

Support of the non-military system by the Territorial Defence Forces as an element of regulations limiting the effective use of the formation in crisis situations

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Abstract

The involvement of the Territorial Defence Forces (WOT) in the implementation of crisis management tasks, may give rise to the belief that this formation operates on the basis of different principles than the operational forces, and is used as a service in crisis situations in an automatic and immediate manner. The aim of the article is to answer the question: do the current legal regulations governing the use of the Polish Armed Forces allow for the effective (widespread, immediate, prompt) deployment of the WOT in the crisis management system? The author analyses the role of the WOT in the crisis management system. He indicates the legal basis for the use of the formation to support the non-military system in crisis situations and draws attention to the formal and legal limitations in this area. Furthermore, he presents the actions taken by the WOT to improve the procedures for the use of the formation in crisis situations. The author highlighted necessary changes in order to optimally and effectively use the WOT to carry out crisis management tasks.

Keywords crisis management, Territorial Defence Forces, procedures for activation of the armed forces, elements of the crisis management system

Introduction

The entry into force of the Act on the defence of the Homeland¹ introduced new tasks for the Territorial Defence Forces (WOT) in the area of crisis management. One of these tasks, carried out in both peacetime and times of crisis, is to support elements of the non-military subsystem in the performance of tasks relating to crisis management, i.e. to participate in an immediate and comprehensive response to non-military threats. In addition to the Act, these matters are governed by the doctrine on the use of the WOT, which sets out a broad scope of activities for these forces depending on objectives, needs and the evolving situation, as well as categorises and groups actions according to the state's defence readiness level². A literal interpretation of these provisions might give the impression that the WOT sub-units carry out such activities automatically. This may be suggested by the terms 'immediate' and 'widespread' used in the doctrine. In reality, this is not the case³. Under these provisions, the WOT is treated on an equal footing with the other branches of the Polish Armed Forces. The legislator has not provided for a separate procedure for mobilising the WOT to carry out crisis management tasks⁴, even though, under the Act on the defence of the Homeland, the commander of the WOT is responsible for: planning, coordination and execution of tasks relating to the participation of units and sub-units of the Polish Armed Forces in combating natural disasters and mitigating their effects, operations concerning the protection of property, search and rescue operations, and operations to save or protect human life and health, as well as for participation in the implementation of crisis management tasks⁵.

¹ *Act of 11 March 2022 on the defence of the Homeland.*

² *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej w operacji* (Eng. Territorial Defence Forces in action), DD-3.40, Warszawa 2018, pp. 14–16.

³ J. Leżoń, J. Traciak, *W kierunku efektywnego zarządzania kryzysowego* (Eng. Towards effective crisis management), "Kwartalnik Bellona" 2026, vol. 724, no. 1, p. 150. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0055.6961>.

⁴ *Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management.*

⁵ Article 22(2)(6) of the *Act on the defence of the Homeland*.

Any deployment of the armed forces must be preceded by a request from the voivode, in situations where the use of other forces and resources is impossible or may prove insufficient⁶. The list of tasks is set out in the Act on crisis management⁷ without distinction between different branches of the armed forces.

The research problem is formulated as follows: do the current legal regulations governing the use of the Polish Armed Forces allow for the effective (widespread, immediate, prompt) deployment of the WOT in the crisis management system? Answering this question requires identifying specific issues in the form of the following questions:

1. What legislation governs the provision of non-military support by the Polish Armed Forces in crisis situations?
2. What are the procedures for mobilising designated forces and resources of the armed forces for crisis management tasks?
3. What measures has the WOT taken to streamline these procedures?
4. How can the use of the WOT for crisis management tasks be optimised?

The author has adopted the following research hypothesis: the current legal framework limits the ability to fully utilise the potential of the WOT in the crisis management system. These limitations stem primarily from the fixed list of crisis management tasks to be carried out, which does not account for threats characterised by considerable dynamism, complexity and unpredictability⁸, as well as from the current procedures for activating the Polish Armed Forces to carry out crisis management tasks.

Threats such as natural disasters – which in Poland are most commonly caused by floods and flash floods – are relatively easy to predict and mitigate. The same cannot be said of threats associated with various types of conflicts, which can lead to the destabilisation of entire countries⁹. The most dangerous appear to be those of a hybrid nature, exhibiting characteristics of both military and non-military actions, and covering a broad spectrum of activities, such as acts of subversion and sabotage, disinformation, cyberattacks and migratory

⁶ Article 14(2)(4) of the *Act on crisis management*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 25(3).

⁸ S. Smoleński, *Procedury zarządzania kryzysowego* (Eng. Crisis management procedures), "Zeszyty Naukowe SGSP" 2022, no. 84, pp. 149–160. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0016.1807>.

⁹ W. Walczak, *Zarządzanie kryzysowe – rola i zadania organów administracji państwowej* (Eng. Crisis management – the role and responsibilities of state administrative bodies), "Przedsiębiorczość i Zarządzanie" 2009, vol. 10, no. 8, pp. 98–101; A. Bieńkowska, Z. Kral, A. Zabłocka-Klucza, *Istota i ewolucja zarządzania kryzysowego* (Eng. The essence and evolution of crisis management), "Prace Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej we Wrocławiu" 2005, no. 1092, pp. 25–32.

pressure, which Poland has been facing since 2021¹⁰. The crisis management system must be capable of responding immediately to protect key infrastructure vital to the functioning of local communities and the country as a whole¹¹. In this context, the organisational structure of the WOT, their widespread presence and, above all, their capacity to carry out various operations indicate that a fuller and more effective use of the WOT sub-units would be possible when the formation operated as a so-called territorial component that forms an integral part of territorial defence in the broadest sense¹². A key aspect of this defence strategy is, among other things, decision-making at local level, tailored to the situation and needs in times of peace, crisis and war¹³.

¹⁰ K. Kociubiński, V. Shadurski, *Zagrożenia hybrydowe dla bezpieczeństwa Polski ze strony Białorusi po 2020 r.* (Eng. Hybrid threats for Poland's security from Belarus after 2020), "Wschodnioznawstwo" 2024, vol. 18, pp. 231–253. <https://doi.org/10.4467/20827695WSC.24.015.20630>; M. Chudoba, *Zagrożenia hybrydowe – wnioski dla Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Eng. Hybrid threats – conclusions for the Polish Armed Forces), "Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego" 2023, n. 29, no. 3, pp. 121–140. <https://doi.org/10.37055/sbn/173489>; E. Jakubiak, *Wojna hybrydowa jako nowy rodzaj konfliktu zbrojnego we współczesnym świecie* (Eng. Hybrid warfare as a new type of armed conflict in the modern world), "Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego" 2022, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.37055/sbn/151015>; W. Skomra, K. Wojtasik, *Infrastruktura krytyczna jako cel działań hybrydowych. Studia przypadków ataków na obiekty i systemy IK* (Eng. Critical infrastructure as a target for hybrid operations. Case studies of attacks against the facilities and systems of CI), "Terroryzm – studia, analizy, prewencja" 2025, special edition: *Zagrożenia terrorystyczne i sabotażowe infrastruktury krytycznej*, pp. 13–34. <https://doi.org/10.4467/27204383TER.25.013.21516>; A. Zaręba, *Dezinformacja jako zagrożenie hybrydowe cyberbezpieczeństwa społecznego (social cybersecurity)* (Eng. Disinformation as a hybrid threat to social cybersecurity), "Cybersecurity and Law" 2025, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 95–107; M. Czuryk, *Status prawny samorządu terytorialnego w sferze zarządzania kryzysowego* (Eng. Legal status of local government in the area of crisis management), "Cybersecurity and Law" 2024, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 174–186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.35467/cal/188567>; J. Leżoń, M. Bojarczuk, J. Traciak, *Znaczenie działań niekinetycznych w nowoczesnych siłach zbrojnych* (Eng. The importance of non-kinetic operations in modern armed forces), "Polityka i Społeczeństwo" 2025, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 174–190. <https://doi.org/10.15584/polispol.2025.1.10>; Z. Śliwa, A.K. Olech, *Wyzwania w kontekście migracji i kryzys na granicy polsko-białoruskiej* (Eng. The challenges in the context of migration and the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border), "Wiedza Obronna" 2022, vol. 278, no. 1, pp. 89–107. <https://doi.org/10.34752/2022-d278>.

