
Chief of Staff/Nordic-Polish Brigade on NATO Mission in Bosnia, June 1998 - January 1999 The Leavenworth Link

By

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[This article highlights on a personal level the value of security assistance training. Such anecdotes from officers around the world who have attended courses in the U.S. clearly show the value of the foreign training dollars expended.]

I graduated from Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth in 1982 as a newly promoted major. After having served in many NATO related commands and postings, I was selected to be chief-of-staff in the Nordic Polish Brigade which for the first time in NATO history was to be commanded by a Polish general in June 1988.

The brigade of some 3000 men and women was composed of five national battalions, from Poland, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark. There was also a Swedish medical company, a multinational military police company, a multinational headquarters company and brigade staff.

This truly multinational formation was in the NATO mission Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia commanded by a truly national division, the U.S., 1st Armor Division (from Germany) commanded by Major General Ellis.

This chain of command, with a U.S. major general with his national staff with its own traditions and training, commanding national brigades from the U.S., U.K., and Turkey, and a multinational Nordic Polish Brigade with its own traditions and training in peace support operations and under the command of a Polish general with his Warsaw Pact training, had a lot of potential for misunderstandings and conflicts.

Luckily, however, Major General Ellis had a chief of staff, Colonel Peterson who in many respects was a tough customer, but he was a Leavenworth graduate from 1983. I took the very first opportunity to establish The Leavenworth Link with the chief of staff of the Armor Division at a meeting face to face.

After the usual exchange of old stories from CGSC, it was agreed between the two of us that with our common background we would solve any problems that might appear in the division-brigade relations on a bilateral basis by means of only a phone call!

And so it functioned very well to the benefit of both formations and for the future peaceful settlement in Bosnia.

When the 1st Cavalry Division from Fort Hood in Texas took over from 1st Armor Division in late 1988, similar good relations were established with Major General Byrnes and his team.

One of the deputy commanders graduated in 1982 from Section 21, just across the hall from my section.

Throughout my service, my Leavenworth experience has served me, my units and commands well.

At present, I am the commanding Military Region South in Denmark and formations with a wartime strength of some 1200 men and women establishing the link between Denmark and Germany and onwards to Poland.

By the way, I got to know my Polish commander very well, and we often discussed his previous wartime missions in Denmark which were in my current area of responsibility.