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# **An unfortunate ally of the United Arab Republic. The People’s National Army of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war\***

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the combat potential of the People’s National Army (hereafter: PNA) of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria (hereafter: Algeria) in the 1960s, with a particular focus on its operations during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and the consequences of that war for the further development of the Algerian armed forces. These issues have received little attention in Polish literature and remain overshadowed by the earlier years of the guerrilla warfare Algerians waged against the French during the War of Independence. The existing descriptions of the Algerian armed forces in the latter half of the 1960s are largely limited to essential information on their combat potential<sup>1</sup>; moreover, authors concerned with the PNA have mainly focused on assessing its major impact on the country’s political system<sup>2</sup>. Hence, there is a need to address the gap in that respect.

Given the language barrier and the impossibility of conducting queries in the Algerian archives, this study relies on the briefing notes prepared by the military attaché office at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of Poland in Algiers in 1964–1967 as the primary

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<sup>1</sup> As an example, one could cite the description of the People’s National Army of Algeria, [in:] Z. Dobosiewicz, *Algieria dnia dzisiejszego*, Warsaw 1964, pp. 66–70.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g.: M. Wajzer, *Rola armii w pierwszych latach niepodległości Algierii*, „Studia Politicae Universitatis Silesiensis” 2012, vol. 8, pp. 102–116.

source material<sup>3</sup>. The military attaché did not engage in any intelligence activities against the host country and was confined to gathering information by legal means: from the local mass media or through personal contacts with the hosts and other members of the diplomatic corps accredited in Algiers. Even so, he was able to obtain valuable data on the PNA, which adds greatly to the knowledge of the Algerian armed forces during the period in question. Interestingly, this is supported by relevant literature in English, which makes it a valuable addition.

The analysis of the source material demonstrates that although the PNA presented itself as one of the three strongest armies on the African continent on paper, its combat potential was seriously undermined by the country's backwardness and internal instability, which adversely affected the organizational structure of the armed forces and deprived them of sufficiently numerous, trained reserves. The involvement of the PNA command in political activity translated into a decline in the army's combat readiness, which became acutely evident in June 1967.

The paper is divided into several parts. This introduction is followed by a brief characterization of how the Polish military attaché office in Algiers operated. Subsequently, some basic information on the PNA is provided before moving on to issues relating to its combat potential before the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. One of the most important sections is concerned with the PNA's attempts to provide assistance to the armed forces of the United Arab Republic during the Six-Day War, which – with the exception of supplying several dozen aircraft – ended in an embarrassing failure that revealed a thorough lack of preparation for operations outside the country. The remaining three sections discuss the conclusions drawn by the Algerian authorities from the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, such as the need to establish mandatory military service in order to increase the numbers of trained personnel and create sufficiently large reserves for a professional army, as well as to continue further purchases of modern weapons and equipment. Consequently, some attention is devoted to the decisions taken by the Algerian authorities to further the development of the PNA, their implementation and the state of the armed forces in 1968. The text then ends with a brief recapitulation.

### **The military attaché office at the Embassy of the People's Republic of Poland in Algiers**

The office of the Polish military attaché in Algiers became operational on 21 November 1963, less than two years after Algeria had gained independence. The first Polish attaché, who also served in that capacity during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, was

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<sup>3</sup> The beginning of that timeframe coincides with the moment when the Polish military attaché office in Algiers embarked on active acquisition of information concerning the PNA; the end, on the other hand, was determined directly by the launch of transformation in the PNA in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, as well as the highly dynamic developments on the Algerian political scene, which deserve a separate study.

Col. Dominik Piotrowski. Previously, because the officer had served as the military attaché in Paris between 1953 and 1957, he had the appropriate language skills and a substantive background. Col. Piotrowski stayed in Algeria for nearly four years and was recalled to the country on 12 September 1967, in line with the rotation schedule.

In addition to official tasks, the Polish military attaché in Algiers was charged with the aforementioned information and operational tasks.

The attaché's information-related duties consisted of following and reporting on Algeria's current internal politics, its cooperation with the Arab countries in the political and military domain, potential cooperation of the countries in the region with NATO as well as possible utilization of the nuclear test site at Reggane and the air and naval base at Mers el-Kébir by France. Col. Piotrowski was also expected to report on the French units still on Algerian soil, the redeployment of the French troops to France or Algeria and, relying on the local sources, and to gather information on the French armed forces as a whole. The attaché was also ordered to "investigate the organization and composition of the Algerian armed forces, the combat complement of the basic units, their equipment and weapons, so that, if required, the attaché office will be able to elucidate the essential issues of the country's armed forces"<sup>4</sup>.

Operational activities involved familiarization with the intelligence situation in Algeria (working methods of the Algerian and French counter-intelligence), constant monitoring of the development of political and economic relations as well as directions of development of the armed forces, French influence on Algerian life in general (and the army in particular); "type selection and recruitment" carried out among the French, Spaniards and Italians (with a view to using them to gather intelligence on the NATO facilities and French bases on Algerian territory and other countries in the region), as well as supplying information on the possibilities of effective intelligence work against France, Spain and Italy in the country of posting<sup>5</sup>.

While carrying out his duties, Col. Piotrowski was expected to work closely with his counterparts from the socialist countries, especially the attaché of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In 1963, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers collected information on the redeployment of French forces to the metropolis. In 1964, after the withdrawal of the French units, Col. Piotrowski was ordered to concentrate on the foreign, internal and mil-

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<sup>4</sup> The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw (hereafter: AINR), 2602/12452, Special order for Col. Dominik Piotrowski leaving to work as military, naval and air attaché at the Embassy of the People's Republic of Poland in Algiers, 21 XI 1963, item 128.

<sup>5</sup> The special order for Col. Dominik Piotrowski states among other things: "[...] many moments in the current political situation in Algeria indicate that there still reside several hundred thousand Europeans who have been disappointed in their hopes and who are often hostile towards the governments of their metropolises; they are gradually leaving Algeria for their native countries, which constitutes a potentially good recruitment pool for our work; this moment should be exploited to the full" – *ibidem*, item 127.

itary policies of Algeria, as well as Morocco and Tunis. In addition, he was to monitor the political-military cooperation between the countries in the region and their contacts with other Arab countries, as well as assess their attitude towards NATO. The attaché was also requested to obtain data on the armed forces of Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Algeria. The headquarters expected reports on the Algerian-French military cooperation and on the locations, troop movements and exercises involving French, US and British forces in the western and central Mediterranean or the adjacent Atlantic Ocean basin. Another task of the attaché was to lay the operational groundwork in Algeria and, where possible, other countries in the region.

In 1965, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers reported that Algeria solicited French assistance as it tried to expand its own armed forces. This was particularly important in view of Algeria's border disputes with Tunisia and Morocco – dating back to the region's colonial past – following the discovery of deposits of oil and other mineral assets in the desert borderlands between these countries. That particular issue even led to an Algerian-Moroccan armed conflict in October 1963, in which Morocco was the aggressor. The tension on the Algerian-Moroccan and Algerian-Tunisian border continued in the following year and had a considerable impact on the direction of the PNA's development and its potential for involvement in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, as discussed below.

Col. Piotrowski's activities in Algeria were assessed as unsatisfactory. Although he did deliver information as required, he "failed to organize [...] an adequate network of information contacts among the diplomatic corps and the local authorities, which became palpable during the Middle Eastern conflict [the 1967 Arab-Israeli war]. The amount of information obtained at that time was insufficient. [...] Evaluating the work of the residency headed by Col. Piotrowski in general terms, it must be stated that, regardless of the difficulties of objective nature, better results could have been achieved. This applies primarily to operational work [...] These results are disproportionately small, especially given the experience and practice that Col. Piotrowski had"<sup>6</sup>.

From the standpoint of the Second Directorate of the General Staff of the Polish Army, the Maghreb was important, as it witnessed the clash of interests between the United States (which sought to increase its influence in Morocco and Tunisia) and France (which strove to maintain its dominant position in Algeria, which supplied 40 per cent of France's annual oil requirement). Attention was also drawn to the regional activities of the Federal Republic of Germany, which supplied equipment to the Algerian army as it built its structures. The Polish military attaché office in Algiers was aware that the economic situation in the country was dire and in need of outside assistance, which prompted grow-

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<sup>6</sup> AINR, 2602/12452, Extract from the evaluation of the work of Col. Dominik Piotrowski for the period of his posting in Algiers, 15 III 1968, items 151–152; A. Kochański et al., *Polska 1944–1991. Informator historyczny. Struktury i ludzie*, part 1, Warsaw 2022, p. 467.

ing concern that the situation could have been exploited by “capitalists”. An eloquent fact they noted was that the increasing deliveries of equipment and arms to Algeria from socialist countries were accompanied by the appearance of the American equivalents in Morocco (F-5 aircraft and missile systems, as a counterpoise to the modern Soviet-produced weapons held by Algeria). The Americans were also establishing military bases in Morocco and Tunisia (a Moroccan facility was even alleged to store nuclear warheads for a while, which were then transferred to Spain). One report also underscored the economic penetration of the region by the American “oil monopolies”, which competed fiercely with the French for Saharan oil and other raw materials.

Over time, issues relating to the Algerian army and the unstable internal situation in the country (to which the military considerably contributed) became increasingly important in the work of the Polish military attaché office in Algiers. In 1967, the Arab-Israeli conflict and its aftermath would also become one of the primary concerns.

