I have ammunition for short or long distances, lighter or heavier, perforating ammunition that passes through windows, that doesn't deviate the bullet. Because at a certain angle a windscreen will deviate the bullet and I might hurt my colleagues. There are things that are learned from practice and having different locations helps. It's great that I find understanding among other forces, and also, we change information about weapons and ammunition.

We also have training camps, which are useful. I get to fire at different times of the day, from early morning till night. And I see how the bullet behaves in the morning when is colder, during the day with the sun, or in the evening. And then there

is the light. There's a difference between shooting at an artificial lighted target and at the one that is lighted naturally. In the field, you have the mirage and you can no longer see the target. Then there are fire-ranges with cross winds, and the settings from one side are not working on a different side.

All these things you get them by working. And it doesn't take few days. It took me 4-5 years so I can say I am good. I can hit without problems a target 300 meters away, without having doubts that I can make the shoot. Now I fired at 490 meters, with a 12 m/sec wind, that I could barely stand, and I hit 8.

I even hit a bottle. We use bottles as targets from practical reasons. At long distances or in high wind is hard to watch through the scope and see if I hit or not my target. So, I use a bottle or a small object so I can see if I fire near it or on the ground. I see where the dust rises. On a target, I cannot see as easily and I lose time if I have to go and check. But like that, I can see where I fire and I can make the necessary corrections.

We also use the abandoned buildings from the fire ranges. It's a different feeling when you fire from a room. You may have the surprise of having pieces of the ceiling falling on you. Then you have the noise and the dust. We saw that if you fire from the open ground, the grouping is about 5 cm. If we fired from inside a building, the grouping was about 20 cm. In a building, you don't have a comfortable position.

TM: What is the structure of a sniper team?

S: The team is always made by a sniper and a spotter. Comparing with the teams from the rest of Europe or USA, they have half

of the force snipers and the other half normal intervention. There 80-90% of interventions are resolved using snipers. We do the same, meaning that we use the snipers' team to cover the intervention teams. Until now, in Romania, at none of the interventions I've participated in, have I required firing. But is easy to eliminate a target using a sniper team than an intervention one.

TM: How can someone get into the SIAS sniper team?

S: First of all, he has to have experience as a police officer, either as a fighter or as a street patrol. After he works hard and goes through all the tough situations for few years, when he is around 30 years old he can

come to me so I can see him and decide if is any good for the job or not.

Officially, the interview is over, but on my way out he answers to some personal curiosities. "From all the snipers you know, from whom you learned the most?" "Otto Simonyi. That's clear! Then the Russians. Generally, the ex-soviets have a long tradition in the job." "How long have you stood in one place without moving?" "From evening till next day at noon." "How much does your gear weigh?" No answer. "If you cannot tell me..." "I can. Just let me see... the rifle has 7 kilograms, and I have my standard gear will all the weapons that all the fighters have, then there is the telemeter, binocular anemometer, telescope"



SIAS's Snipers



They are considered to be the best policemen, and a few hours with SIAS's small sniper unit gives you the chance to see why they have been named this way. In spite of the job's reputation, training has nothing spectacular or dramatic at first glance, and those who expect scenes from an American film will be disappointed because the shooting session is quiet, as quiet as it can be when you are surrounded by gunfire.

