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### PECULIARITIES OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF THE US BORDER PATROL SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP'S AGENTS

#### ABSTRACT

*Professional training of the agents of the US Border Patrol Special Operations Groups has been substantiated in the article. Special attention has been paid to revealing Selection and Training Course (STC) of the Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) and the Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue Unit (BORSTAR). It has been determined that BORTAC STC lasts over a month and candidates who pass the initial testing must then complete a timed, six-mile ruck march with a weighted pack, swimming, treading water and drown-proofing. As indicated in the article, in case of successful completion of the testing phase, candidates undergo weeks of intense training in tactics and airmobile operations, operational planning and weapon skills. As mentioned further, BORSTAR STC foresees a physical abilities test: a minimum of 7 pull-ups, 40 push-ups, 60 sit-ups (in 2 minutes), 1,5 mile run in 11 minutes or less, and a 250-yard swim. The following disciplines are taught during the course: the basic incident management system and incident command system, technical rescue training, land navigation, tactical medicine training, swift-water rescue technician training etc. Besides, the curricula of such disciplines as "Tactics and special training", "Topography", "Weapons practice", "Tactical medicine", "Physical training" (104 academic hours and 88 hours of classrooms lessons) for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine mobile forces training have been presented. The SBGSU mobile personnel training program lies in a thorough study of the specifics of service management and carrying out of service duties, as well as learning of the SBGSU mobile units' personnel actions during protection of the state border, personal security and the use of force. The main objective of the training course is to acquire the special knowledge and practical skills necessary for performing the main tasks on the state border protection, which are prescribed by professional duties. At the same time, the focus is made on the practical component of the actions of the border guards. In addition, they improve knowledge and skills during the training process.*

**Keywords:** US Border Patrol agents, Special Operations Group, professional training, State Border Guard Service of Ukraine personnel, curriculum.

#### INTRODUCTION

Mobile units play an important part in the modern history of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU). During the second half of the 1990s, reserve outposts were formed as a part of separate detachments of the Border Guard Troops of Ukraine. The former were later transformed into border outposts for performing special tasks. The new stage of mobile units' development began in the frameworks of implementation of the Concept of the SBGSU development for the period until 2015. It was at that time that the concept of "mobile forces" was introduced, which included mobile border outposts (under



command of border detachments), separate mobile border outposts (subordinated to regional commands) and a mobile border detachment. However, the most active measures for reforming and improving the capabilities of mobile units took place during 2015–2016.

The military conflict in the East of the country, illegal migration, smuggling activities, the intensification of international terrorism prompts establishing of rational forces and assets of border units capable of providing proper response to existing threats and risks. Thus, the heads of the regional commands and border guard detachments received “rapid response” reserves capable of acting in non-standard situations. In particular, five border service units of type “C” were deployed on the basis of mobile border outposts under subordination of the SBGSU regional commands. Special operations units – rapid response division for action on water – were introduced in the system of SBGSU marine guard. They were created to fulfill specific tasks for protection of the state border and sovereign rights of Ukraine in its exclusive (maritime) economic zone within the limits of the SBGSU functions both independently and as a part of regular inspection teams of Marine Guard ships’ (cutters’) crews (Lemeshko, 2016).

In accordance with the Development Strategy of the SBGSU until year 2020, approved by the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (dated 23.11.2015, No 1189-p), a new Program of SBGSU mobile units’ development for the period until 2018 has been elaborated. The Program provides for the reorganization of existing mobile units and their reorientation to the highest standards and best practices of special units of the US and the EU countries. Experts from the US Border Patrol were invited to assess the performance of the SBGSU mobile units (Mobilni pidrozdily, 2017).

Besides, within the framework of international cooperation, a number of trainings were held in 2016 in accordance with the US Border Patrol Task Forces’ training system; joint training of the SBGSU (10<sup>th</sup> mobile border detachment) and National Police of Ukraine was conducted at the terminal “F” of the Boryspil airport. To increase readiness and improve the skills of the mobile detachment personnel to perform tasks of counteracting illegal activity at the sea and river sections of the state border, a special actions’ tactics training course on a vessel was conducted with the participation of the instructors of the Border Guard of the Republic of Poland. Advanced training for auxiliary assault teams was conducted. Units of counteraction against illegal activities on the water were created in the process of detachment reorganization (Desiaty mobilnyi prykordonnyi zahin, 2017).