### **The Algerian People’s National Army: basic data**

In the summer of 1964, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers estimated the size of the Algerian army at around 60,000 men. Infantry was the principal fighting force, with battalions of around 600 men as the largest tactical formations. Most of the battalions were equipped with trucks supplied by Germany, which effectively made them motorized infantry units.

Algeria was divided into five military regions, to which individual infantry battalions were assigned. The strongest 1st MR had a contingent of 20 battalions, the 2nd MR had 7, the 3rd MR 5, and the 4th and 5th MRs disposed of 8 battalions each. Most of those units were concentrated in the west, on the Algerian – Moroccan border, to counteract potential attack from that direction.

Initially, infantry soldiers were armed with rifles and both light and heavy machine guns of various origins (French, Soviet, and Italian). During the conflict with Morocco, a substantial volume of armaments (tanks, artillery, aircraft) were supplied to Algeria from Egypt and Cuba, while in the years to follow, most deliveries of modern military technology came from the USSR. The young state did not have the capacity to produce arms and military equipment on its own (merely conducting repairs in the military repair facilities left by the French) and therefore depended on external suppliers. A note from the Polish military attaché office in Algiers stated in May 1965: “To date, Algeria does not possess an arms industry, except for a few plants producing various explosives”<sup>7</sup>.

It is worth noting that France provided relatively little military assistance to Algeria as it built its armed forces. Apparently, Paris was concerned that the excessive strength

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<sup>7</sup> AINR, 2602/12840, General information on the economic situation in Algeria, 19 V 1965, item 51.

of the Algerian army might lead to the outbreak of an armed conflict in the region, which would have posed a threat to the French interests there. It was, therefore, more advisable to maintain a state of relative balance between Algeria, on the one hand, and Tunisia and Morocco on the other. Moreover, in the assessment of the Polish military attaché office in Algiers, if Algeria had had a strong and modern army, the French would have been pushed out of key segments of Algerian industry. French assistance was therefore confined to supporting the organization of the police forces (police and National Gendarmerie) to prevent chaos in Algeria and providing limited training to PNA soldiers. For this reason, Algeria's cooperation with Egypt proved tremendously important; it was the only Arab country to provide military assistance. Among other things, the Egyptians trained commanding officers of the PNA infantry and naval units on their own territory as well as sent their instructors to Algeria. Meanwhile, the task of supplying military equipment and arms was undertaken by the USSR, which also dispatched experts in aviation, missile systems, armored weapons and naval warfare to assist the Algerians as well<sup>8</sup>.

Having acquired a more substantial number of tanks, an unsuccessful attempt was made to create a mechanized division in the mid-1960s<sup>9</sup>. The expansion of the air force proceeded slowly. According to the information gathered by the Polish military attaché office in Algiers, in the summer of 1964, the service had only six MiG-15s supplied by Egypt and several light helicopters at a base near the capital (the aviation personnel had trained in Egypt and the USSR). The navy was just being formed as well, and its fleet consisted of several torpedo boats obtained from Egypt, which were based in Algiers<sup>10</sup>.

Conscription had not yet been introduced in Algeria, and only volunteers served in the army, which should be attributed to the country's backwardness<sup>11</sup> and political circumstances. As the country had gained independence only in 1962, adequately trained cadres were lacking while the training centers had yet to be established; in the meantime, soldiers were sent on development courses abroad<sup>12</sup>. Still, such courses were unable to meet the most urgent needs promptly enough. The statistically dramatically low level of general education among the Algerian population was a major problem; consequently, one had to rely on the personnel resources from colonial times, at least temporarily. This

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<sup>8</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Internal note on the political-military cooperation between Algeria and France, the Maghreb and other countries, 9 X 1966, items 191–196.

<sup>9</sup> One of the documents mentions that it was an armoured division; however, most of the later briefing notes sent by the military attaché at the Embassy of the People's Republic of Poland in Algiers referred to a mechanized division.

<sup>10</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note concerning general information on the Algerian army, 27 VII 1964, items 144–150.

<sup>11</sup> PNA soldiers were said to be former peasants in the main – Z. Dobosiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup> In early 1965, 24 officers graduated from the Mikhail Frunze Military Academy in Moscow; soon afterwards, 256 more were sent to the USSR for military training – AINR, 2602/12840, General information on the economic situation in Algeria, 19 V 1965, item 51.

provoked certain unfavorable phenomena, which, as the Polish military attaché office in Algiers reported in the summer of 1964, were as follows:

[...] in the Algerian army there are numerous officers educated by the French, often former collaborators. [...] Their presence in the young army was indispensable, particularly in the early days of independence, as they possessed the appropriate qualifications [...] which [were] often lacking among the former guerrilla officers, who had joined the military because of their convictions and the need to fight the enemy, as well as among the officers of the border army<sup>13</sup>.

Despite these difficulties, the Algerian armed forces gradually increased their combat potential. The Polish military attaché in Algiers, who on 1 November 1965 attended the military parade on the anniversary of the outbreak of the War of Independence, stated that the hosts possessed modern equipment, e.g. from Germany (transport vehicles, engineering equipment) and the USSR (T-34 and T-54 tanks, classic artillery with Soviet ZIS tractors, Katyusha rocket artillery, surface-to-air missiles<sup>14</sup>, MiG-17, MiG-21 and An-12 aircraft). French-produced equipment was scarce, and it was limited to the new AML armored cars, 100 of which were supplied to the National Gendarmerie. A note concerning the parade observed: “The equipment was in good technical repair. Seeing how the vehicles were driven, one could conclude that the crews were well trained”. Even though the quality of the soldiers’ and officers’ uniforms was noted, infantry units were described more critically, as they “did not look impressive. The lack of training was glaring. Their weapons were not uniform. In addition to Soviet-made rifles, the soldiers had old French rifles”<sup>15</sup>.

The provision of increasingly modern means of warfare to military units (a total of 1/6 of the country’s annual budget was allocated to the army)<sup>16</sup> elevated the combat potential of the PNA only to a limited extent. This was due to the fact that until the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the most pressing structural and political problems – which affected the armed forces – had not been resolved.

The extensive territory, the continued presence of a substantial force on the western border with Morocco and the need for the PNA to ensure internal stability in the young

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<sup>13</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Note on the armed of Algeria prepared by the military attaché office for the political report of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of Poland in Algiers for 1966, undated, items 210–211. A proportion of the PNA officers who had previously served in the French army had largely been non-commissioned officers in the latter; only a few had attained officer ranks – AINR, 2602/12840, Study on the possibility of acquiring information and intelligence material in Algeria, 10 XI 1964, item 41.

<sup>14</sup> SA-2 missiles to be specific – R.F. Nyrop et al., *Areal Handbook for Algeria*, Washington 1972, p. 347.

<sup>15</sup> AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note concerning the parade on 1 November 1965, 26 XI 1965, item 175.

<sup>16</sup> It was estimated that Algeria’s military expenditure in 1965 amounted to USD 98 million – R.F. Nyrop et al., op. cit., p. 343.

state that faced serious economic problems as well as political and social disturbances had a significant impact on the armed forces. As a result, the ground forces relied on a large number of infantry battalions scattered throughout the country, whereas attempts at creating higher-level tactical formations were virtually abandoned. Although, as already noted, the expansion of the army in terms of personnel and overall quality was restricted because of inferior (i.e. poorly educated) human resources, the political aspect played a crucial role. Several tens of thousands strong, the existing professional army was an environment in which it was easier to maintain an “appropriate ideological disposition” as well as nurture the attitude that the country’s leadership considered the most important, i.e. utter obedience to superiors, a legacy of the War of Independence<sup>17</sup>. Interestingly, this perspective was shared by the Polish military attaché office in Algiers:

There are [...] numerous facts which suggest that many officers have little to do with the Algerian revolution and the adopted agenda of building a socialist state. There are numerous incidents of economic malfeasance of various kinds, etc. Among the cadre, there are quite a few officers (Muslims) who served in the French army. They switched to the Algerian side during the period of hostilities, while some only after Algeria had gained independence. Officers of the middle-class and bourgeois provenance constitute a numerous group<sup>18</sup>.

Increasing the size of the army apparently involved the risk that further “uncertain elements”<sup>19</sup> penetrate the armed forces while creating tactical formations larger than a battalion (and later brigade), and operational-level commands posed the threat of a military coup undertaken by ambitious individuals who gathered too much power in their hands<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Absolute obedience was required of soldiers and junior officers, senior commanders were “hard into politics” – AINR, 2602/9718, The armed forces of Algeria [briefing note], undated [1967], items 224–229.

<sup>18</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note concerning general information on the Algerian army, 27 VII 1964, item 149. Although almost all units of the PNA had their Political Commissariat, the tasks of that body were almost exclusively cultural and educational – AINR, 2602/12449, Note on the armed of Algeria prepared by the military attaché office for the political report of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of Poland in Algiers for 1966, undated, item 212.

<sup>19</sup> As late as late 1967, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers assessed: “Many Algerian officers, even those who graduated from schools in the USSR and other socialist countries, display a negative attitude towards socialist countries. They are mostly sons of the bourgeoisie, for whom France remains the social model. Very many of them have married into French families. The memory of the recent war experience plays no role in their feelings. No hatred or resentment towards France as a former colonial metropolis can be observed” – AINR, 2602/12449, note no. 12/67 Concerning the evaluation of the military parade of the Algerian PNA on 1 November 1967 on the 13th anniversary of the Algerian revolution, undated, item 232.