text & photo: Marcella Drăgan



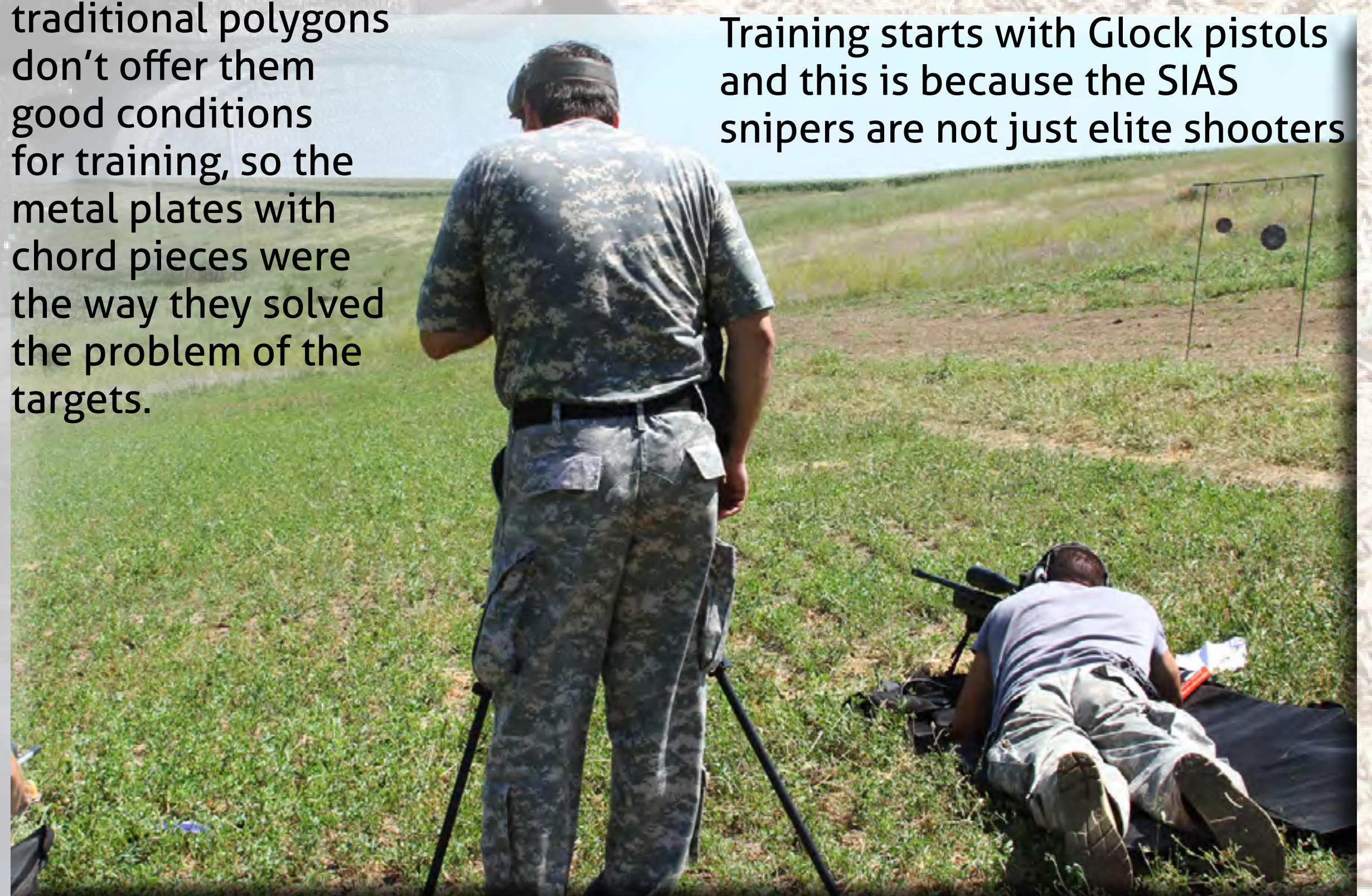
FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



The day began with a long drive to one of the "secret locations", as it would be jokingly called. I don't get too much information about the program of the day, but the first clues about what is going to happen appear in the form of few steel plates, a reason for joy and praise for the four shooters I accompanied. They had to be particularly inventive when it came to their job because traditional polygons don't offer them good conditions for training, so the metal plates with chord pieces were the way they solved the problem of the targets.

The experience of the team's leader speaks out, he chooses the place where the steel plates are mounted and, as I will see over the course of the day, has taken care not to do the job easy for the snipers, including himself. Placed in the open field, a little above the grass, the targets are hard to see, and if you do not know where to look, you can hardly see them from a distance of a mile.

Training starts with Glock pistols and this is because the SIAS snipers are not just elite shooters



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



the direction of the wind, its power, the outside temperature, the type of ammunition used, the mirage, the light, even the clouds that pass over us. They rely on the basic ballistic program that each sniper knows, and the corrections are made according to each of these elements. The sheets of program values are rarely reviewed, changes are made mentally, automatically, each change leading to the restoration of calculations.