¹¹ W. Goleński, D. Zimny, *Przygotowanie państwa na zagrożenia hybrydowe* (Eng. Preparing the state for hybrid threats), "Kontrola Państwowa" 2024, no. 5, pp. 18–37.

¹² J. Leżoń, J. Traciak, J. Zaguła, *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej rodzajem Sił Zbrojnych – teoria czy rzeczywistość?* (Eng. Territorial Defence Forces as a branch of the Armed Forces – theory or reality?), "Kwartalnik Bellona" 2025, vol. 722, no. 3, pp. 80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0055.4501>.

¹³ J. Marczak, R. Jakubczak, *Raport strategiczny: Siły Zbrojne RP w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku. Koncepcja strategiczna Obrony Terytorialnej RP* (Eng. Strategic Report: The Polish Armed Forces in the second decade of the 21st century. Strategic Concept for the Territorial Defence of the Republic of Poland), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337929735_Raport_strategiczny_Sily_Zbrojne_RP_w_dru-giej_dekademie_XXI_wieku_Koncepcja_strategiczna_Obrony_Terytorialnej_RP [accessed: 8 VI 2026].

This article is analytical and problem-oriented in nature and is based on a qualitative research approach. Content analysis was used as the main research method¹⁴. Furthermore, methods of synthesis, definition, abstraction and interpretation were employed. These enabled the phenomena under study to be characterised and formed the basis for identifying the constraints that prevent the effective use of the WOT in the crisis management system.

The author has been serving continuously in the WOT since 2017 in various posts. The content presented here is therefore the result of both an analysis of legal regulations and an assessment of the functioning of crisis management procedures in real-world operations. The author is also the architect of many of the current arrangements governing the organisation of the crisis management system in a territorial defence brigade, as outlined in the article.

Definitions of crisis management and a crisis situation

The crisis management system is a key element of national security, responding to almost any crisis situation¹⁵. There is no single, unambiguous definition of the concept of crisis management among Polish researchers¹⁶. They approach this term in two ways. The first concerns the definition set out in the Act on crisis management, while the second relates to the subject of management as a distinct branch of academic study¹⁷. In line with the subject of the article, the provisions of the Act on crisis management were selected for further analysis. The Act treats crisis management as (...) *the activities of public administration bodies forming part of national security management, which consist of preventing crisis situations, preparing to take control of them through planned measures, responding when crisis situations arise, mitigating their effects, and restoring resources and critical infrastructure*¹⁸. The essence of this definition lies in planning actions across all phases of crisis management, namely:

¹⁴ E. Kalinowska, *Analiza treści jako technika badawcza* (Eng. Content analysis as a research method), "Dyskursy Młodych Andragogów / Adult Education Discourses" 2001, no. 2, pp. 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.34768/dma.vi02.286>.

¹⁵ P. Szmitkowski, *Plany zarządzania kryzysowego w świetle nowych regulacji prawnych* (Eng. Crisis management plans due to the new law regulations), "Doctrina. Studia Społeczno-Polityczne" 2016, vol. 13, no. 13, p. 208.

¹⁶ S. Smoleński, *Procedury zarządzania kryzysowego...*, p. 157.

¹⁷ P. Gromek, *Państwowa Straż Pożarna a zarządzanie kryzysowe. Ujęcie strukturalne* (Eng. State Fire Service and crisis management. Structural perspective), "Zeszyty Naukowe SGSP" 2017, vol. 63, no. 3, p. 23.

¹⁸ Article 2 of the *Act on crisis management*.

response, preparedness, prevention and recovery. The Act also defines the concept of a crisis situation as (...) *a situation which adversely affects the safety of people, property on a significant scale or the environment, and which causes significant restrictions on the operations of the relevant public administration bodies due to the inadequacy of the resources and means at their disposal* (...) ¹⁹.

It follows from these provisions that a crisis situation can be said to exist when the resources and capabilities of the public administration are insufficient and result in significant operational constraints. This definition captures the essence of crisis management, which, as previously indicated, is the planning of actions. Attention should also be paid to the hierarchical structure of the crisis management system and its implications. What constitutes a crisis situation at a given organisational level is not necessarily so at a higher organisational level. This stems from the capacity of a given level to respond to a specific situation (Figure 1). For example, significant flooding within a single municipality and the exhaustion of its response capacity will constitute a crisis situation for that municipality. However, it will not be a crisis situation for the district of which this municipality forms part, given the district's significantly greater capacity to act using the available personnel, means and resources. The same applies to subsequent organisational levels.

¹⁹ Ibid.

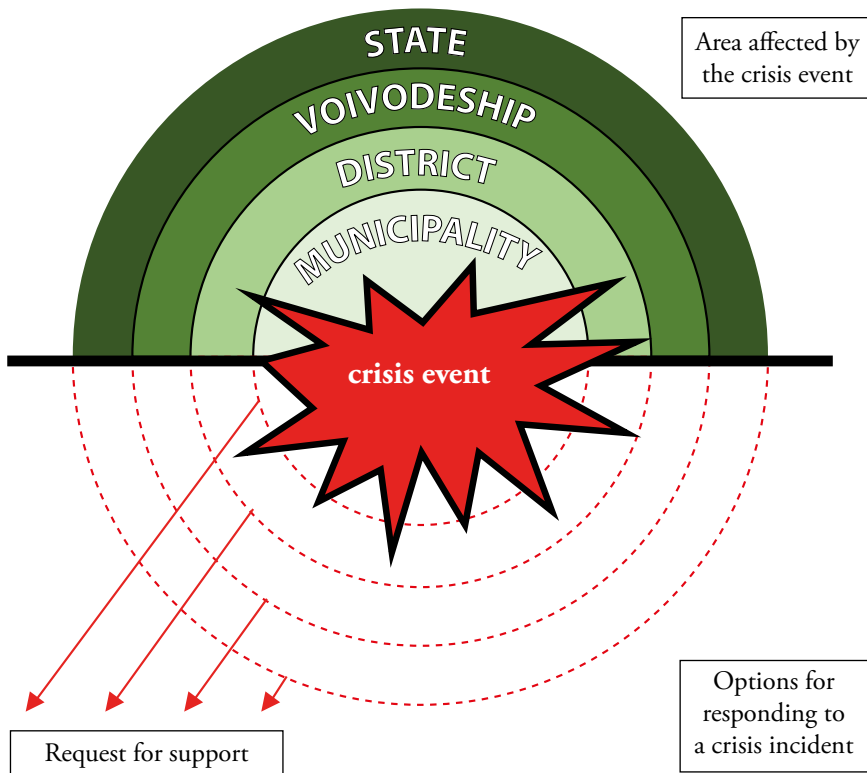


Figure 1. The scope of a crisis and the options for responding to an incident.