<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Algeria was not spare that kind of internal turmoil in 1965, when Houari Boumediène seized power in the country; near two years later, in late 1967, an unsuccessful military coup was led by Chief of General Staff Col. Tahar Zbiri – see: AINR, 2602/11266, Report on the official activities of the military attaché office at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of Poland in Algiers for the period from 27 November 1967 to 4 February 1968, undated, items 31–49. On the role of the army in Algeria’s internal politics see e.g.: L. Addi, *Army, State and Nation in Algeria. The Military and Nation Building in the Age of Democracy*, New-York 2001,

As a result, the army's combat potential did not correspond to the existing capabilities and challenges. Hence, the Polish military attaché in Algiers stated in the summer of 1966:

The prevailing opinion is that the Moroccan army, nearly half the size of the Algerian army in terms of numbers, matches and perhaps even surpasses the Algerian army in terms of its combat power and readiness for warfare on the modern battlefield, something that the Algerian army is lacking, being based essentially on a battalion-level organization, untrained and insufficiently prepared to conduct combat operations in cooperation with other branches of the military<sup>21</sup>.

Although 500 officers had been successfully trained by the end of 1966, and 400 more were being trained at the time, major shortages were still in evidence, especially in lower- and middle-tier command positions<sup>22</sup>. The Polish military attaché office in Algiers observed:

The reasons for such difficulties lie mainly in the fact that the profession of an officer in a modern army requires a thorough general education, which the Algerian youth generally lack. Those with secondary education, for instance, prefer to choose other professions. Moreover, due to the absence of the officer's statute in the Algerian army, young people do not see that this profession offers assurances for the future<sup>23</sup>.

Even so, the Algerians failed to take advantage of even those meagre high-quality human resources that they actually had. A briefing note of the Polish military attaché office in Algiers from late 1967 states as follows:

Pilots and engineers found it difficult to be promoted to officers and obtain the associated remuneration. As a result, there were incidents of refusal to discharge one's formal duties. [...] Soviet specialists are limited in their ability to train troops effectively. They are only

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pp. 159–178. On the internal situation in Algeria after 1965 see e.g.: F. Humi, *Algeria's 'Revolution'*, "Swiss Review of World Affairs" 1972, y. 22, no. 2, pp. 7–8.

<sup>21</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note from the trip to Morocco in July 1966, 11 VIII 1966, item 188.

<sup>22</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Note on the armed of Algeria prepared by the military attaché office for the political report of the Embassy of the People's Republic of Poland in Algiers for 1966, undated, item 214. Even at the end of 1967, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers expressed the following conviction: "The present officer cadre are largely former veterans of the liberation war, the majority originate from the so-called border army, and a smaller proportion from the guerrilla units fighting in the country [...] as well as units of the former colonial army. These cadres, taking in their entirety, possess low level of general education and poor military grounding" – AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 13/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 25 XI 1967, item 322.

<sup>23</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Note on the armed of Algeria prepared by the military attaché office for the political report of the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of Poland in Algiers for 1966, undated, item 215.

consultants to Algerian officers, who were often ignorant of the military specialty they are in charge of whilst being conceited and irritable<sup>24</sup>.

Having graduated from military technical schools “by hook or by crook”, many military specialists sought discharge from the army and set up successful craft businesses. Although in 1967, a number of officers educated at foreign military schools – including 100 former officers of the French army – took up jobs in the departments of the Ministry of Defence, army staffs and domestic military schools (whose level was vastly different from their European counterparts), “a state of carelessness, laziness and organizational malaise which is incomprehensible to Europeans still prevails in the army. The Ministry of Defence lacks an adequately organized operational department responsible for the training of the armed forces. Drill and firearm training continue to predominate”<sup>25</sup>.

The morale of the soldiers was not high. The desire to improve one’s material standing proved to be the main incentive for serving in the army. In view of substantial unemployment (reaching 50% among the male population) and the country’s difficult economic situation, the army offered recruits relatively good living conditions. The soldiers received free uniforms and food, while in addition to their pay, they were entitled to a wife and child allowance and, on average, they enjoyed the living standard of an average-earning worker or civil servant. Nevertheless, from a European perspective, the conditions of service in the Algerian army were not attractive to more ambitious or better-educated individuals. Also, one could hardly fail to note the considerable disparities in the remuneration of soldiers of different ranks. In late 1967, a private before completing his first year of service earned 120 dinars (later 200), a corporal 270, a sergeant 470, a master sergeant 570, a warrant officer 670, an officer candidate 800, a second lieutenant 1,000, a lieutenant 1,200, and the captain 1500. This engendered a major material and mental gap between officers, NCOs and rank-and-file soldiers, who were most severely affected by any organizational and logistical shortcomings. This had a range of specific consequences:

The living conditions of the soldiers in the barracks are very harsh, and their health is unsatisfactory. The generally poor health of the population, particularly considering that tuberculosis is a social disease in Algeria, is reflected in the overall health of the soldiers. At the same time, due to lacking cadres, the level of medical care among soldiers is unsatisfactory<sup>26</sup>. In general, it may be said that the austere conditions of the barracks,

<sup>24</sup> AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 13/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 25 XI 1967, item 320.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, item 321.

<sup>26</sup> Medical services in the Algerian army were organized with the assistance of Bulgarian advisers.

the absence of political and educational work, and the glaring discrepancy between the living standards of the commanding personnel and the masses of soldiers have a negative effect on the mood and the moral and political mindset among the soldiers. Poor military discipline is also seen, including chattiness and failure to observe the military standards and the rules of military secrecy. Desertions of soldiers from the army also attest to the strength of the moral and political posture<sup>27</sup>.

### The army of Algeria shortly prior to the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war

In mid-January 1967, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers estimated the size of the country's army at 68–70,000 men, of whom approximately 57,000 served in the ground forces, 2,000 in the air force, 2,000 in the navy and 8,000 in the National Gendarmerie<sup>28</sup>. Since no official information on the army's strength was published in Algeria, the calculations above were based on the information obtained by the attaché office. Compared to previous years, the manpower increase in the armed forces must have been negligible, as previous information stating the strength of 60,000 men did not include National Gendarmerie units.

Infantry battalions (mostly motorized) comprising 500–550 men remained the basic tactical formations of the ground forces. Although the aforementioned attempt to form a mechanized division in 1964 failed, the first brigade-level infantry unit (mechanized infantry brigade) consisting of several battalions of infantry was indeed successfully established<sup>29</sup>. After another infantry brigade was formed in 1967 and – just as the first one – assigned subsequently to the 2nd MR, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers reported on the organizational structure for this type of tactical formation, which consisted of:

- command and staff,
- three infantry battalions (each consisting of 670 soldiers),
- an artillery battalion (two artillery batteries and a mortar company),
- an anti-aircraft artillery battalion,
- a tank company,
- an anti-tank gun battery,
- a combat engineer company,
- a communications company,
- a transport company,

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, items 321–322.

<sup>28</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 1/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 15 I 1967, item 226.

<sup>29</sup> Creation of tactical units above battalion level was recommended by the Soviet advisers – *Algeria. A Country Study*, ed. H.Ch. Metz, Washington 1993, p. 260.

- a reconnaissance platoon,
  - rear echelon services,
- 4,000 men in total<sup>30</sup>.

In the opinion of the Polish military attaché office in Algiers, that new tactical formation was a positive sign for the future and a major progressive stimulus for the armed forces:

Currently in development, the new organization of the mechanized brigade may yield successful results in the final phase, because in the Algerian conditions, with the extensive distances, maintaining a continuous front in the event of a conflict is unthinkable; a highly maneuverable and relatively independent mechanized brigade may prove to be a good solution. Given the present capabilities, one should not expect prompt completion. It may even be a matter of a few years<sup>31</sup>.

It was estimated that the PNA had approximately 600 tanks (T-34s and T-54s) and self-propelled guns (SU-100), and around 150 armored cars. The artillery consisted of 122 mm and 152 mm cannons and howitzers, supported by “Katyushas” and modern surface-to-air missiles<sup>32</sup>. The air force, subordinated directly to the Minister of National Defence, could field only a dozen or so aircraft in 1964, but thanks to long-term loans from the USSR, its strength – according to incomplete data from the Polish military attaché office in Algiers – grew to 140 aircraft and helicopters by early 1967. This figure included 50 fighters (MiG-15s, MiG-17s and MiG-21s), 18 IL-28 bombers, 13 transport aircraft (seven An-12s, six IL-14s), 30 helicopters, and 30 Yak-18 training aircraft<sup>33</sup>.

Still being organized, the navy was the least impressive, with three “submarine destroyers”, one minesweeper and eight torpedo boats.

Most forces remained concentrated along the border with Morocco and Tunisia (Algiers continually feared an unexpected attack from these countries) and in the 1st MR area, which included the capital. According to the Polish military attaché office in Algiers, the contingents of the various military regions as of mid-January 1967 were as follows:

- 1st MR (with headquarters in Blida, now Al-Bulayda in the northern part of the country, near the capital): 12 infantry battalions (12th, 15th, 19th, 24th, 37th, 43rd, 53rd, 56th, 61st, 63rd, 71st, 75th), two tank battalions (in the Algiers area), three artillery battalions, and the 15th combat engineer battalion;

<sup>30</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 3/67, Political-military relations between Algeria and Morocco, undated, item 245.