However, some elements become true enemies. Now the target is no

but also have the same duties as the rest of the fighters, and when their support is no longer necessary or the configuration of the field does not allow the use of snipers, they join the intervention team. The small arms training It is also the first test of the new targets, which, through the sound produced when the bullets hit them, clearly confirm that they



longer a steel plate, but a figurine, a bit larger than a coin, drawn on a paper and located at 120 meters. It has eyes, mouth, and nose and must be identified from the other 20 faces on the A4 page and hit in less than one minute, a competition test.

In the small group, no one moves,

have been touched. The next firing session is with the HK MP5 submachine gun, but the session is short because the real training starts with the targets at 120, 508 and 740 meters. The pistols are replaced by the SSG 3000, and the snipers occupy their places by aligning their weapons.

Now they really start their training, now even the smallest thing can make a difference, now they count on a lot of elements:



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the four shooters are focused on the identification and hitting of the targets. I can hear, cushioned by the helmets, each fired shots, and the few words exchanged between snipers. There are strange words for those who are not part of their world, short indications of how they fired and how to shoot: MOA, click, deviation, hour one ... but the loudest I can hear "I hit, did you heard it?", referring to the sound produced by the steel targets when touched by the bullet. They keep this



position for tens of minutes, despite the sun that raises the temperature to 30 degrees. Few minutes, compared to the hours spent by some of them on a mission.

On return, once recovered, each target is analyzed, and some traces left on metal are recognized: "here is where I shoot, it was too to the right", but everything is a new opportunity to learn.



Shooting technical data

Weapons: Glock gun, HK MP5 / A5 machine gun, SSG 3000 rifle


Distance and target dimensions:

Glock 17 and HK MP5 / A5 = 15 m

SSG 3000 = 508 m (target 20 cm), 740 (target 40 cm), 120 m (figurines)

SIAS

Appearing in the structure of the Romanian Police in 1993, SIAS was founded as an incipient core of the fight against organized crime, becoming an independent and fully operational unit in 1995. SIAS has shown flexibility and permanent adaptation to the operational needs of the institution, making the difference between success and failure. SIAS's professional maturity test was successfully passed in April 2007, when the European vocation of SIAS was enshrined by its inclusion in the elite group of the special police intervention units of the Member States of the European Union - the "ATLAS" Group.

SIAS is the main intervention force within the Romanian Police with general territorial competence intervening for the release of hostages, abducted persons, seized or deprived of liberty illegally and for capturing and immobilizing persons who oppose legal measures through violence or the use of weapons. Fire, explosive, toxic or dangerous substances, or other destructive means. It also organizes and carries out ongoing activities of support, guidance, and control of all Rapid Intervention Services within the Romanian Police. 





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Faces of Romania. A serviceman's PORTRAIT

text & photo: Marcella Drăgan

The image of the saluting serviceman while marching under Bucharest's Arch of Triumph, on the celebrations of Romanian National Day, has become one of the best photographs I've taken. His eyes filled with emotion and the significance of the solemnity of the moment he was attending stuck with me long after I took the photo, and aroused my curiosity: what is in the soul of a serviceman participating in such an event, and especially who is the man hidden behind the thin layer of camouflage paint.

After some research, I managed to find who that person was and get some inside in his life and motivations.

Major D – for security reasons, will just call him that – is an officer since 1992, when he was promoted to lieutenant, but he began his military career seven years earlier at the Military College "Stefan cel Mare". He then followed "Nicolae Balcescu" Land Forces Academy from Sibiu, and Command and Staff Faculty from Carol I National Defence

University from Bucharest.

"I chose this path by curiosity. And more because the rebellious ways of a 14-years-old boy who loved guns and arches and would have wished for his weapon to be real.

Later I realized that this is not just a job, but a way of life. Personally, I think that you can't service unless you truly believe in what you do, if you don't give yourself 100%, and if you can't make your family understand your sacrifice. You are a military 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 12 months a year. You

cannot take leave of absence from your duty to your country.