Source: own elaboration.

Crisis management organisation in relation to the use of the armed forces

The scope of support provided by the armed forces to the administration is governed by legislation. Table 1 sets out the most important pieces of legislation relating to the deployment of the armed forces, including the WOT, in a broadly defined crisis area. The key piece of legislation, which is applied most widely, is the Act on crisis management.

Table 1. List of legal acts governing the use of the armed forces in crisis situations.

Legal act	Scope of tasks for the armed forces	Requesting authority	Decision-making body	Implementing act
The Act on the defence of the Homeland	<p>The general powers of the WOT Commander with regard to the planning, coordination and execution of tasks relating to the participation of units and sub-units of the Polish Armed Forces in combating natural disasters and mitigating their effects, operations to protect property, search and rescue operations, and operations to safeguard human life and health, as well as participation in the implementation of crisis management tasks.</p> <p>Military operations in peacetime.</p> <p>Tasks carried out to ensure the external security of the state</p>	Council of Ministers	President	
The Act on the state of natural disaster	<p>Tasks in accordance with the 'Emergency Response Plan'. Rescue or preventative measures carried out to prevent the consequences of a natural disaster or to remedy them</p>	Voivode	Minister of National Defence	<p>Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the detailed rules governing the participation of sub-units and units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in preventing or mitigating the effects of natural disasters</p>

Legal act	Scope of tasks for the armed forces	Requesting authority	Decision-making body	Implementing act
The Act on crisis management	Crisis management tasks, in accordance with the provincial crisis management plan	Voivode	Minister of National Defence	
The Act on the prevention and control of infections and infectious diseases in humans	Tasks specified by the Chief Sanitary Inspector or the voivode	Voivode, Chief Sanitary Inspector	Minister of National Defence	
The Act on the state of emergency	In accordance with the Regulation of the Council of Ministers. Tasks assigned by the Minister of National Defence in consultation with the minister responsible for the interior	Prime Minister	President	Regulation of the Council of Ministers on detailed rules for the deployment of units and sub-units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland during a state of emergency

Legal act	Scope of tasks for the armed forces	Requesting authority	Decision-making body	Implementing act
The Act on the Border Guard	Tasks determined by the Minister of National Defence in consultation with the minister responsible for the interior	Prime Minister	President	Regulation of the Council of Ministers on cooperation between the Border Guard and units and sub-units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland
The Act on the Police	Tasks determined by the Minister of National Defence in consultation with the minister responsible for the interior	Prime Minister	President	Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the deployment of units and sub-units of the Police and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in the event of a threat to public safety or a breach of public order
The Act on anti-terrorist activities	Anti-terrorist activities, of a terrorist nature, including counter-terrorism activities	Minister of Internal Affairs	Minister of National Defence	Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the detailed conditions and procedures for organising cooperation between Police units and sub-units and units and sub-units of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in the event of the declaration of a third or fourth alert level

Legal act	Scope of tasks for the armed forces	Requesting authority	Decision-making body	Implementing act
The Act on the protection of shipping and seaports	To ensure the protection of, primarily, ships, port facilities and the associated infrastructure	Minister of Internal Affairs	Minister of National Defence	Regulation of the Council of Ministers on facilities of particular importance to national security or defence and their special protection
The act on maritime law	In accordance with the provisions of the Act on civil protection and civil defence and the Act on crisis management			
The Act on civil protection and civil defence	In accordance with the provisions of legislation		Minister of National Defence or Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland	

Source: own elaboration.

Regulations concerning the execution of crisis management tasks can be divided into three categories based on the nature of the incident: non-military, hybrid, and during martial law and war. It seems that the consolidation of legal acts would make it easier to navigate this area. The proposed categorisation may be helpful, particularly with regard to the execution of specific tasks and the bodies authorised to request support from the armed forces, as well as the decision-making authorities.

It is also important that any use of the armed forces should be subject to the provisions of the Act on crisis management. Article 25(9) of this Act stipulates that the use of ad hoc task forces in a crisis situation must not jeopardise the armed forces' ability to carry out tasks arising from the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and ratified international agreements. However, this provision does not apply to other legal acts regulating the use of the armed forces for crisis management tasks. Is there, therefore, complete discretion in this area?

Article 26 of the Constitution stipulates that the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland serve to protect the independence of the state and the integrity of its territory, and to ensure the security and inviolability of its borders. While this is a general provision, it expresses the armed forces' constant readiness to act in order to ensure the state's security in the broadest sense. A key element of this readiness is the proper training of the armed forces. When deciding on the use of the armed forces in crisis situations, decision-makers should take into account the implementation of planned, relevant exercises that prepare units and sub-units to carry out tasks in accordance with their wartime role.

The current regulations governing which organisational level may plan and request the deployment of the armed forces, and under what circumstances, are unambiguous and do not grant such powers to municipalities or districts. The decision to deploy the armed forces, including the WOT, is taken at ministerial level. Similar arrangements are in place in the two Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia)²⁰ and the Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland)²¹. It should be noted, however, that the territorial defence forces of Lithuania and Latvia form an integral part of the land forces²². In Norway, Sweden and Finland, territorial defence formations,

²⁰ M. Gikiewicz, *Współczesny wymiar ochrony ludności i obrony cywilnej* (Eng. The contemporary role of civil protection and civil defence), vol. 1: *Wybrane państwa basenu Morza Bałtyckiego*, Warszawa 2026; J. Trocha, *Norweski system bezpieczeństwa cywilnego a uwarunkowania zagrożeń kryzysowych i wojennych kraju* (Eng. Norwegian civil security system in the face of potential crisis and war threats), "Obronność – Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Zarządzania i Dowodzenia Akademii Sztuki Wojennej" 2017, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 230–246.

²¹ J. Grzela, *Obrona terytorialna w państwach nordyckich* (Eng. Territorial defence in the Nordic countries), "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka" 2017, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 207–223.

²² T. Małysa, *Wojska obrony terytorialnej w państwach bałtyckich* (Eng. The Baltic states Territorial

as in Poland, constitute a separate branch of the armed forces, but their structure, equipment and tasks stem from the formations' nature as a guard force²³. Slightly different arrangements have been adopted in Estonia, as the authority to deploy the Estonian Defence League has been delegated to its commander. It operates on the principle of territorial defence and carries out its tasks with the same intensity in times of peace, crisis or war²⁴. The Estonian model most closely corresponds to the author's views on modern territorial defence, its role and tasks in all states of the state's defence readiness.

Under national legislation, a request for support from the armed forces is made to the Minister of National Defence at the provincial level. On the one hand, this principle limits the risk of over-interpreting certain crisis situations, which could lead to the unjustified deployment of the armed forces. On the other hand, it deprives the lowest organisational levels of the opportunity to benefit from the significant support that the armed forces can provide. In this context, the current rules should be analysed, bearing in mind the capabilities and potential of the WOT, particularly those arising from its territorial nature, speed of response and integration with local communities. Under the current legal framework, at the planning stage, municipalities and districts are limited to requesting support from the armed forces via a higher-level authority. As a result, the municipalities' crisis management plans, which are required by law, are relatively limited in scope, while standard operating procedures deal only superficially with specific threats.