<sup>31</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 1/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 15 I 1967, item 235.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, item 227.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, item 231. The briefing note states that many aircraft were most likely destroyed in the course of training or withdrawn from service.

- 2nd MR (with headquarters in Oran near the Moroccan border): 1st Mechanized Infantry Brigade (20th, 29th, 31st, 72nd Infantry Battalions), five infantry battalions (13th, 22nd, 32nd, 49th, 72nd) and the 1st combat engineer battalion;
- 3rd MR (with headquarters in Bashar in the western part of the country near the Moroccan border): five infantry battalions (21st, 23rd, 33rd, 35th, 41st), an artillery brigade, a mortar company and a camel-borne company);
- 4th MR (with headquarters in Ouargla in the eastern part of the country, near the Tunisian border): four infantry battalions (6th, 10th, 21st, 49th) and five camel-borne companies;
- 5th MR (with headquarters in Constantine in the north-eastern part of the country, near the Tunisian border): ten infantry battalions (7th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 27th, 39th, 52nd, 58th, 65th, 66th), a commando unit, an armored battalion, an artillery battalion and an engineer battalion<sup>34</sup>.

The Polish military attaché office in Algiers estimated that many of the essential problems of the PNA – signaled for a number of years already – had remained unresolved by early 1967. The difficulties associated with the shortage of sufficiently trained manpower were particularly acute: “At present, the issue of cadres is quite severe for the young army. The lack of qualified military personnel is widespread”<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, despite visible progress in the systematic upgrades of equipment and weapons, the actual combat value of the armed forces was limited, even though it may have looked good on paper:

The Algerian army’s weaknesses are its poor maneuverability and insufficient organization of the rear services. This became vividly evident in the recent Moroccan-Algerian conflict. The Moroccan army was clearly better prepared in this respect. Hence, the efforts of the Algerian army command aim to have the infantry battalions motorized as far as possible as well as to modernize the units of the rear echelon. Major results have been achieved in that regard in the last two years. Still, the Algerian army is currently insufficiently prepared for operations on the modern battlefield. Unit training is conducted at the platoon and company level, less frequently at the battalion level. All types of troops are trained in their own narrow scope. To date, no training has been conducted in cooperation between individual branches, e.g. infantry with tanks, artillery, etc.<sup>36</sup>

The above sources of potential problems of the PNA, as well as the shortcomings which resulted, among others, from the actual absence of a mobilization system and deeply substandard logistics, became fully apparent during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, items 228–230.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, item 233.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, item 235.

conflict exposed the most vulnerable points of the armed forces in a manner that was drastic and profoundly embarrassing for individual commanders and the political leadership of the country. Interestingly, as late as 9 June 1967, at a meeting of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party with party secretaries of the communist countries in Moscow, it was stated that "only the Algerian army is good and valuable since it possesses combat experience. The armies of the UAR and other countries have no or very little such experience. Moreover, modern equipment requires experience. Also, modern equipment requires a soldier of a certain level. Meanwhile, if we counted, we would find out how many illiterate soldiers there are in the Arab countries"<sup>37</sup>. Such a view on the matter expressed by Gomułka indicated that he was not particularly well informed about the capabilities of the PNA. The extensive experience of guerrilla warfare against the French had no relevance in the realities of the modern battlefield, nor could it offset the grave, multifaceted difficulties that troubled the armies of the Arab states.

### A display of ineptitude: the PNA and the 1967 Arab-Israeli war

A briefing note from the Polish military attaché office in Algiers concerning the actions of the PNA in the context of the so-called Six-Day War served as follows: "The events of June in the Middle East came as a surprise to Algeria as well, as hardly anyone believed in the possibility of Israel launching an armed aggression against the Arab states so rapidly. Still, they were even more astonished by the inadequate preparation of the Arab states to repel the aggression, especially the weakness of the Egyptian armed forces"<sup>38</sup>. The events on the frontline unfolded so quickly – and unfavorably for the Arabs – that Algeria, more than 3,000 kilometers away from the Sinai Peninsula, did not manage to take direct part in the conflict, apart from sending some 40 combat aircraft into Egyptian territory<sup>39</sup>.

In practice, the MiG-21s in question turned out to be the only weapons provided by Algeria that were used in combat operations. It may also be noted that the very inferior training of the Algerian pilots – an issue discussed further on – enabled only the best of them to fly the fighters following deployment to the war zone. A number of Egyptian pilots were involved in the operation as well. Having been specially flown to Algeria since

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<sup>37</sup> Excerpt from the speech of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party Władysław Gomułka at a meeting of communist party secretaries from socialist countries in Moscow, 9 VI 1967, [in:] *Stosunki polsko-izraelskie (1945–1967)*, selected and compiled by S. Rudnicki, M. Silber, Warsaw 2009, p. 701.

<sup>38</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria's position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, item 263.

<sup>39</sup> Algerian air reinforcements for the UAR were to consist of 48 MiG-17 and MiG-21 jets and twelve An-12s (the document erroneously stated the type, i.e. An-24) – AINR, 01299/853, Report of Department I of the Ministry of the Interior on the situation in the Middle East, 8 VI 1967, item 48.

the evening of the first day of the war, they subsequently carried out combat missions on the Algerian machines<sup>40</sup>. The first aircraft – 12 MiG-21s – were delivered to Egypt on the second day of the war. Eventually, 47 (48, according to Polish sources) jet fighters were reportedly delivered to the UAR, including 29 MiG-17s (meaning Algeria's all combat-ready machines of that type); and 18 MiG-21s. Algerian An-12s provided technical support to the fighter planes deployed to Egypt, carrying spare parts and armaments<sup>41</sup>.

It follows from most recent research that an encounter between the Israeli air force and probably six "Algerian" MiG-21s – which flew cover (alongside four MiG-19 fighters) for MiG-17s carrying out a strike mission – took place on the morning of 8 June (the fourth day of the war). Although the bombing run on the enemy positions did inflict losses, the two Israeli fighters which attacked the Egyptian formation managed to shoot down as many as four fighters (three MiG-19s and one "Algerian" MiG-21, whose pilot was killed)<sup>42</sup>. There were also reports, unconfirmed to this day, that a further six "Algerian" MiG-21s were lost due to an error, as they landed in enemy-held territory and were captured by the Israelis<sup>43</sup>.

Interestingly, prior to the outbreak of the war, certain actions undertaken in Algeria – using propaganda as well as other means – indicated that the country was being prepared for a possible armed conflict. Nevertheless, as it later transpired, military commanders, by and large, believed that war would not ensue after all, and even if it did, the UAR forces would prove large enough to defeat Israel:

In the period prior to the Israeli aggression, the Algerian authorities launched an extensive campaign against Israel's hostile policies, urging increased vigilance and combat readiness. On 26 May, the army stopped issuing passes, leave was cancelled, and an appeal was made to the veterans to make contact with the nearest military garrisons to receive instructions in case of mobilization. Line units and headquarters were put on combat standby. However, despite the above undertakings, virtually no preparations were made in the army for Algeria's participation in repelling the imminent danger. In conversations, the Algerian military took the ordered standby rather lightly, considering it more of a political demonstration on Algeria's part given the events in the Middle East [...]. This state of affairs may be explained by the widespread conviction at the time that larger-scale hostilities would not take place and that the United Arab Republic, together with other states of the Middle East, would be able to counter the aggression and defeat

<sup>40</sup> Although it was occasionally claimed in pertinent literature that Algerian pilots took part in combat missions, this is unlikely to have occurred given their very low level of training, except perhaps in isolated cases.

<sup>41</sup> T. Cooper, D. Nicolle et al., *Arab MiGs*, vol. 3: *The June 1967 War*, Houston 2012, p. 99.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 102; K. Kubiak, Ł.M. Nadolski, *Wojna sześciodniowa 1967*, Zabrze–Tarnowskie Góry 2015, pp. 285–286.

<sup>43</sup> T. Cooper, D. Nicolle et al., *op. cit.*, p. 100.

the aggressor. The considerable distance between Israel and Algeria also had a reassuring effect to some extent<sup>44</sup>.

When reality unfolded differently than Algeria had expected, all previous negligence and disregard for the situation triggered an avalanche of negative events that could no longer be remedied in any way. Lack of proper planning and prior preparations, which compelled one to improvise, resulted in a collapse of the logistical system. This led to an intensely embarrassing situation: transported by trucks, the land component of the Algerian army, which was to support (the attacked) Egypt, failed to reach its destination:

A number of facts testify to the fact that the Algerian army, despite modern equipment and arms, was still a guerrilla-type army to some degree. When, after the start of the aggression, the Algerian government decided to send its military units to the Middle East, [it] turned out that the military leadership began to draw up plans for the deployment of military units only at that very point. Only then did it become apparent that the army was not sufficiently supplied with the necessary equipment. It was literally on the eve of the departure of the vehicle columns to the Middle East that they began to equip themselves with fuel and water canisters. In every shop (state and private), soldiers would buy the entire stock of fuel and water canisters. The first unit, consisting of one infantry battalion and a command company, was successfully deployed to the UAR by An-12 aircraft. The next wave of approximately 2,500 soldiers was directed to the Middle East by truck, through Bou-Saâda, Biskra, El-Oued, the southern part of Tunisia (Touza, Gafsa, Kabis) towards Tripoli and Benghazi. Some of these columns managed to reach Benghazi only. It proved impossible for the troops to proceed farther, as they ran out of supplies (especially fuel) at Benghazi and had no means of protecting the columns against potential air attack. After the ceasefire, the columns were turned back to Algeria<sup>45</sup>.