A choice that comes with good and bad, although the latter is easily forgotten when compared with the satisfactions that are fast to come when you put your heart and soul in what you do. It can be the rewarding feeling of doing your duty and returning home, you and your comrades, without a scratch, at the end a deployment in an operation theater. Or the warmth that fills your heart when you see a 3-4 years' boy applauding you at the December 1st Military Parade, with his little, frozen hands, with a huge smile on his cheeks red from the cold, refusing to leave until the last military from the parade passes, ignoring the pleas of their grandparents to go home".

And speaking of family, the major stresses the important part the

loved ones play in the success of his career. "If they understand what we do, they will help us, they will stand by us, with all they heart. We adapt, we support each other in all we do, and so we overcome all the difficult moments. It's important that we see the good part of all situations, that we are optimists and see the full part of the glass. When deployed, we are trying to think about the joy of the reunion with our family and not at the long months that we are apart, and that makes the time pass faster."

And the major has had his share of hard times in his deployments, like the one in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the three ones in Afghanistan. *"I try not to remember and I think that if I was able to forget it means the thinks weren't that bad after all."*

And if the major is not speaking about the hard times, he definitely has his good moments that he cherishes and remembers with great pleasure. The most beautiful moment in his military career was the promotion to lieutenant, a moment that he always keeps dear.

Makings the most beautiful moment's list is also the Military Parade from December 1st, the Romanian National Day, like the one from 2011, when I took the picture. About that day, I wanted to talk to major D, to ask him what it feels like to pass under the Arch of Triumph, and what memories a soldier keeps in his heart and mind.

"I remember the smiles of the kids waving the flags, the applauses of the people as we pass them, but mostly I remember the fierce concentration to give the best I can so I honor the thousands of people that bear the cold to see us. In the exact moment of passing under the Arch, I felt on my shoulders the weight of the entire history of the place. But I was so proud. Proud that I can be part of the long line of soldiers gloriously passing under the Arch."

A moment truly unique for which the servicemen and women prepare for two weeks in advance, with long days of training and rehearsals. But all the hard work and the pain of training sometimes in freezing temperatures fades away when faced with the glory and satisfaction of taking part in the Military Parade.

Asked to end with a message for the Romanians, the major responds with the simplicity born from a life in the service of the country and the uniform: *"May we be healthy! And to those who serve, to keep on respecting our traditions, our profession, and our uniform!"*



Thermobaric ammunition

for the 3x40 millimeters grenade launcher



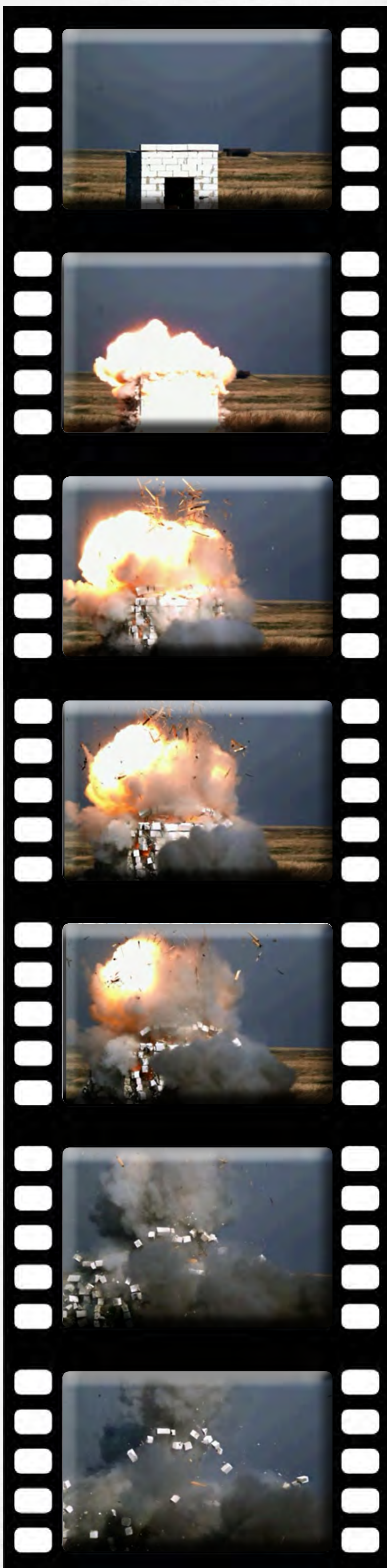
The thermobaric ammunition for the 3x40 millimeters grenade launcher was successfully tested at the "Getica" National Training Center in Cincu by specialists from the Scientific Research Center for CBRN Defence and Ecology (SRCCBRNDE) of the Research Agency for Military Technique and Technologies of the Ministry of National Defense. The experimental model has been tested on three targets, two car bodies and a lightweight construction to see what the effects are. *"We want this equipment to be developed*