As Franciszek Krynojewski, a civil defence expert, points out, every municipality must have its own crisis management plan, drawn up on the basis of a risk assessment for the specific locality and municipality and tailored to them, although certain procedures and measures may be replicated²⁵. Such a plan must provide for, among other things, the selection of an assembly point for evacuees, the designation of coaches for evacuation, and the signposting of evacuation

Defence Forces), "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka" 2017, no. 3, p. 233.

²³ They do not constitute a separate component of territorial defence alongside operational forces, but are part of them; furthermore, lacking territorial command structures, they carry out tasks in isolation from local needs in pursuit of operational objectives determined outside territorial structures.

²⁴ U. Staškiewicz, *Kaitseliit – estońska organizacja cywilna działająca na rzecz obronności państwa i bezpieczeństwa ludności* (Eng. Kaitseliit – Estonian Civilian Organization Working for State Defence and Population Security), "Europejski Przegląd Prawa i Stosunków Międzynarodowych" 2024, vol. 69, no. 1, pp. 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.52097/eppism.8882>.

²⁵ *Każda gmina musi mieć swój plan zarządzania kryzysowego. Nie może być kopiuj-wklej* (Eng. Every municipality must have its own crisis management plan. It cannot be a copy-and-paste job), Portal Samorządowy, 20 IX 2024, <https://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/zmiany-w-prawie/kazda-gmina-musi-miec-swoj-plan-zarzadzania-kryzysowego-nie-moze-byc-kopiuj-wklej,570960.html> [accessed: 12 III 2026].

routes. The procedures drawn up are implemented immediately without undue delay, which plays a crucial role in combating natural disasters in cases of rapidly developing events. Municipal plans are so important because the provincial crisis management plan is the sum of the district plans, which in turn are made up of municipal crisis management plans. The national crisis management plan, on the other hand, is a collection of provincial and ministerial plans. Each plan at the next higher organisational level therefore incorporates elements of the plan at the lower level, creating a hierarchical relationship between them. Consequently, if the plans at the lowest level are not detailed, one should not expect the plans at higher levels to be detailed either. Comments such as ‘lack of coordination’, ‘delayed military response’ and ‘ineffectiveness of the emergency services’ – often voiced during a crisis – are most likely the fault of the person who failed to make a decision. The floods in Lower Silesia in 2024 serve as an example. In many cases, the failure to order a preventive evacuation, or the delay in doing so, exposed residents of at-risk areas to the risk of loss of life or injury²⁶. This was the case, for example, in Głucholazy, where the evacuation was initiated too late, necessitating the use of specialist equipment, including military equipment²⁷.

In this context, a properly understood and organised territorial defence takes on even greater significance. It is based on the cooperation of all organisational elements (services, guards, the WOT)²⁸. Activities focused on territorial defence should enable the maximum utilisation of potential, in particular that of the WOT working alongside other services, which forms a key component of the state’s modern defence structure²⁹.

²⁶ M. Kupryjańczyk, K. Lech, Ł. Derkacz, *Rola ratownictwa medycznego w systemie zarządzania kryzysowego na przykładzie powodzi w powiecie nyskim w 2024 roku* (Eng. The role of emergency medical services in the crisis management exemplified by the floods in the Nysa district in 2024), “Kwartalnik Bellona” 2026, no. 4, pp. 201–215. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0055.5824>.

²⁷ *Powódź na południu Polski. Ewakuacje mieszkańców, lista miejscowości* (Eng. Flooding in southern Poland. Evacuations of residents, list of towns and villages), TVN24, 15 IX 2024, <https://tvn24.pl/najnowsze/powodz-na-poludniu-polski-ewakuacje-mieszkancow-lista-miejscowosci-st8087871>, [accessed: 8 VI 2026].

²⁸ P. Wywiał, *Działania przeciwdywersyjne wojsk obrony terytorialnej w kontekście rosyjskiej dywersji na Ukrainie* (Eng. Counter-diverse actions of the Territorial Defence Forces in the context of a Russian diversion in Ukraine), in: *Bezpieczeństwo Polski w warunkach członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, A. Żebrowski, Ł. Zweiffel, K. Kowalska (sci. eds.), Kraków 2018, pp. 284–297; P. Żukowski, *Rola Terytorialnej Służby Wojskowej w systemie bezpieczeństwa militarnego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (Eng. The role of the Territorial Military Service in the military security system of the Republic of Poland), “Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego” 2020, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.37055/sbn/144285>.

²⁹ Z. Polcikiewicz, *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej w systemie bezpieczeństwa narodowego Polski* (Eng. Territorial defense in the Polish national system), “Acta Scientifica Academiae Ostroviensis. Sectio A, Nauki Humanistyczne, Społeczne i Techniczne” 2016, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 399–413;

It is true that the WOT sub-units are intended to carry out crisis management tasks. However, under current legal regulations, they operate on the same terms as the armed forces as a whole. In the author's view, this therefore implies neither 'immediacy' nor 'universality'³⁰. Everything depends on the situation, the scale of the incident, and the forces and resources available to the voivode, who must first call upon the services designated for this purpose³¹. It is therefore questionable to claim that the WOT sub-units are statutorily designated to deal with the aftermath of natural disasters. This situation has, on the one hand, repeatedly been a source of frustration for the public, and, on the other hand, has necessitated difficult decisions regarding the deployment of the WOT. The widespread belief that the crisis management system changed completely upon the entry into force of the Act on the defence of the Homeland is not reflected in the current legislation³², as the Act on crisis management of 2007 has not been amended. This points to the difficulty faced by commanders and authorities responsible for civil defence in navigating the large number of legal acts concerning the armed forces' support for the non-military defence system, as well as, the need to amend the legislation. The aim of the changes should be to adapt the regulations to a situation in which the armed forces include the WOT formation operating on entirely different principles from the rest of the armed forces, capable of supporting local communities 'here and now', without unnecessary formalities, legal procedures or decisions taken at ministerial level.

Procedures for the deployment of the Territorial Defence Forces in crisis management

Notwithstanding the inaccuracies highlighted, the WOT is well-suited both to carrying out crisis management tasks³³ and to directing them. The WOT crisis

R. Jakubczak, *Wybrane kwestie teorii Obrony Terytorialnej* (Eng. Selected aspects of Territorial Defence theory), in: *Bezpieczeństwo, zarządzanie, medycyna i kultura fizyczna. Wybrane zagadnienia*, vol. 4, J. Telak et. al. (ed.), Gdańsk 2020, pp. 15–35.

³⁰ J. Leżoń, J. Traciak, *W kierunku efektywnego zarządzania kryzysowego...*, p. 150.

³¹ The State Fire Service, the Police, the Volunteer Fire Service, other services, guards and inspectorates.

³² T. Stelmach, *Reorganizacja systemu zarządzania kryzysowego resortu obrony narodowej* (Eng. Reorganisation of the National Defence sector crisis management system), "Problemy Techniki Uzbrojenia" 2023, vol. 163, no. 1, pp. 39–55. <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0053.5917>.

³³ M. Klisz, *Utworzenie Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej jako odpowiedź na nowe zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa* (Eng. Territorial Defence Forces development as reaction to current national security threats), "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka" 2017, no. 3, p. 70.