The mobilization system failed utterly as well, and the lack of trained reservists who could be quickly drafted into the army was particularly noticeable. This problem could by no means be addressed by calling up former guerrillas for two main reasons. First, the veterans of the War of Independence had only small arms expertise and thus were unsuited to serve in armored units, artillery, etc. Second, the former guerrillas – especially better-educated inhabitants of towns and cities, whose potential value for the army was highest – were already serving in the police and the National Gendarmerie, while some were employed in various institutions of the state administration, which excluded them

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<sup>44</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67, Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria's position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, items 263–264.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, items 264–265.

from the draft. The Polish military attaché office in Algiers described the unsuccessful mobilization response to the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war as follows:

After the start of hostilities in the Middle East, the mobilization of human reserves was announced in Algeria. Its course also demonstrated numerous shortcomings. The mobilization of the reserves was not carried out according to any earlier mobilization plans, as there were none, but by means of press and radio appeals which urged reservists to report to the nearest military garrisons or the National Gendarmerie. Thus, those were mainly volunteers willing to take part in the fight against the aggressor for the liberation of Palestine who reported for duty. After initial selection (as both sick and elderly people applied), the volunteers were entered on lists. Those living further away were quartered in the barracks of military units or the National Gendarmerie. Those residing closer were ordered to return to their homes and wait to be summoned. Several days after the cessation of hostilities in the Middle East, the recruitment of volunteers was halted, and those in the barracks were dismissed, even though the head of the Algerian government called for the fight to be continued in his speeches. The newspapers and the radio continually reported that Algeria was mobilizing all its forces and resources to fight imperialism and Zionism. This was due to the conflicts which had arisen in Algeria between the NLF (National Liberation Front) party and the army. As is well known, in Algeria, the army has been, and still is, the most serious organized force capable of exerting influence on the country's internal political situation. The NLF party has not yet been able to transform itself into an organized force capable of fulfilling its role; it does not yet constitute a more serious force<sup>46</sup>.

It is noteworthy that the above assessment, made *ex post facto*, was at odds with the information supplied to Warsaw during the conflict. A report from Department I of the Ministry of the Interior of the People's Republic of Poland on 7 June 1967 stated: "The first three days of fighting will be the most difficult for the Arab side, as the United Arab Republic and its allies have not yet completed their preparations. Algerian and Libyan troops will enter the battle in two days, Moroccan troops in five. Further troops are being pulled from the desert"<sup>47</sup>. Meanwhile, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers reported that the first troops (four infantry battalions and a tank battalion, as specified on 8 June 1967) had already been deployed to the Arab-Israeli front. Ultimately, 25,000 and 40,000 Algerian troops were supposed to be sent to fight against the Jews<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, items 265–266.

<sup>47</sup> AINR, 01299/853, Report of Department I of the Interior Ministry on the situation in the Middle East, 7 VI 1967, item 23.

<sup>48</sup> AINR, 01299/1012, Paraphrase no. 01063/67 from Second Directorate of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, 1 p.m., 8 VI 1967, item 14.

## Lessons from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war

The severe difficulties that the Algerian government faced in June 1967 as it tried to mobilize an adequate number of trained soldiers clearly demonstrated the scale of issues in that area<sup>49</sup>. As the first expedient to remedy the situation, the national media announced on 12 July that 5,000 female and male students, as well as pupils in the final grades of secondary schools, would be called up for compulsory military training lasting 45 days (in the following days, the press published a detailed list of young people, specifying the services and units in which they would undergo training)<sup>50</sup>. The Polish military attaché office in Algiers assessed that measure as follows:

By calling up students and secondary school pupils in the first place, the Algerian authorities rely on the assumption that an adequate level of general knowledge of the conscripted will facilitate the completion of military training even in such a short period of time. This is correct to a certain extent, as a student or a pupil in the final year of secondary school can assimilate the relevant knowledge more quickly than a person without any education or one who has completed some primary school grades. Nevertheless, a period of one and a half months is absolutely insufficient to adequately train even a student, particularly in technical units. Hence, in this case, the Algerian leadership seems to be making a mistake. Soviet military specialists working in the Algerian army have repeatedly stressed: the importance of having properly trained human reserves. [...] For the time being, the Algerians have not agreed to introduce mandatory military service in their country. They presume that the introduction of mandatory military service would result in an influx of elements with different views and political leanings into the ranks of the army, which could weaken the army, the principal organized force maintaining order in the country<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> The Polish military attaché in Algeria commented aptly: “[...] because with modern weaponry, the lack of trained reserves cannot be replaced by former guerrillas, who at best know how to handle a rifle, but will be helpless when faced with modern technology” – AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 3/67. Political-military relations between Algeria and Morocco, undated, item 245.

<sup>50</sup> A later briefing note from the Polish military attaché office in Algiers stated that the creation of the country’s civil defence was announced in the first days of July 1967: “It was emphasized that one must always reckon with possible imperialist aggression, which is why adequate preparations need to be made to repulse that aggression, and therefore involve the broad masses in organizing the defence. [...] It was found that passive defence of the country, covering the entire Algerian territory, has to be permanent. One cannot count only on volunteers who may come forward in the event of an aggression. [...] It was also stressed that an alert system and the most straightforward means of ensuring safety to the civilian population must be organized within a short time” – AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 8/67. Announcement of national civil defence to be established in Algeria, undated, item 295.

<sup>51</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria’s position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, items 267–268. The 45-day training of secondary and higher education students was not a one-off undertaking; it was to be continued subsequently as part of weekly military science classes. The intention behind it was to educate a future cadre of reserve officers, although the Polish military attaché office in Algiers observed that, with the Algerian government declaring the need for a million

Despite the embarrassment of the failed attempt to provide assistance to Egypt during the “Israeli aggression”, as well as the weaknesses of which Warsaw had been advised even before the outbreak of war, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers assessed that the PNA “nonetheless represents a serious fighting force which can still solve certain problems inside the country, as well as influence further developments in the Middle East to some degree”<sup>52</sup>. It was stressed that the Algerian society (including the opposition communist party), as well as the state leadership, are determined to fight for the “liberation of Palestine”<sup>53</sup> as well as oppose “Zionism” and “Anglo-American imperialism”: “In conversations, representatives of various strata of the Algerian society see only one way to solve the Palestinian problem: through armed struggle”<sup>54</sup>. Nevertheless, the defeat of the Egyptian army came as a major shock to the population:

The early reactions of the Algerian society were highly resentful towards [UAR President Gamal] Naser and the Egyptian army, as well as towards the Soviet Union for its lack of armed involvement in the conflict. These reactions were often fueled both by certain reactionary elements and by the fact that the Algerian public was misinformed about the direct participation of the US Sixth Fleet in the armed conflict<sup>55</sup>.

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reservists to defend its vast borders, the training of several thousand young people was far from sufficient. Furthermore: “Students expressed their dissatisfaction at being called up for training due to the interruption of their exams and their postponement to later dates. The Algerian opposition asserts that the calling up the students for training was a mere ploy by the government, which feared demonstrations and riots, therefore the students were barracked to keep them in check” – AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 9/67. Military training of students, undated, item 298.

<sup>52</sup> AIPN, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria’s position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, item 268.

<sup>53</sup> M.S. Mandel, *Muslims and Jews in France. History of a Conflict*, Oxford–Princeton 2014, p. 89.

<sup>54</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67, Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria’s position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, item 269. See also: R.A. Raughton, *Algeria and the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War*, “The Middle East Journal” 1969, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 434–444. It soon became evident that the “unity” proved only ostensible when confronted with the aforementioned threats. As the Polish military attaché office in Algiers stated, chaos ensued in Algeria’s power structures after the Six-Day War, owing to frictions between the “nationalists” and the “leftists”: “The Israeli-Arab war, or rather the defeat of the Arabs, have provoked an utter polarization of the internal forces in Algeria. Whereas previously the adherents of the capitalist path had hidden behind a facade of progressive declarations, they began to assert loudly after the defeat that the capitalist camp represented strength, whereas the ‘friends from the East’ proved once again that they could not be counted on at decisive moments; hence, Algeria must not sever ties with the West, because the East will never assure it adequate compensation” – AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 6. The internal situation in Algeria in September 1967, undated, item 287.

<sup>55</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria’s position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, item 268. The information concerning the involvement of the Sixth Fleet in the hostilities to support Israel was disseminated by the UAR media, to justify the tremendous effectiveness of the Israeli air strike in the first hours of the war, which won the Jews aerial superiority. According to Arab propaganda, Israel would not have been able to deal such a powerful, devastating blow to UAR bases if its territory had not been covered by the air and naval forces of the Sixth Fleet at the time. The USSR and its satellites strongly rejected allegations that the UAR lacked adequate support in its confrontation with Israel. For instance, on 9 June 1967 Władysław Gomułka stated: “certain Egyptian leaders may [...] say so in order to excuse their own mistakes” – Excerpt from the speech..., p. 702.