and approved, then transferred to an economic agent, preferably from the defense industry, to take over and industrialize the product," said Cezar Stroie, head of the Compartment of Public Relations within the Department of Armaments.

The thermobaric ammunition for the 3x40 mm caliber grenade launcher is now in an experimental phase, with only 28 pieces being made. Until now, the scientists from SRCCBRNDE have been working on finding the right composition for the

thermobaric charge, developing the components and testing the effectiveness of the hit in static conditions.

Project Director Engineer Alexandru Rogoz, said, speaking about this type of ammunition: *"Starting with the last two decades of the last century, notions such as fuel air explosive (FAE) or thermobaric ammunition have been frequently circulated in the specialty literature but also in the accounts of the conflicts in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Chechnya or the Persian Gulf. Given that*



the destructive effect of these two new weapons categories is the surplus generated by a shock wave, although by different mechanisms, we consider the term "thermobaric weapon" to be the most comprehensive."

What should we know?

According to Mr. Rogoz, "taking into account the experience of the SRCCBRNDE, who since 1983 has been able to control the detonation phenomenon of combustible and air mixtures in a free atmosphere, and in the early 1990s, through its three working research prototypes (the jumping mine, the 100 Kgf aviation bomb and the 99 mm caliber portable thermobaric grenade launcher) had placed Romania among the top four countries in the world in terms of achievements in the this field", we can say the following:

- Ammunition with a fuel-air explosion involves a combustible substance, typically liquid and from the hydrocarbon class, and two conventional explosive
- charges. When the first explosive charge is detonated, the fuel is scattered into the atmosphere in the form of a cloud of aerosols or vapors. The operation of the second explosive charge, after a determined time, causes the initiation of the detonation of the fuel and air mixture cloud, which behaves like an explosive.
- Thermobaric ammunition involves a combustible substance and a single explosive charge for dissemination. In this case, when spraying the combustible substance, the mixture with air is inflamed and burns, due to the action of a large number of initiation centers, represented by small incandescent metallic particles. This generates a large amount of energy in a very short time, which produces a shock wave and overpressure.
- Non-selective comparisons between classical and thermobaric ammunition are incorrect: the destructive effect is achieved in the first case,



mainly by sketches, and in the other by the shock wave (overpressure). Thermobaric ammunition can be very effective in situations where classical brilliant ammunition is virtually harmless and vice versa.

It is true that

- there is currently no means of protection against the action of thermobaric munitions;
- due to the high shock wave area, the thermobaric ammunition (predominantly high capacity) requires less accurate target conditions;
- when fighting in the cities, the thermobaric ammunition is superior to the classical ammunition of similar size, for two reasons. First, when operating in closed spaces

the overpressure is increased through successive reflections from the walls and ground. Second, the fuel-air cloud acts "around the corner";

- if you own the technology necessary to create it, the thermobaric weapon is usually cheap and relatively simple to make;

Certain FAE and thermobaric ammunition owners are currently states like USA, Russia, Canada, Israel, China, India, Bulgaria, and Serbia. Depending on the doctrine, the offensive or defensive weaponry predominates.

The USA owns and had used, in Vietnam and in the two conflicts in the Gulf and Afghanistan, aviation bombs (CBU-55B, BLU-82, "daisy cutter" BLU 118 B), air-to-ground and air-to-air missiles

with a FAE warhead, and a corridor creation system through CAT-FAE minefields.