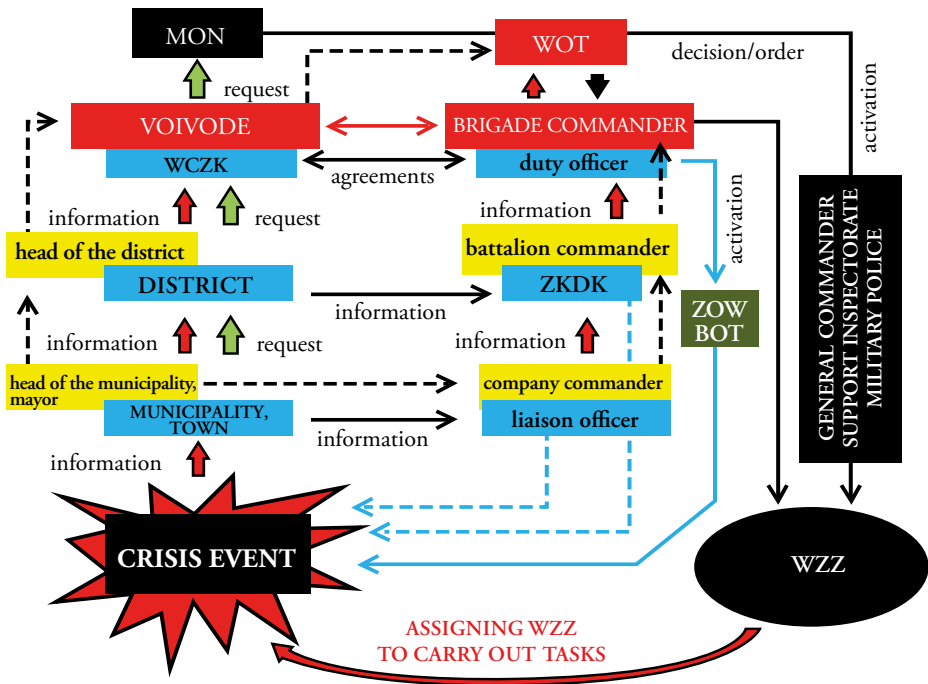
management system forms an integral part of the Ministry of National Defence's (MON) crisis management system. The WOT Command acts as the Crisis Management Centre of the Ministry of National Defence (CZK MON). Territorial defence brigades and border defence brigades carry out crisis management tasks within their permanent areas of responsibility using task modules designated for this purpose. In accordance with the Act on the defence of the Homeland, the WOT Commander is responsible for planning, coordinating and carrying out tasks relating to the participation of units and sub-units of the armed forces in combating natural disasters and mitigating their effects, operations concerning the protection of property, search and rescue operations, and operations to save or protect human life and health, as well as for the participation in the implementation of crisis management tasks³⁴. One of the reasons for adopting this approach was the belief that the WOT could be deployed immediately in crisis situations. While this is a sound and valid idea, it requires amendments to numerous regulations. In its current form, it may lead decision-makers to take so-called 'shortcuts' and, in a sense, to treat it as standard operating procedure. For the principles of 'universality' and 'immediacy' of the WOT operations in crisis situations to take effect, legislative changes are required.

Coordination of crisis management tasks, streamlining of procedures

Despite certain legal constraints, pursuant to the order of the WOT commander, measures were initiated to improve the coordination of crisis management tasks at both the WOT level and within individual provinces. A set of guidelines relating to contractual procedures was implemented, followed by the development of rules designed to streamline crisis management operations. These primarily concerned: the procedure for submitting requests from voivodes for support from the armed forces, maintaining constant contact, the method of exchanging information between territorial defence brigades and individual Provincial Crisis Management Centres (WCZK), the procedures for the operation and activation of the Crisis Response Teams (ZRK) of individual brigades, and the rules for the exchange of information between military units stationed within the province.

Measures were then implemented to streamline the decision-making process leading to the deployment of forces to the crisis area. Figure 2 illustrates the sequence of actions and procedures followed by the various entities involved in the crisis management system.

³⁴ Article 22(2)(6) of the *Act on the defence of the Homeland*.



Legend:

WCZK - Provincial Crisis Management Centre

ZKDK - Crisis Coordination Team

ZOW BOT - Support Assessment Team of Territorial Defence Brigade

Figure 2. Flowchart of the procedure for deploying the Polish Armed Forces to crisis management tasks.

Source: own elaboration based on the WOT's internal documents.

By shortening the decision-making process, the response time to an incident is also reduced. This is facilitated by the following factors:

- close cooperation between the voivode, the brigade commander – supported by the Support Assessment Team (ZOW) – and the WOT Commander – the head of the Crisis Management Centre of the Ministry of National Defence (CZK MON). The result is the efficient processing of requests for support in the form of forces and resources allocated from the armed forces, culminating in the issuance of the relevant decision-making and command documents and the deployment of the Military Task Force (WZZ) to the area where the tasks are to be carried out;

- short chain of command: the WOT Commander (Head of the CZK MON) – the brigade commander. The presence of only two entities in the decision-making chain allows for a swift and efficient response, in contrast, for example, to the chain: WOT Commander – Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces – Division Commander – Brigade Commander – and, not infrequently, the commander of a military unit, which comes into play when operational troops need to be deployed;
- ongoing cooperation and exchange of information with all military units stationed within the province;
- the operation in the field of elements of the crisis management system (ESZK), such as the Crisis Coordination Team (ZKDK), and consequently receiving up-to-date information on the situation in the area affected by the crisis.

The last of these factors has a significant impact on the speed and effectiveness of operations. The presence of WOT structures in every province, district and municipality also facilitates cooperation in the context of crisis management tasks³⁵. In essence, a key element of the WOT crisis management system is a well-organised and functioning crisis management system at brigade level – or, to put it simply, at provincial level. In accordance with the Act on crisis management, the voivode is responsible for crisis management in the province, supported by the Provincial Crisis Management Team (WZZK), which, by decision of the Minister of National Defence, includes the commander of the Territorial Defence Brigade³⁶. It is this body that assists the voivode in matters relating to the provision of support by the armed forces, by advising him on the deployment of specific units and sub-units to carry out crisis management tasks. In simple terms, the essence of this operation lies in the parallel transmission of information (reports) regarding a crisis incident within the local administration and the WOT command structure, while maintaining a horizontal exchange of information between local government and the military. The establishment of Elements of the Crisis Management System (ESZK) such as the Support Assessment Team (ZOW)³⁷, the Reconstruction Support Unit

³⁵ I. Wróbel, *Perspektywy współdziałania wojsk obrony terytorialnej z administracją publiczną w zwalczaniu klęsk żywiołowych* (Eng. Prospects of Territorial Defence Forces and Public Administration collaboration in terms of fighting natural disasters), "Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka" 2017, vol. 28, no. 3, p. 143.

³⁶ *Decision Z-4 of the Minister of National Defence of 6 May 2022 on the Crisis Management System of the Ministry of National Defence.*

³⁷ A non-staff executive unit under the brigade commander, forming part of the WOT crisis management system, tasked with conducting reconnaissance and assessing the threat level in a given province in connection with the occurrence or likelihood of a crisis situation, and determining

(ZWO)³⁸, the Brigade Crisis Response Team (ZRK)³⁹ and the Crisis Coordination Team (ZKDK) of the light infantry battalion⁴⁰ has proved helpful in this regard. These units advise public administration bodies on the possibilities for utilising the capabilities of the armed forces in a specific crisis situation⁴¹.