As English-speaking scholars have already pointed out, it is worth noting that the Algerian leaders were shocked and exasperated by such a rapid collapse of the Egyptian defence in the Sinai, as well as by the vacillating attitude of the Soviets. From a distance of 3,000 kilometers, decision-makers in Algiers advised the UAR against agreeing to a ceasefire and urged them to switch to guerrilla warfare so as to exhaust Israel. The Algerian proposals were unrealistic and were not received enthusiastically in Cairo<sup>56</sup>.

The Polish military attaché office in Algiers was also aware of the limited capabilities of the armed forces of the Arab states after the recent war in the Middle East, which – also due to the losses – had significantly diminished their military potential, as well as exposed the weaknesses of their armies:

The above undertakings by the authorities, the deployment of troops to Egypt and the official statements indicate that the Algerian government is determined to continue the armed struggle against Israel. When this might take place is unknown. Algeria's capabilities in this regard are not great, both because of insufficient readiness of its armed forces to carry out more serious combat tasks, poor preparation of the country and because of the great distance [from the theatre of operations]. It seems certain that, on its own, Algeria will not embark on a more serious venture in this direction. It can only do so in agreement and close cooperation with other progressive countries of the Middle East, most notably Egypt. However, given the losses sustained by its [Egypt's] armed forces during the armed clash with Israel, it is unlikely that Egypt would agree to a more serious military undertaking before at least several months have passed<sup>57</sup>.

After the end of hostilities, Algeria not only did not withdraw its troops from Egypt but continued to transport more soldiers, equipment and weapons there for several weeks to follow<sup>58</sup>. By mid-July 1967, two infantry battalions, two artillery battalions, a tank

<sup>56</sup> W.B. Quandt, *Algerian Military Development. The Professionalization of the Guerrilla Army*, Washington 1972, p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria's position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, items 270–271. Given Algeria's publicly proclaimed intransigence against the enemies of the Arab world, it is noteworthy that the country continued to supply oil to France and Spain, breaking the boycott which the other Arab states imposed on the "imperialists" who supported Israeli policies. Such duplicity provoked resentment from the UAR, whose military attaché in Algiers claimed that "[...] it is easy for the Algerian government to preach slogans calling for the war to be continued because: the Algerian territory is not the theatre of operations; the losses due to the closure of the Suez Canal are suffered by the UAR, not by Algeria; the Algerians continually extract and sell their oil in Europe, while other Arab states incur losses as a result of the announced boycott. In his further argument, the UAR military attaché declared that, in fact, the UAR had no enemies in Israel except the Zionist faction; that it would be possible to come to terms with Israel if the US, the chief enemy of the UAR and the Arab countries, were not behind it" – AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 11/67. Concerning certain aspects of the political-military situation in Algeria, 27 IX 1967, item 305.

<sup>58</sup> In the opinion of the USSR military attaché, Algeria sent three infantry battalions (1,500 men) and forty aircraft to Egypt. Apparently, they were the best troops in the entire army, although their value to the UAR was

battalion, and a substantial volume of other equipment and armaments were already on the Egyptian territory<sup>59</sup>. Among other things, this was possible thanks to an agreement with the USSR on an increased supply of equipment and arms to the Algerian army, under which the Soviets expedited the deliveries originally planned for 1968 (mainly aircraft and tanks). In addition, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers supplied unconfirmed information about the Algerian request to France for the sale of SS-10 and SS-11 anti-tank guided missiles<sup>60</sup>. At the time, the president of the Revolutionary Council, Houari Boumédiène, declared during official speeches that: “[...] the army [...] will continue to be modernized in order to repulse potential invaders, to defend the borders of the state and the achievements of the revolution. Aggression is not the goal of the army. Algeria has no intention of invading any countries in order to gain new territories”<sup>61</sup>.

Another stopgap measure to enhance combat potential was raising additional funds for armaments from its own population:

An extensive fundraising campaign for the war fund is currently underway throughout Algeria. To this end, the Algerian bank has issued special vignettes [worth] 10, 50, 100 and 500 dinars. Every Algerian citizen should buy at least one vignette, depending on his or her financial means. The tax authorities have decreed an earlier deadline for paying income taxes for the current year. The prices of certain foodstuffs have been raised by an average of 15 per cent. An extraordinary compulsory luxury tax on individually owned passenger cars has also been introduced in Algeria<sup>62</sup>.

In short, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war made the Algerian authorities realize that it was not possible to rely solely on a professional army and, furthermore: “the efforts of the Algerian army leadership during the Middle Eastern conflict to replenish the army’s manpower proved very meagre and failed to yield the expected results”<sup>63</sup>. The existing problems were not solved by calling up veterans of the War of Independence, as the former

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low because of their limited strength, weaponry and equipment – AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 11/67. Concerning certain aspects of the political-military situation in Algeria, 27 IX 1967, item 310.

<sup>59</sup> According to official Egyptian data, by the end of June 1967 Algeria had delivered twenty MiG-17s, twenty MiG-21s and twelve Il-28s to the UAR. On the other hand, according to unofficial sources, in early 1968 Egypt returned only six of the 47 aircraft which, as noted earlier in this paper, had been supplied by Algeria; in contrast, the contingent of Algerian pilots returned home in their entirety – T. Cooper, D. Nicolle et al., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>60</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria’s position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, items 269–270.

<sup>61</sup> After: AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 3/67, Political-military relations between Algeria and Morocco, undated, item 243.

<sup>62</sup> AIPN, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 5/67. Brief assessment of the Algerian army and Algeria’s position on the events in the Middle East, 15 VII 1967, item 270. Such desperate steps taken by the Algerian authorities indicated that the country was not well prepared for war.

<sup>63</sup> AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 9/67, Military training of students, undated, item 296.

guerrillas lacked adequate training, which would have required too much time. Once again, the shortage of non-commissioned personnel and officers made itself evident; the existing cadre “proved insufficient to assume new duties. In any case, this cadre, educated in a different spirit, saw themselves as the chief political force in the internal contention and were unaccustomed to conducting regular combat operations”<sup>64</sup>. An exercise in cooperation between armored forces and artillery conducted by the Soviet instructors already after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war offered an eloquent example: “When, during live artillery fire covering the advance of the tanks, shells burst in close proximity [to the armored vehicles], the officers abandoned their combat vehicles and retreated to the rear. This attests not only to the absence of preparation and habits of conducting warfare but above all to the mentality of these people”<sup>65</sup>. The Israeli army at the time maintained diametrically different standards, which had quite a substantial impact on the course of events during the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts. For instance, Krzysztof Kubiak observes: “Tremendous importance is placed on [...] the commanders leading by personal example; it is even said that in the Israeli army there is no command «forward», only «follow me»”<sup>66</sup>.

### Measures to increase the combat readiness of the PNA until the end of 1967

The Arab defeat in the armed confrontation with Israel, combined with the already discussed Algerian failure to provide effective assistance to the UAR during the hostilities, prompted the intensification of the training process in the PNA. Among other things, battalion-level exercises were conducted to practice cooperation with other arms, tanks and artillery in the main. They were led by the instructors from the USSR who, at the request of their hosts, replaced the Egyptians who had been disgraced by their defeat in the clash with the Israeli armed forces and withdrawn from Algerian territory<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Ibidem, item 297.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem. Such problems were in evidence in other Arab armies as well. For example, with regard to the inept retreat from the Sinai during the Six-Day War, Łukasz Przybyło observed: “Division commanders and their superiors [...] were the first to flee [...], leaving their soldiers to their fate. This also applied to a substantial group of middle-ranking officers. This caused a total collapse of the morale among the soldiers and exacerbated the defeat even further – in ways that were felt for years to come” – Ł. Przybyło, *Od wojny sześciodniowej do wojny Jom Kippur. Armia egipska w latach 1967–1973*, [in:] *Wojny i konflikty zbrojne po 1945 roku. Zbiór studiów*, vol. 2, eds. M. Giętkowski, Ł. Nadolski, Bydgoszcz 2016, p. 177. The reprehensible attitude of the Syrian army commanders during the Six-Day War, is discussed in e.g.: idem, *Walczyć nie umieli, ale bić się chcieli. Armia syryjska podczas wojny Jom Kippur 1973 roku*, [in:] *Wojny i konflikty zbrojne po 1945 roku. Zbiór studiów*, vol. 6, eds. W. Bartoszek, Ł. Nadolski, Bydgoszcz 2019, p. 218.

<sup>66</sup> K. Kubiak, *Suez 1956*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 130.

<sup>67</sup> AIPN, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 11. Concerning certain aspects of the political-military situation in Algeria, 27 IX 1967, item 307. The USSR sent some 700 advisers to Algeria – Y. Ro'i, *Soviet Policy Toward the Six Day War Through the Prism of Moscow's Relations with Egypt and Syria*, [in:] *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War*, eds. B. Morozov, Y. Ro'i, Stanford–Washington 2008, p. 20.