Russia has a full range of FAE and thermobaric ammunition and has used it first in Afghanistan and then in Chechnya: the ODAB-500 aviation bomb; portable launcher of thermobaric grenades 93 mm caliber RPO-A "Schmel" (ammunition in a non-recoverable container PAFS type); multiple missile system (12 strokes) 300 mm caliber "Smerch" (range - 70 km; mass - 800 kg; FAE load - 100 kg; cloud diameter - 25 m); launcher of reactive missiles 220 mm caliber "Uragan"; TBG-7V thermobaric ammunition for AG-7 grenade launcher.

China holds a thermobaric grenade launcher 80 mm caliber PF-97, with a single use.

Bulgaria produces a thermobaric ammunition for AG-7 grenade



launcher.

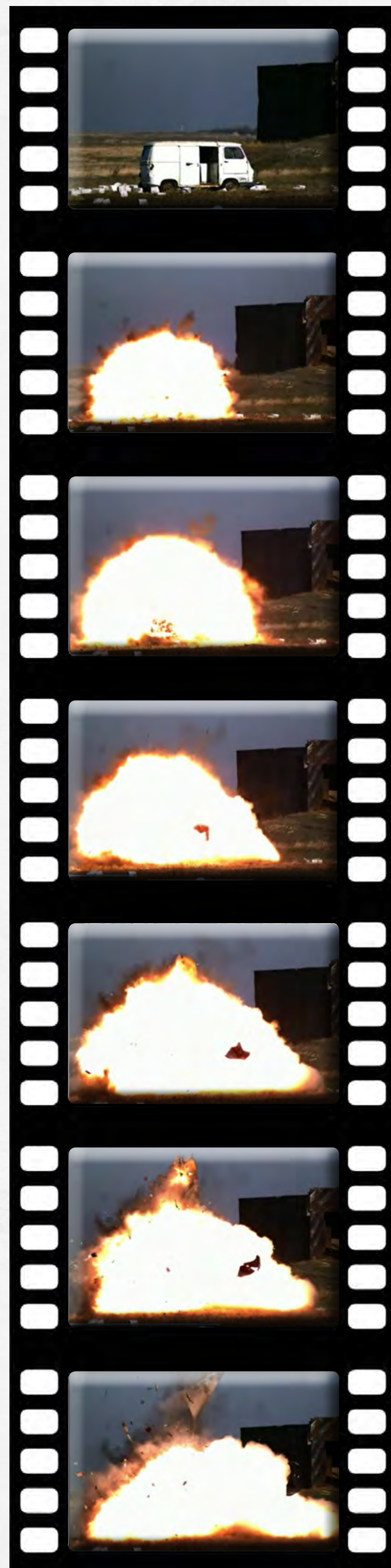
Serbia has offered for sale in the 1990s a 32-liter capacity fuel-to-air jet mines "UDAR-FAE".

Canada holds the FALCON system for FAE demining.

Where are we?

For 20 years, many of whom without sufficient funding, a team from the SRCCBRNDE, based on a SSID program for the endowments of the forces, developed, in different stages of assimilation, the following thermobaric ammunition:

- FAE mine "MISECA" (Product C21) - industrial prototype homologated with Dragomiresti UPS
- portable thermobaric grenade launcher 99 mm caliber "LAPGECA-99" - a certified research prototype
- portable thermobaric grenade launcher 95 mm caliber "LAPGECA-95" (similar to Russian RPO-A) - an experimental model
- 100 kgf aviation bomb "BAECA-100" - experimental model approved for combat
- thermobaric grenade 105 mm caliber for AG-7 grenade launcher - industrial prototype approved with S.C. "Carfil" Brasov.



Special Action Service Constanta



***They train hard,
they fight tough,
and they love it.
This is the truth
that stands at the
end of a day spent
with the fighters
from the Special
Action Service
Constanta from
County Police
Inspectorate.***

text & photo: Marcella Drăgan



FROM THE INSIDE FROM THE INSIDE



The day starts first thing in the morning with a hard run designed to increase the fighters' stamina and toughen their resistance to abrupt and extended physical strain. Often this workout comes complete with all the equipment and gear they would carry or wear as if they were in a live situation. The day continues with further physical training in the gym, where a short warm-up session prepares them for yet more strenuous, strength-building workouts that follow. Featuring highly among these are cardio exercises, notably boxing, used not only for cardio workout but to sharpen self-defense skills, as one fighter explains: „teaches you to hit very well, hard, accurate, fast, combined with a good physical condition and high level endurance.”