The effectiveness of the WOT crisis management system depends on how the crisis management systems of individual territorial defence brigades are organised. At the heart of a brigade's crisis management system are the ESZK, which are crucial for the coordination of operations by the brigade commander within the province. The most important of these elements is the ZRK, which operates on the basis of established standard operating procedures. Owing to the structure of the crisis management system, the brigade commander, as the permanent representative of the WZZK, influences the content of the request for the deployment of armed forces addressed to the Ministry of National Defence. Furthermore, at this stage, he may issue guidelines for the preparation of these forces and provide an opinion or propose ready-made solutions to the Crisis Management Centre of the Ministry of National Defence (whose functions are, in fact, performed by the Tactical Operations Centre of the Territorial Defence Forces Command –

the need to deploy forces and resources from the Ministry of National Defence to support public administration bodies – definition of the DWOT. See also: B. Składanek, *Rola Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej w systemie zarządzania kryzysowego* (Eng. The role of the Territorial Defence Forces in the crisis management system), "Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego" 2021, n. 20, p. 18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.37055/sbn/146280>.

³⁸ A non-staff executive unit under the brigade commander, forming part of the WOT crisis management system, designed to provide advice and assistance in restoring the necessary conditions for the functioning of the affected population and infrastructure following a crisis (a natural or man-made disaster) in a given province, and to assess the scope for supporting public administration bodies with dedicated forces and resources from the Ministry of National Defence following the conclusion of the WZZ operation – definition by the DWOT. See also: B. Składanek, *Rola Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej...*, p. 18.

³⁹ A team of specialists, organised, prepared and deployed in accordance with the brigade commander's decision, ensuring the efficient execution of tasks in all phases of the crisis management process (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery) – definition by the DWOT.

⁴⁰ A non-staff executive body reporting to the battalion commander, forming part of the brigade's crisis management system, responsible for planning and coordinating crisis response operations, as well as monitoring the situation within the Permanent Area of Responsibility, maintaining contact and exchanging information with district and municipality crisis management units, and the brigade's crisis response team – definition by the DWOT.

⁴¹ T. Smal, R. Balcerzyk, *System zarządzania kryzysowego w kontekście wykorzystania podmiotów militarnych* (Eng. Crisis management system in refers to the use of military units), "Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej" 2017, no. 114, pp. 445–446.

DWOT). This significantly shortens the process and reduces the time required to activate the remaining ESZK units, particularly the task modules.

In addition to the brigade commander, the crisis management system of a territorial defence brigade comprises, among others:

- the brigade commander's command post (brigade duty officer);
- the brigade's crisis response team (ZRK);
- the command posts of subordinate sub-units (ZKDK of the light infantry battalion's command post), the battalion duty service;
- task modules – forces and resources planned and allocated for the execution of crisis management tasks, elements of command support and operational coordination (ZOW, ZWO)⁴².

In the context of the proposed streamlining of procedures, the processing of requests submitted to the Ministry of National Defence takes on particular significance. A crisis occurs suddenly. It requires swift, accurate decisions to be taken by the relevant authorities. This calls for procedures which, given the gravity and significance of the situation and the time constraints, enable this process to be carried out properly. Figure 3 illustrates one such current procedure, based on the performance of specific actions in a specific order in accordance with regulatory documents⁴³.

⁴² Based on the crisis management system of the 3rd Podkarpacka Territorial Defence Brigade (author's own materials).

⁴³ Ibid.

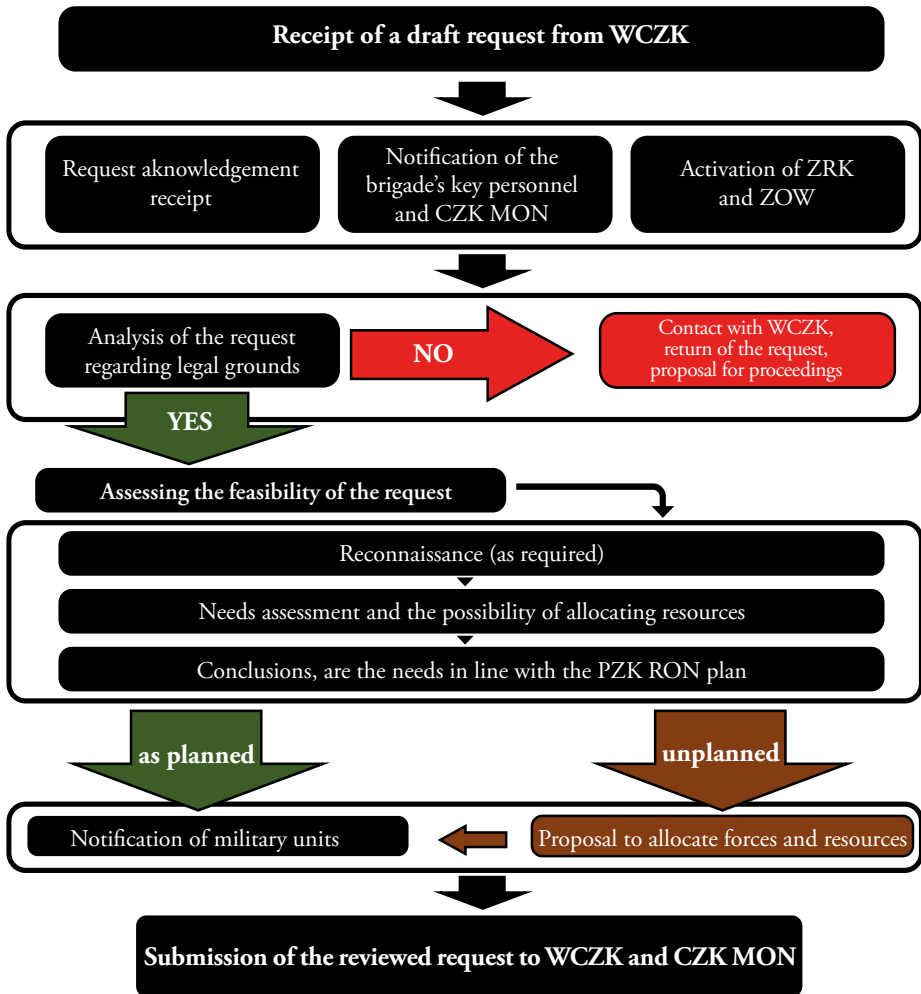


Figure 3. The procedure for submitting a request for support from the armed forces.

Source: own elaboration based on the 3rd Podkarpacka Territorial Defence Brigade.

A key element in the proceedings in question is the formal and legal analysis of the request for military support to avoid errors that could lead to its rejection. This makes it all the more important for brigade officers to possess the necessary knowledge of the legislation governing the use of the armed forces in this context. This refers not only to the Act on crisis management, but also to other legal provisions providing for the possibility of the armed forces providing support to various entities.

The crisis response team as the most important element of the brigade's crisis management system

The organisation of the command and coordination of individual elements is based on a comprehensive exchange of information, both horizontally and vertically, between military bodies and civil administration bodies.