In connection with this, one of the directions for cooperation between the SBGSU and the US Embassy in Ukraine is the reformation of mobile units. The activity of DOZOR mobile detachment is being determined with this objective in view. A new regulatory and legal base is being developed for clear assigning of special tasks, functions and powers of the detachment, while new approaches to staffing and training of personnel are applied (Bereziuk, 2017). Learning of the experience of professional training of the US Border Patrol Special Operations’ unit is essential and important. This will contribute to the increase of effective professional training level of the SBGSU mobile units.

#### **THE AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to substantiate the professional training of the US Border Patrol Special Operations Units’ agents and reveal effectiveness of its implementation for SBGSU personnel training enhancement.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS**

Many Ukrainian scholars (O. Bereziuk, 2017; V. Lemeshko, 2016; V. Kyrylenko, O. Meiko, 2013; O. Trembovetskyi, S. Zhuk, 2016; et al.) substantiated the tasks,



organization and establishment of Ukrainian special task border units. At the same time, foreign researchers (N. Jacobellis, 2014; S. Southworth, S. Tanner, 2002) mostly focus on the practical and historical aspects of the US special forces deployment. However, we currently lack the researches that would analyze and generalize the experience of professional training of the US Border Patrol Special Operations Unit agents. As understood from the above, training experience peculiarities have not been fully revealed, which, in turn, shall encourage elaboration of professional training courses which with the view of their implementation in the education process of the SBGSU mobile units.

To achieve the purpose of the study the following research methods were used: theoretical methods of analysis, synthesis, generalization, systematization, substantiation of theoretical and practical material of the research.

### RESULTS

The US Border Patrol (BP) is the mobile uniformed law enforcement arm of the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and oversees all aspects of border control, including visa policies, immigration, and transportation policies. The US BP incorporates three units: Mobile Response Unit (MRT), the Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) and the Border Patrol Search, Trauma and Rescue Unit (BORSTAR), which formed the USBP Special Operations Group (SOG), headquartered in El Paso, Texas. The USBP SOG provides the DHS and BP with specially-trained and equipped tactical teams capable of rapid response to emergent and uncommon law enforcement situations requiring special tactics and techniques, search and rescue and medical response capabilities via land, air and sea (Border Patrol Special Operations Group, 2016).

BORTAC and BORSTAR enhance the missions of the BP and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) by handling uncommon and dangerous situations beyond commonly assigned tasks of BP. These units accomplish their goals through planning and training. MRT, which is a rapidly deployable unit capable of addressing problematic issues along the borders, is supported by SOG in terms of training, equipment and logistics.

Let us consider the mission and personnel training of BORTAC. It provides an immediate response capability to emergent and high-risk incidents requiring specialized skills and tactics and is manned by full-time team members (headquartered in El Paso, Texas) and non-full-time members (stationed throughout the US). The BORTAC agents can be deployed immediately when needed. The unit was created in 1984 to serve a civil disturbance function and quickly evolved having acquired the following skills and tasks: intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance; foreign law enforcement / BP capacity building; airmobile operations; maritime operations, etc. BORTAC is unique as it provides a global response capability, conducts training and operations both in the US and overseas. Enrollment to BORTAC starts with a Selection and Training Course (STC), which is similar to the US Special Operations Forces' selection courses. The STC lasts over a month, and begins with physical testing involving push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, a 1,5 mile run and a pistol qualification. Candidates who pass the initial testing must then complete a timed, six-mile ruck march with a weighted pack. Testing procedure also includes swimming, treading water and drown-proofing. In case of successful completion of the testing phase, candidates undergo weeks of intense training in small unit tactics, operational planning, advanced weapon skills, defensive tactics and airmobile operations. Prior to graduating and becoming an acting BORTAC agent, candidates must also demonstrate the ability to function in a team environment under stress and sleep deprivation conditions. STC graduates then will



return to their respective sectors and work alongside other operators while learning advanced techniques in weapons and tactics (Border Patrol Special Operations Group, 2016).