The first Soviet-led exercises revealed the aforementioned major deficiencies in the attitude of land force officers at platoon and company level, who would send rank-and-file soldiers to the first line while remaining in absolute safety of the rear when live ammunition was used. The situation in the air force was no better. Algerian pilots were not particularly adept at flying MiG-21 aircraft, having particular problems with firing the missiles with which it was equipped. The causes of such problems were attributed to the extremely high level of illiteracy among the Algerian population<sup>68</sup>.

A fair proportion of the issues were rooted in the country's complicated internal situation and politicization of the army. This resulted in the abolition of the post of commander of the armored forces, as it was feared that the officer in that position might accumulate too much power in his hands. On the other hand, the newly-appointed air force commander had no previous ties with the air force, having led an infantry platoon and later a company, after which he served on the staff of one of the military regions and subsequently attended a brief training at the Mikhail Frunze Military Academy, which resulted in his transfer to the armored forces command. The Polish military attaché office in Algiers concluded on the situation as follows: "his appointment to the post of commander of the air force defeats the purpose from a military point of view"<sup>69</sup>. The same was true of the Chief of the General Staff: "As an aside, it is worth mentioning that the legendary guerrilla leader in the country, the current Chief of the General Staff, Col. Tahar Zbiri, has completed a few grades of primary school and has not graduated from any military school"<sup>70</sup>.

Algeria's situation, however, was undoubtedly improved by the normalization of relations with Tunisia in 1967. The potential threat from Morocco also diminished, as immediately after the Six-Day War, the latter state could not dare breaching Arab unity in the face of the Israeli threat. In addition, the authorities of both countries negotiated on the exploitation of natural resources in the disputed territory. These developments made it possible for the Algerian army to begin forming two more infantry brigades.

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<sup>68</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 11. Concerning certain aspects of the political-military situation in Algeria, 27 IX 1967, item 308. It was estimated that in 1967 as many as half of young people at school age were not receiving any education. However, from the perspective of the Polish military attaché office in Algiers, broader involvement of better-educated young citizens posed another threat, as they generally originated from a "bourgeois" background: "The absence of a class criterion and the conditions for its application is a practical cause for concern that the political awareness of the young cadre may be influenced by bourgeois ideology. All the more so that the political and formative work as we understand it is not carried out in the Algerian army, despite the existence of the Political Commissariat. The role of this institution is reduced to providing political information" – *ibidem*, item 310.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, item 309.

<sup>70</sup> AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 13/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 25 XI 1967, item 323. According to the Polish military attaché office in Algiers, the asset of that officer was his "ideological facet": he was in favour of closer cooperation with socialist countries and espoused anti-French and "anti-imperialist" views.

The diplomatic corps accredited in Algiers had an interesting opportunity to assess the state of the Algerian armed forces during the military parade of 1 November 1967. Before it started, an official announcement was made that mandatory military service would be introduced as of 1968<sup>71</sup>.

The parade consisted of three major components.

The first was a foot echelon composed of students, high school students and athletes who demonstrated a good level of training. After the youth, a battalion of reservists marched through the streets of the capital, followed by cadets from military schools and academies whose degree of training was assessed as uneven. The final element of the first component were the commandos who – according to a briefing note from the Polish military attaché office in Algiers – “drew universal applause with their outstanding bearing. Dressed in camouflage uniforms, they looked splendid in terms of their physical appearance, combat stance and satisfactory level of training”<sup>72</sup>.

The second component of the parade included a motorized contingent; the first to appear was a cavalry squadron, a gendarmerie company on motorcycles, a company of French-made armored cars of the gendarmerie, a motorized gendarmerie company, an infantry brigade command, a traffic regulation company on British-made all-terrain vehicles and two battalions of motorized infantry on all-terrain vehicles. This was followed by the armored force, comprising a mechanized infantry battalion on armored personnel carriers and a battalion of T-54 tanks (21 vehicles). Artillery came next: a battery of 122 mm guns, a “Katyusha” battery and a recoilless gun battery. The last to appear in this section of the parade were anti-aircraft artillery (100 mm automated gun battery, 37 mm double-barrel gun battery, and a battery of quadruple-barrel large-caliber machine guns), engineering company, material and technical company, medical platoon and a naval unit equipped with Soviet sea-to-sea missiles<sup>73</sup>. Nearly all the equipment and weapons of the motorized contingent were Soviet-made and had already been used during the Second World War.

Finally, military aviation presented its assets at the parade. That echelon comprised a squadron of helicopters, a squadron of training aircraft (nine aircraft), a squadron of An-12s aircraft (nine aircraft), a squadron of IL-28s (nine aircraft), a squadron of MiG-17s (8 aircraft flying in two diamond formations) and a squadron of MiG-21s (six aircraft in Vic formation).

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<sup>71</sup> Military service was envisaged to last two years and involve men and women aged 19 – *Algeria. A Country...*, p. 266. The original plans set out to draft 116,000 women and 118,000 men in the first year of mandatory military service, some of whom would be assigned to carry out economic and social projects. It was estimated that approximately 150,000 men reached conscription age each year; the Algerian population at the time amounted to approximately 14.2 million – R.F. Nyrop et al., op. cit., pp. 342–343.

<sup>72</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 12/67 Concerning the evaluation of the military parade of the National People’s Army of Algeria on 1 XI 1967 on the 13th anniversary of the Algerian revolution, undated, item 312.

<sup>73</sup> Type P-15 missiles – R.F. Nyrop et al., op. cit., p. 349.

Watching the parade, members of the diplomatic staff found that the Algerians had good equipment and weapons but were not yet able to use them properly. Attention was drawn to evident problems with training: uneven drill skills, poor organization of the parade, some columns were excessively stretched, and there were unjustified gaps. The aerial component delivered a particularly poor display: the successive squadrons appeared in front of the box after long pauses, and the air parade was not well synchronized with the marching troops. Importantly, it was Soviets who flew the leading MiG-17s and MiG-21s in the jet formations, and the interval between the flight of the first three MiG-21s and their second group was as long as five minutes: “The idea was to maintain maximum safety given poor pilot training. The Algerians have enough of their own pilots for one squadron of MiG-21s”<sup>74</sup>. In conclusion, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers assessed that the armed forces of the country had reached “the level of an average army of an Arab country”.

### State of the armed forces at the end of 1967

It followed from the information obtained by the Polish military attaché office in Algiers that at the end of 1967, the PNA numbered 70,000 men, of which the land forces accounted for 55,000, the air force for 2,300, the navy for 1,500 and the National Gendarmerie for 10,000<sup>75</sup>. The National Gendarmerie, as a type of armed service, was subordinate to the Ministry of Defence, while the Ministry of the Interior was in charge of the force in operational terms. The year 1967 saw an important change: the separate commands of infantry and armored forces were abolished, increasing the direct control of the Minister of National Defence over the army.

The following military institutions were in charge of the Algerian armed forces:

- Board of Personnel,
- Political Commissariat,
- Infantry Board,
- Aviation Board,
- Navy Board,

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<sup>74</sup> AINR, 2602/12449, Briefing note no. 12/67 Concerning the evaluation of the military parade of the National People’s Army of Algeria on 1 November 1967 on the 13th anniversary of the Algerian revolution, undated, item 314. In yet another briefing note, the Polish military attaché office in Algiers reported that: “In view of the relatively high proportion of illiterates in the army and the poor educational background of non-commissioned officers and officers, there are particular difficulties in mastering the electronic equipment. Very inferior level of training is observed in aviation. There are too few candidates with secondary education to become pilots. The piloting skill involving MiG-21 aircraft is very poor. In the majority of cases, pilots are able to fly the aircraft, but their aerial combat ability is problematic as they have hardly mastered, e.g., firing rockets that this aircraft is armed with” – AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 13/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 25 XI 1967, item 319.

<sup>75</sup> AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 13/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 25 XI 1967, item 324.

- Armored Forces Board,
- Artillery Board,
- Board of Engineers,
- Communications Board,
- Board of Operations,
- Supplies Board,
- Medical Service Board,
- Transport Board,
- Material and Technical Board,
- Foreign Military Affairs Branch (military intelligence and counter-intelligence).

The command structure of the individual military regions, on the other hand, was as follows:

- commander,
- chief of staff,
- deputy chief of staff and, at the same time, operations officer,
- political commissar,
- chief of combat training,
- chief of medical service,
- chief of engineering troops,
- chief of organization and mobilization,
- chief of special service,
- quartermaster.

A military district had a contingent of several to over a dozen infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, a tank battalion, an engineering battalion and a communications unit. The organizational structure of an infantry battalion of 400–500 soldiers was as follows:

- commander,
- deputy commander,
- chief of staff and operations officer,
- four infantry companies (each with four platoons comprising four squads).

At the time, the PNA already had four infantry brigades, although only two were fully operational (they included armored weapons, artillery and combat engineer units). The 3rd and 4th Infantry Brigade were formed in September – October 1967, following renewed tensions on the Algerian – Moroccan border. The organizational structure of an infantry brigade was as follows:

- commander,
- chief of staff and operations officer,
- quartermaster,
- three to four infantry battalions,

- tank battalion (approx. 300 men),
- artillery battalion (approx. 300 men),
- combat engineer battalion.