A key element of the brigade's crisis management system is the crisis response team (ZRK), whose main tasks include liaising with the Provincial Crisis Management Centres (WCZK), directing the designated forces and resources of the Ministry of National Defence earmarked for crisis management tasks, and coordinating activities⁴⁴. This element therefore requires an appropriate structure, based on permanent components: management, a planning group, a monitoring, analysis and risk assessment group; and on elements established on an ad hoc basis (as required), namely: command specialists, administrative staff, an airspace coordinator, an operations command and coordination group, as well as an operations support group. The team carries out specific tasks both during peacetime operations⁴⁵ and in the event of a crisis (activation of forces and resources)⁴⁶. The essence of the ZRK's operation is to ensure the efficient, organised and timely deployment of forces and resources in a crisis situation, as well as to command them while they carry out their tasks. This process is directed (until the ZRK is deployed in the event of a crisis) initially by the brigade's duty service, and subsequently by the brigade commander via the ZRK. The team carries out its tasks from the moment it receives the order or signal instructing its activation until the completion of operations.

⁴⁴ The measures adopted by the crisis management system organisation at local level proved their worth, among other things, during the flash flood in Pawłosiów in the Jarosław district of Podkarpacie region. On 18 April 2025, a violent storm swept through the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. In the space of 20 minutes, heavy rainfall accompanied by hail triggered a mudslide that virtually submerged over 150 properties in the village. Throughout the afternoon and into the night, firefighters, together with other emergency services – including the WOT soldiers – worked to clear up the aftermath of the disaster. Such a rapid response from the WOT soldiers was possible precisely because of the implementation of specific procedures, despite the fact that the incident occurred on Good Friday in the afternoon. See: *Powódź w Pawłosiowie* (Eng. The flood in Pawłosiów), Jednostki Państwowej Straży Pożarnej – Komenda Powiatowa Państwowej Straży Pożarnej w Jarosławiu, 20 IV 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kppsp-jaroslaw/powodz-w-pawlosiowie> [accessed: 9 VI 2026].

⁴⁵ The term 'peacetime operations' refers to the routine day-to-day activities carried out by a military unit, during which there is no need to activate the ESZK.

⁴⁶ The term 'crisis' refers to a situation in which it is necessary to activate the ESZK and deploy forces and resources to support the public administration in carrying out crisis response tasks.

The core tasks of the ZRK during peacetime include monitoring and analysing the potential for crisis-related threats in the province and maintaining cooperation with the Provincial Department of Security and Crisis Management. The flow of information between the WCZK and the brigade's duty service is facilitated by ICT systems in accordance with the procedures set out in the general regulations⁴⁷. During a crisis, the main task of the ZRK is to direct subordinate forces and resources to counter the crisis situation and to coordinate actions in cooperation with representatives of the WCZK.

The tasks outlined will only be achievable if the officers forming part of the ZRK are properly trained and possess the necessary knowledge and experience in crisis management operations. Is this possible given the current structural conditions of the territorial defence brigades? The performance of its tasks by the WOT to date in various crisis situations suggests that it is. One might, however, ask whether these tasks are being carried out to the highest standard, and whether they could be performed better and more effectively. In the author's opinion, undoubtedly so. It is worth noting – and this is generally overlooked in various analyses of the WOT's activities in crisis situations – the execution of tasks across all phases of crisis management, namely prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. In most cases, only the last two phases are analysed. These are the most distinctive from the point of view of the effects of deploying forces and resources in crisis response. However, prevention and preparedness must not be overlooked. Response, on the other hand, is often the result of poor, incomplete or incorrect execution of tasks during the preparation and prevention phases, necessitating the creation of ad hoc procedures and the taking of action without prior preparation⁴⁸.

Duties of brigade commanders

Responsibilities have been assigned to brigade commanders at every stage of the crisis response⁴⁹. The conventional division of the four stages into two groups stems from the nature of the tasks. It can be assumed that the first two phases constitute a typical preparatory stage, during which threats are monitored, appropriate forces and resources are planned to neutralise such threats if necessary, procedures for dealing

⁴⁷ Order No. 7/MON of the Minister of National Defence of 28 April 2023 on the introduction of the 'General Regulations for Soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces'.

⁴⁸ T. Wierzbica, *System zarządzania kryzysowego na szczeblu gminy* (Eng. Crisis management system at local authority level), https://gdansk.frdl.pl/static/upload/store/frdl/ANALIZY_CELOWE/ANALIZA_CELowa_System-zarzadzania-kryzysowego.pdf, pp. 14–17 [accessed: 19 III 2026].

⁴⁹ Plan użycia Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej w sytuacjach kryzysowych (dokument wewnętrzny) (Eng. Plan for the deployment of the Territorial Defence Forces in crisis situations (internal document)).

with a crisis are drawn up, and training is provided for all entities involved in crisis management. The response and recovery phases involve tangible, practical action on the ground aimed at preventing the threat from escalating, and at minimising and eliminating its consequences. The tasks of the brigade commander during these phases focus on:

- organising reconnaissance of areas affected by a crisis and assessing the level of threat by deploying to the ZOW area;
- developing of the necessary ESZK and ensuring that the designated forces and resources are fully prepared to participate in preventing or mitigating the effects of the crisis;
- commanding the WZZ (comprising the forces and resources of the Ministry of National Defence placed under its command and designated for the performance of crisis management tasks);
- analysing and estimating the costs and losses incurred during the operations of subordinate military units assigned to operate in a crisis situation;
- cooperating with local authorities in providing advice and assessing the scope for supporting the mitigation of the effects of natural disasters, following the completion of WZZ tasks, through the ZWO;
- analysing and evaluating the actions taken; updating, where necessary, plans for the deployment of subordinate forces and resources in crisis situations.

The brigade commander carries out most of these tasks through the ZRK he has appointed. Consequently, the ZRK should comprise specialists who do not have other day-to-day duties⁵⁰.

The ‘non-permanent’ structure (functional unit) currently operating at brigade level in the form of the ZRK should be regarded as a stopgap, temporary solution. Ultimately, a ‘permanent’ unit capable of carrying out tasks in all phases of crisis management should be established.

Summary

The analysis carried out confirmed the research hypothesis. The Territorial Defence Forces play a significant role in the crisis management system, but legal regulations limit the ability to fully utilise their potential. The current provisions governing the use of the armed forces, including the WOT, to carry out tasks in support of the non-military subsystem require a thorough review and amendments to enable the optimal and effective utilisation of these forces’ potential.

⁵⁰ J. Leżoń, J. Traciak, *W kierunku efektywnego zarządzania kryzysowego...*, p. 151.

In the author's view, the list of tasks that these formations can carry out should be expanded, as should the powers of brigade commanders to decide on the use of subordinate forces and resources. Consequently, the organisational structure of the formation, its widespread presence and its capabilities will provide the basis for treating it as a territorial component alongside operational forces. Decisions by brigade commanders would be taken exclusively at the request of the voivode and would relate only to the execution of tasks within a specific province (the brigade's permanent area of responsibility) in accordance with the ministry's crisis management plan approved by the Minister of National Defence. There would then be no risk of a fragmentation of responsibilities. On the contrary, this situation should be viewed as the conferral of additional powers upon brigade commanders responsible for the military element of crisis management within the province, particularly as they effectively fulfil the role of territorial command structures constituting a fundamental element of territorial defence⁵¹. The ability of Territorial Defence Brigade commanders to deploy forces independently is also not at odds with the constitutional principles of maintaining neutrality in political matters and of subjecting the armed forces to civilian and democratic control. This is because the principles of civilian control over the armed forces would not be infringed in any way⁵², while military commanders would retain the sphere of military command, which entails commanding and directing subordinate units in the fulfilment of the objectives and tasks set by the state's political authorities, using the available forces and resources⁵³.