The training continues with focus on more technical aspects, such as boxing bag kicking, dodging, pirouettes, endurance competition pertaining to force, and generating high levels of hits. A short break is for equipment change that makes way for the martial arts training kicks and immobilizations techniques, aiming for a high complexity of the exercises, putting heavy emphasis on arms and legs. The fighters must be thoroughly trained in defending themselves against all manner of weaponry a criminal may possess, which are frequently knives, therefore the fighters must be able to expediently neutralize the criminal who attempts such an attack. A different instructor commands the exercises and drills in which most expertise and experience has been cultivated.



Once the physical training is completed, they start the tactical training. This is done in a special place that offers both the space needed for exercises involving

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vehicles and a replica of a house to achieve specific CQB techniques.

The first operation is conducted as if the officers are acting on intel about a suspect in the house, but without any other details to go on; not knowing whether the perpetrator is or is not armed, or if he is under the influence of alcohol or other substances and what is his hiding position inside the house. For the training to be as close to the real situation encountered in the field, one officer will be armed with a knife and act out the role of aggressor.




Leaving their car and on approach to the house, the officers organize themselves in an intervention squad, the fighters taking cover behind a shield. „The team enters the house and combs, crawls, while taking the necessary security measures, until the suspect is found, immobilized, handcuffed, and given to the officers in charge of the missions,” said one of the policemen briefly describing the exercise. Field demonstrations transform what appears to be a simple mission into a fast and flawless series of actions which concentrates tremendous attention to details, thus showing that the fighters practice these scenarios on regular basis and that each fighter knows what to do and his role in the team. Silent hand signs often the sole means of communication, the whole house is checked, rooms are cleared and the offender who attempts to attack the police is rapidly immobilized and disarmed.



The second drills follows in full force, this time held outside, recreating an interception in traffic. With one officer to play the offender's role, it goes on the scenario of the one person in the car, but the same rules apply if

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more people are involved. The suspect vehicle is blocked and the team approaches in formation, always paying maximum attention to the movements of the suspect, to ensure the safety of the fighters. The suspect is extracted from the car, restrained, handcuffed and searched.

In the third exercise, the scenario is the same, but the SAS team is joined by the K9 unit, a shepherd dog named Nun. The dogs are used in general when they are going after dangerous criminals, to prevent any attacks against the law enforcement unit members. No matter how aggressive the person is, they quench fast enough in front of a police trained dog, reducing the risks the fighters are exposed to. 

Constanta Special Action Service has the following attributions:

- * Executes, independently or not, interventions and time limited police action, in areas and environments with high crime rate or criminal potential to prevent and combat violence offenses;
- * Participates in strengthening the security measures in communities with high criminality rates;
- * Intervenes in areas and neighborhoods where serious crimes were committed (kidnappings, murders, armed attacks, escapes), completing the initial steps of the municipal police;
- * Participates, alongside other police forces, in police raids and hold-ups.



Reading THE FIRE WITH Vatra Dornei's FIREFIGHTERS



I have, like any person, a normal fear of fire, so the idea of entering a closed room where a fire is burning raised my pulse. It was an experience that made me respect more the work the firefighters do and understand the effort and risks assumed each day by these people so they can be better prepared when they are needed.

text & photo: Marcella Drăgan



Those who welcomed me into their team and taught me the secrets of fire were the firefighters from Vatra Dornei Fire Department, whom I accompanied during their everyday training.

The day started with a preparatory technical meeting, a daily routine which aims to show to all the personnel of the subunit exactly how a fire manifests itself, the phases it goes through, from the initiation phase to the widespread burning and all the other phenomena occurring during the fire. The information is used primarily for the personal

protection of the firefighters, and also to better fight the fire. The theoretical part is followed by the practical study conducted in the fire study room, where the entire evolution of a fire is recreated, from initiation to regression.

Together with the team that I accompanied during the day, I attended the technical meeting, where the plan of the fire study room was presented. The locations of the materials to be burned were presented, also the places of each firefighter, or, in my case, journalist. One at a time, the place, role, and actions of each serviceman were explained, and also of those offering support, like secondary teams and SMURD (paramedics). Given the fact that several objects were placed at different distances from the fire, so we can see all the phenomena occurring during the fire, their places were also marked.