Both the screening program to qualify for BORTAC training and the actual training course are very demanding in the law enforcement profession (DHS Office of Inspector General, 2014). The current attrition rate for BORTAC training is around 70 percent. As sworn federal law enforcement officers, US BP BORTAC agents are authorized to carry firearms on and off duty. When participating in high-risk missions in US and abroad BORTAC agents are also authorized to carry an issued M4 Carbine and various other special weapons and equipment (Jacobellis, 2014).

The BORSTAR was created in 1998 in response to the growing number of injuries to BP agents and migrant deaths along the US state border. BORSTAR provides specialized law enforcement, search and rescue and medical response, specialized training support directed by the DHS for both domestic and foreign government agencies. BORSTAR is comprised of experienced BP agents selected from all border sectors nationwide who are specially equipped and trained to locate, access, stabilize, and transport victims to the places where they may be given proper medical care or treatment. In order to become a BORSTAR agent, candidates have to attend and successfully complete the BORSTAR STC. It is a physically and mentally demanding course in which candidates are evaluated in various search and rescue techniques, tactical medicine, communication, swift-water rescue, etc.

BP agents must meet the following criteria for Selection as a BORSTAR Candidate: serve at least two years at BP, be recommended by the Chief Patrol Agent of their Sector. Besides they must pass the BORSTAR physical abilities test: 7 pull-ups minimum, 40 push-ups minimum, 60 sit-ups minimum (in two minutes), 1,5 mile run 11 minutes or less, 250-yard swim (to graduate the Academy), pass a team field evaluation test and a standard interview process. BORSTAR STC lasts for approximately 5 weeks and includes the following disciplines: basic incident management system and incident command system, technical rescue training, land navigation, tactical medicine training, swift-water rescue technician training etc.

Having finished the Basic course, BORSTAR agents must demonstrate the following basic skills: technical rope rescue, swift-water rescue technician, first responder, aerial rescue operations, inherent tracking/sign-cutting skills, land navigation, wilderness survival. BORSTAR missions include: national security threat response, law enforcement operations, search and rescue, response/instruction, tactical medic support/instruction, emergency medical response, natural disaster response, incident command/management, capabilities assessment, air and marine operations support, maritime search, rescue, and recovery, training/advisory support. Upon completion of the BORSTAR STC, agents receive additional advanced specialized training in tactical medicine; technical rope rescue; paramedic; load planner; helicopter rope suspension training; rescue watercraft/boat operator; cold-weather operations; personnel recovery; small unit tactics; tactical combat casualty care; operations management and planning; and advanced dive, swift-water, and technical rope rescue operations (Border Patrol Special Operations Group, 2016).

The personnel of mobile units from the Eastern, Northern as well as Azov and Black Sea regional commands participated in advanced training at the Training Center of the SBGSU named after Igor Momot. It included 3 stages of the above-mentioned program of preparation designed for the staff of the US BP BORTAC special unit: special assault course, moving of heavy wooden logs, wheels, pushing of armored vehicles, overcoming water obstacles, using securing strap mountaineering equipment. The cadets also overcame



the 4-meter deep marshy terrain and ran several ten-kilometer accelerated marches with full pack. All that was done in conditions of limited nutrition and interrupted sleep. Not all cadets were able to make it to the final exam which took place on August 21. Only 12 servicemen were able to prove, first of all to themselves, that they were ready for any loads and obstacles. They were awarded with “survival course” completion certificates. Extremely complex tasks which simulated combat conditions required the border guards to show incredible endurance, determination, courage, moral stability and, most importantly, teamwork. It should be noted that over the first two stages of preparation, which involved more than 100 servicemen, just a few more than 20 were able to successfully complete it (Derzhavna prykordonna sluzhba Ukrainy, 2017).

The SBGSU mobile personnel training program lies in thorough study of the specifics of service management and carrying out of service duties, as well as learning of the SBGSU mobile units’ personnel actions during protection of the state border, personal security and the use of force. At the same time, the focus is made on the practical component of the actions of the border guards. In addition, they improve knowledge and skills during the training process.

The main objective of the SBGSU mobile units’ personnel training course is to acquire the special knowledge and practical skills necessary for performing the main tasks on the state border protection, which are prescribed by professional duties.