The WOT have repeatedly demonstrated their effectiveness in carrying out crisis management tasks. One need only mention their involvement and participation in

⁵¹ R. Jakubczak, *Strategiczna refleksja nad wojskami obrony terytorialnej* (Eng. Strategic thoughts on Territorial Defense Forces), "Kwartalnik Bellona", vol. 687, no. 4, pp. 21–41.

⁵² A. Fałkowski, *Gen. Fałkowski: jakie zasady demokratycznej kontroli nad wojskiem* (Eng. Gen. Fałkowski: what are the principles of democratic control over the armed forces?), *Defence24*, 12 X 2023, <https://defence24.pl/polityka-obronna/gen-falkowski-jakie-zasady-demokratycznej-kontroli-nad-wojskiem> [accessed: 8 VI 2026].

⁵³ Z. Trejnis, *Meandry w kwestii cywilnej kontroli nad Siłami Zbrojnymi w RP po 1989 roku* (Eng. The complexities surrounding civilian control of the Armed Forces in the Republic of Poland after 1989), "Studia Orientalne" 2022, vol. 24, no. 4, p. 11. <https://doi.org/10.15804/so2022401>.

operations such as ‘Resilient Spring’⁵⁴, ‘Reliable Aid’⁵⁵ and ‘Phoenix’⁵⁶. Furthermore, according to a CBOS survey, in 2024, 94% of Poles rated the actions taken during the floods by services such as the Fire Brigade and the WOT positively (of whom 71% rated these measures as definitely good)⁵⁷. The effective conduct of these operations was made possible by streamlining the functioning of the crisis management system to the extent that troops could be deployed more quickly and efficiently to carry out crisis management tasks. Proactive initiatives led to the creation of ESZK units, such as the ZRK, ZOW and ZKDK, which work closely with local administrative bodies (both central and local government). Maintaining constant contact and exchanging information between the WCZK and the Territorial Defence Brigades, as well as at lower organisational levels (district – battalion, municipality – company), enables the effective and rapid identification of requirements regarding the deployment of armed forces to support crisis response operations.

Contrary to widespread expectations, beliefs and needs, Polish legislation lacks provisions allowing for almost immediate support for local communities in crisis situations. The fact that the WOT is treated in legal regulations in the same way as other types of armed forces prevents its optimal use in the context of crisis management. To change this, the following proposals could be implemented:

⁵⁴ An operation organised in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in Poland in early March 2020. The WOT has been involved in crisis response activities since 6 March 2020. Activities were carried out as part of Operation ‘Resilient Spring’ (renamed ‘Lasting Resilience’ in June 2020) in seven main areas, including: support for hospitals and health services, building individual and community resilience, and support for local authorities, the Material Reserves Agency, the Police, the Border Guard and the Civil Aviation Authority. See: *Podsumowanie operacji „Odporna Wiosna”* (Eng. Summary of Operation ‘Resilient Spring’), Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej, 2 VI 2020, <https://media.terytorialsi.wp.mil.pl/informacje/520508/podsumowanie-operacji-odporna-wiosna> [accessed: 14 III 2025].

⁵⁵ An operation concerning the migration of people from Ukraine affected by Russian aggression. As part of this operation, tasks were carried out to support voivodes, local authorities and institutions responsible for organising assistance for refugees (primarily relocation and accommodation). See: *Decision No. 82/DWOT of the Ministry of National Defence of 18 March 2022 on support for voivodes in connection with measures taken regarding refugees from Ukraine as part of the operation entitled ‘RELIABLE AID’*.

⁵⁶ A multi-stage operation lasting several months, aimed at addressing the consequences of the floods and inundation across the entire area affected by the natural disaster. The operation was designed to rebuild the damaged areas. See: *Rusza operacja Feniks – Wojsko Polskie wspiera odbudowę terenów dotkniętych powodzią* (Eng. Operation Phoenix gets underway – the Polish Armed Forces are supporting the reconstruction of flood-affected areas), Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej – Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, 23 IX 2024, <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/rusza-operacja-feniks-wojsko-polskie-wspieraodbudowe-terenow-dotknietych-powodzi> [accessed: 14 III 2025].

⁵⁷ *Wielka powódź – jej zasięg oraz oceny działań ratunkowych* (Eng. The great flood – its extent and an assessment of the rescue operations), “CBOS Flash” 2024, no. 40, p. 2.

1. Amendments to the Act on crisis management in respect of:
 - ability of Territorial Defence Brigade commanders to deploy and direct subordinate forces and resources to carry out crisis management tasks,
 - expansion of the list of tasks set out in Article 25(3) of the Act on crisis management,
 - change to the definition of a crisis situation so that it is not directly linked to available response or countermeasure capabilities. On this basis, the author proposes the following definition: ‘a situation which affects or may adversely affect the level of safety of people, property on a significant scale or the environment, requiring appropriate (emergency) action by the relevant public administration bodies due to the need to deploy and coordinate extraordinary forces and resources.’
2. A change to the structure of the Territorial Defence Brigades involving the introduction of full-time ZRK personnel.
3. Abandoning the dual command structure. At present, responsibility for crisis management lies with both the WOT commander and the operational commander of the Polish Armed Forces, in accordance with their respective powers, which derive not only from decisions made by the Minister of National Defence⁵⁸ but also from the relevant legal regulations. The optimal solution would appear to be to entrust all crisis management tasks to a single person⁵⁹.
4. A change to the procedures governing the use of the armed forces for crisis management tasks, whereby the WOT is granted a degree of autonomy in providing support to local communities, based on the following principles:
 - the rules of conduct apply in times of both peace and war (in the event that the armed forces are required to support civil defence);
 - the division of support provided by the armed forces into that carried out by the operational component and that carried out by the territorial component;
 - the treatment of the WOT as an element of crisis management at the disposal of the voivode within the province.

⁵⁸ *Decision No. Z-4/MON of the Minister of National Defence of 6 May 2022 on the Crisis Management System of the Ministry of National Defence.*

⁵⁹ Given that, within the crisis management system, the WOT will be treated according to different rules from those applicable to operational forces, this raises a legitimate question and, at the same time, provides scope for discussion regarding who should fulfil the role of the Crisis Management Centre of the Ministry of National Defence (CZK MON), while assuming that this task is to be carried out in times of peace, crisis and war?

Janusz Leżoń and Julian Traciak have put forward an interesting proposal⁶⁰. It involves specific legislative changes aimed primarily at expanding the powers of Territorial Defence Brigade commanders, and at simplifying and modifying existing procedures for mobilising forces and resources to carry out crisis management tasks, which will enhance the role of the WOT in the crisis management system.

The recommended measures appear to be essential. The paradox is that Territorial Defence Brigades, which are doctrinally dedicated to carrying out tasks within their permanent areas of responsibility, are effectively deprived of this capability in a crisis situation. Decisions on their deployment to support local communities are, in fact, taken at ministerial (central) level. This is, in a sense, contrary to the very essence of how territorial defence operates.

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⁶⁰ J. Leżoń, J. Traciak, *W kierunku efektywnego zarządzania kryzysowego...*, pp. 149–155.

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