Once the presentation of all the objects and personnel inside the fire study room was concluded, the explanation of the rules to be followed by all the participants at the exercise started. As I saw later on the field, during the training session, only one person gives the commands, the leader on the training session. Everyone has to listen to him and no one on the field commands over him. Were explained to me the commands used during the exercise, how to move inside the fire study room, the communication methods between the members of the team, and how to react to different situations, different types of teams participating in the intervention and the evolution stages on the fire, that we were to encounter in the fire room.

After completing the theoretical part, we started the practical part, which for me began with donning the protective suit and the rest





of the equipment consisting of a mask and oxygen tube and helmet. Once in the fire room, I could see all the stages that were presented to me in the theoretical session. After initiating the fire, the next step that I could see was vaporization that occurs at around 100°C , when water contained in any material vaporizes. I could see after that the layering the smoke, which, from the top of the room, started to descend, arranging itself in layers and stabilizing at a height of 80 cm from the ground,

called neutral zone, where the best visibility is.

Pyrolysis or decomposition of the material into gas was the next phenomenon that I have seen, which occurs around the temperature of 200°C when the materials break down into gases. These gases create the next phenomenon, flame over, also known as angels of fire. At around 400°C temperature, the gases from the pyrolysis arose and start lighting up and I could



IN THE FIELD IN THE FIELD IN THE FIELD

see on the ceiling as tongues of fire appeared. The flames grew in intensity and began to unite, to blend together, coming up above us, appearing in the form of waves of fire, a phenomenon known as rollover, and a stage of a fire that firefighters studying very carefully.

This is the last step before the most dangerous phenomenon of a fire, the flashover, which is the transition from the localized burning to the general one when the whole room catches fire and the room is engulfed



about the amount of fuel inside the fire and the degree of risk to which the firefighters expose themselves. Another thing the firefighters learn to read is the color of the fire, indicating the level of oxygen and temperature of the fire. They also look after the number of openings (windows, doors) and their location, and the firefighters will try not to create new openings during the intervention to don't supply the fire with oxygen. Another element to consider is the heat, which can

in flames. The phenomenon occurs at temperatures above 600° C. Because the transition from rollover to flash over is very short, ranging between 5 and 15 seconds, knowing each phenomenon is very important, and firefighters can anticipate these steps by "reading the fire". For that, firefighters must take into account five elements.

The first thing the firefighters notice when they arrive at a fire is the smoke, by its color they can know how much it's loaded with unburned gas, of pyrolysis, which provides information



be determined according to the stages in which the fire is and specific phenomena observed. Another indicator is the sound, each fire is accompanied by a series of sounds, such as cracking, which indicates the degree of danger.

By reading these elements firefighters can predict the stage in which the fire is and plan ahead for its extinction. For example, if the firefighters reach the fire at the stage of flame over they can intervene offensive by starting the attack on the fire to put it down. If they have reached the stage of rollover they will act defensively, with more cautious, acting with water jets to cool down the fire and respecting more safety features.

In addition to preparing for interventions to fight a fire, the firefighters prepare for other types of interventions that they are called at, the most common being the rescue of persons (and of various animals) fallen in wells and other confined spaces. The rescue teams work in three teams of two men each - one coordinating team consisting of a rescuer and the coordinating firefighter (that coordinates all the teams participating in the intervention and whose commands are obeyed by all participants), and two teams for lowering and retrieving the rescuer and the victim.

Also during the daily training, the firefighter exercise how to save themselves in cases of fires in tall buildings, when the stairwell is collapsed or filled with smoke, and the only way out is through a window. Using ropes and harnesses, that each firefighter carries, they have to rescue themselves and help their colleagues. They practice rappelling, rope recovery, and the





funicular descent technique that is used in interventions where the victims cannot be evacuated using the stairs.

In addition to firefighting training, the firemen also have a daily routine of physical training, meant to increase their capacity to cope with long-term interventions, especially when using a breathing





apparatus in order to dose the effort and use an oxygen tank as long as possible.





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