Upon completing the course, in accordance with the curriculum, a serviceman must: know the applicability, main tactical and technical characteristics, safety measures and the procedure for the use of weapons during the performance of professional duties; perform service tasks under the conditions of shortage of time for decision making, incomplete data on the situation, uncertainty of the situation, obstacles in executing of professional activities based on strict observance of the current legislation and the requirements set in the guidelines; independently perform official tasks initiatively without the instructions from senior executives.

The main tasks of the training of SBGSU military personnel are to determine: formation of sustainable skills of personal weapons handling, accumulation of experience of emotional and volitional behavior; risky situations modeling and practical training in ways of their solving; acquisition by the personnel of experience in the performance of their professional tasks under the conditions of limited time for decision making and incomplete data on the situation, its uncertainty, obstacles to performance of professional activities with strict observance of current legislation and meeting the requirements of guideline papers; formation and improvement of efficient skills and techniques while performing tasks on the protection of the state border; formation and development of personnel’s initiative and autonomy during performance of service and training tasks, ability for performing service activities without the instructions from senior commanders; formation of intellectual labour culture, autonomy and initiative in acquisition and retrieval of knowledge; mastering of the methods and techniques of psychic self-regulation during performing service activities; increase of psychological compatibility and efficiency of joint actions.

The training course includes the study of the following disciplines: “Tactics and special training”, “Topography”, “Weapons practice”, “Tactical medicine”, “Physical training” (104 academic hours and 88 hours of classrooms lessons).

“Tactics and special training” includes the following topics: “Concept, essence, content and types of special operations”, “Organization and conducting of special measures for physical detention of persons in buildings”, “Tactics of performing tasks on the field”,





“Tactics of actions of a serviceman within the group during the enforcing of special measures for the physical detention of persons in vehicles”.

The subject of “Topography” covers following topics: “Terrain as an element of the operational environment. Measurement and orientation in the field without a map”, “Topographical and special maps. Topographical maps reading. Measurement on the map. Determining of the coordinates of objects on the map.”

The discipline of “Weapons practice” provides for mastering of the following topics: “Rules and safeguards of weapons and ammunition handling during shooting”, “Materiel of small arms”, “Basics and rules of small arms shooting”, “Delivering fire from small arms on appearing and mobile targets in daytime and at night. Shooting training and assessment exercises”.

“Tactical medicine” encompasses the following topics: “Providing first aid during wounds and bleedings” (Wound: methods and ways for primary wound treatment. Application of individual first aid kit, procedure and rules for its use in various types of injuries). (Types of bleeding. Methods of bleeding control. Indications, rules, order and features of garrots use). “First aid during bone damage” (Symptoms of bone damage. Rules of placing a tourniquet. Standard and improvised methods for immobilization during bone fractures. Immobilization during limb fractures. Use of improvised means for immobilization). Methods of evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield), “Providing emergency care at conditions threatening human life” (The notion about conditions that threaten human life. The procedure of artificial lungs ventilation and the tactical medical care).

“Physical training” involves mastering of “Comprehensive physical activity” and “Applied swimming”.

### CONCLUSIONS

As can be confirmed by the above, SOG (incorporating MRT, BORTAC, BORSTAR) – as a highly mobile and rapid-response tool of US BP meant for responding operationally to specific terrorist threats and challenges, providing all-around support for traditional BP operations. Effective measures are being taken to improve the SBGSU mobile units’ training system and to provide them with comprehensive support taking into account combat experience, urgent challenges and threats at the state border. After analyzing the peculiarities of the professional training of the US BP SOG’s agents, it should be noted that considerable attention in the US is paid to the physical training of law-enforcement personnel. Thus, in addition to strict test in PT, they are required to pass a rigorous team field evaluation test and a standard interview process. The subjects taught during the course are revealed in the article in detail. Studying of the experience of special forces training for the US BP SOG, has enabled the SBGSU to introduce new approaches to personnel training, especially in the educational process of the SBGSU Training Center named after Igor Momot and at the mobile border detachment.

Directions of the further investigations are substantiation of the organizational structure of special task border units of the US BP Special Operations Group, the peculiarities of the professional training of the SBGSU Marine Guard units.

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