At the end of 1967, the 1st MR consisted of the following units: twelve infantry battalions (12th, 15th, 19th, 24th, 37th, 43rd, 53rd, 56th, 61st, 63rd, 71st, 75th) and an artillery battalion. Assigned to the 2nd MR there were: 1st InfBde (20th, 29th, 31st and 72nd infantry battalions, tank battalion, artillery battalion, engineering battalion), 2nd InfBde (36th, 39th, 58th infantry battalion, tank battalion, artillery battalion) and four infantry battalions (13th, 22nd, 32nd, and 49th). Troops in the 3rd MR included: 3rd InfBde (1st, 14th, 41st, and 65th Infantry Battalions), 4th InfBde (6th, 10th, 23rd, and 35th infantry battalions), five infantry battalions (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 17th, and 33rd), a tank and an artillery battalion. The 4th MR could field two infantry battalions (21st and 45th) and six camel companies. The 5th MR had five infantry battalions (7th, 11th, 27th, 52nd and 68th), commando units, as well as tanks, artillery and engineers, each in battalion strength<sup>76</sup>.

According to English-language publications, the Algerian army reportedly had 300–350 tanks and self-propelled guns (T-34, T-54, SU-100)<sup>77</sup>.

In late 1967, the air force of Algeria consisted of 20 helicopters<sup>78</sup>, 18 training aircraft, 8 An-12 transport aircraft, 25 IL-28 bombers, 30 MiG-17 fighters and 30 MiG-21 fighters. On the other hand, the navy – as of July 1967 – comprised a squadron of large P-6 torpedo boats (8 vessels), a 3-vessel squadron of small torpedo boats (submarine chasers), a 6-vessel squadron of missile boats (type “Komar”), a minesweeper, a frogman training ship and a training ship<sup>79</sup>.

## Conclusions

On 18 February 1968, at a dinner held by the USSR military attaché in Algiers for the diplomatic corps, the military attaché of the UAR stated in conversation with his Polish counterpart that “a second phase of the war between the UAR and Israel is inevitable since attempts to rectify the aftermath of the Israeli aggression by political means have failed. To this end, Egypt’s armed forces are being expanded and strengthened militarily, and the nation is being prepared politically”<sup>80</sup>. This implied that the degree of tension

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem, items 327–329.

<sup>77</sup> D. Ottaway, M. Ottaway, *Algerian Armed Forces in 1967*, [in:] D. Ottaway, M. Ottaway, *Algeria. The Politics of a Socialist Revolution*, Berkeley 1970, pp. 306–306.

<sup>78</sup> English-language publications mention 50 Mi-1 and Mi-4 helicopters – ibidem.

<sup>79</sup> AINR, 2602/12499, Briefing note no. 13/67 The armed forces of Algeria, 25 XI 1967, items 330–331.

<sup>80</sup> AINR, 2602/11266, Report on the official activities of the military attaché office at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of Poland in Algeria for the period from 5 February to 10 April 1968, undated, item 57. One should remember that in 1967–1973, the Middle East witnessed the so-called “resource depletion conflict” – see: K. Kubiak, *Konflikt izraelsko-arabski w latach 1967–1973*, Zabrze–Tarnowskie Góry 2017.

in the Middle East remained high and that the efforts such as those made by Algeria to boost its combat capability – as described above – were taking place in other Arab states as well. However, at a dinner organized on 27 March 1968 by the Polish military attaché in Algiers, his Egyptian colleague was already much less bellicose and pointed to the serious problem of disunity among the Arab states as the main factor preventing effective opposition against Israel. Present at the dinner, the USSR military attaché added that “the Egyptian army, despite having rebuilt its potential and combat capability, destroyed by Israeli aggression, is unable to conduct offensive operations for the time being”. The Polish military attaché in Algeria at the time, Col. Mikolaj Kalhur, commented as follows:

One can infer from the statements of the military attachés of the USSR and the UAR that the United Arab Republic will most likely try to avoid armed confrontation with Israel for some time until its military potential is fully rebuilt and consolidated. The Egyptians appear not to believe in effective Arab unity capable of eradicating the effects of Israeli aggression. They make it clear in their statements that they must rely primarily on their own military strength<sup>81</sup>.

The subsequent attempt to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict through warfare did not take place until October 1973, and even though the Arabs were much better prepared for military operations than they had been in 1967<sup>82</sup>, it culminated in their defeat once again.

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<sup>81</sup> AINR, 2602/11266, Report on the official activities of the military attaché office at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of Poland in Algiers for the period from 5 February to 10 April 1968, undated, items 64–65.

<sup>82</sup> For a comparison of the war doctrines adopted by the Arabs in the 1967 and 1973 armed conflicts with Israel and an analysis of their effectiveness in confrontation with the enemy war doctrines, see e.g.: Ł. Przybyło, *Doktryny wojenne. Historia i ocena*, Warsaw 2018, pp. 185–219.

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**An unfortunate ally of the United Arab Republic. The People's National Army of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war**

**Summary:** This paper discusses the combat potential of the People's National Army of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria in the 1960s, with a particular focus on its operations during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and the consequences of that war for the further development of the Algerian armed

forces. In view of the language barrier and the impossibility of conducting queries in the Algerian archives, the author relied on briefing notes prepared by the military attaché office at the Embassy of the People's Republic of Poland in Algiers in 1964–1967. Although the military attaché did not engage in any intelligence activities against the host country and was confined to gathering information by legal means, he was nevertheless able to obtain valuable data on the PNA. That information adds to the knowledge of the Algerian armed forces and coincides with the relevant literature in English, offering a valuable supplement to the latter. The analysis of the source material demonstrates that although the PNA presented itself as one of the three strongest armies on the African continent on paper, its combat potential was seriously undermined by the country's backwardness and internal instability, which adversely affected the organizational structure of the armed forces and deprived them of sufficiently numerous, trained reserves. This became acutely apparent in June 1967.

**Keywords:** Arab-Israeli war 1967, People's National Army of Algeria, decolonization

### **Ein unglücklicher Verbündeter der Vereinigten Arabischen Republik. Die Nationale Volksarmee der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Algerien in der Zeit des arabisch-israelischen Krieges von 1967**

**Zusammenfassung:** Der Artikel befasst sich mit dem Kampfpotenzial der Nationalen Volksarmee der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Algerien in den 1960er Jahren, insbesondere mit den Aktionen der Armee während des arabisch-israelischen bewaffneten Konflikts 1967 und den Folgen dieses Krieges für die weitere Entwicklung der algerischen Streitkräfte. Angesichts der Sprachbarriere und der Unmöglichkeit, in algerischen Archiven zu recherchieren, wurden zu diesem Zweck die Aufzeichnungen des polnischen Militärattachés an der Botschaft der Volksrepublik Polen in Algier aus den Jahren 1964–1967 herangezogen. Obwohl der Militärattaché keine nachrichtendienstliche Tätigkeit gegen das Gastland ausübte und sich auf die Beschaffung von Informationen auf legalem Wege beschränkte, konnte er dennoch eine Reihe wertvoller Daten über die NAL gewinnen. Diese Informationen tragen zum Wissen über die algerischen Streitkräfte bei und werden auch durch die englischsprachige Literatur zu diesem Thema bestätigt, zu der sie eine wertvolle Ergänzung darstellen. Die Analyse des Quellenmaterials hat gezeigt, dass sich die NAL zwar auf dem Papier als eine der drei stärksten Armeen des afrikanischen Kontinents präsentierte, ihr Kampfpotenzial jedoch durch die Rückständigkeit des Landes und die instabile innere Lage, die sich negativ auf die Organisationsstruktur der Streitkräfte auswirkte und für den Mangel an ausreichend ausgebildeten Reserven verantwortlich war, stark beeinträchtigt wurde. Dies wurde im Juni 1967 sehr schmerzlich deutlich.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Arabisch-Israelischer Krieg 1967, Algerische Nationale Volksarmee, Entkolonialisierung

**Niefortunny sojusznik Zjednoczonej Republiki Arabskiej. Narodowa Armia Ludowa Algierskiej Republiki Ludowo-Demokratycznej w dobie wojny arabsko-izraelskiej z 1967 r.**

**Streszczenie:** W artykule zanalizowano potencjał bojowy Narodowej Armii Ludowej Algierskiej Republiki Ludowo-Demokratycznej w latach sześćdziesiątych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem działań, jakie armia ta podjęła w trakcie arabsko-izraelskiego konfliktu zbrojnego z 1967 r. oraz konsekwencji tej wojny w perspektywie rozwoju sił zbrojnych Algierii. Wykorzystano do tego celu – wobec bariery językowej i braku możliwości prowadzenia kwerendy w archiwach algierskich – notatki informacyjne opracowane przez polski attachat wojskowy przy Ambasadzie Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w Algierze w latach 1964–1967. Wprawdzie attaché wojskowy nie prowadził działalności wywiadowczej wymierzonej w kraj przyjmujący i ograniczał się do zdobywania informacji drogą legalną, jednak był w stanie uzyskać szereg cennych danych na temat NAL. Informacje te poszerzają wiedzę na temat sił zbrojnych Algierii, jak też znajdują potwierdzenie w anglojęzycznej literaturze przedmiotu, której są cennym uzupełnieniem. Analiza materiału źródłowego wykazała, że chociaż NAL oficjalnie prezentowała się jako jedna z trzech najsilniejszych armii kontynentu afrykańskiego, to jednak jej potencjał bojowy poważnie osłabiało zacofanie kraju i odbijająca się negatywnie na strukturze organizacyjnej sił zbrojnych, a także odpowiadająca za brak dostatecznie licznych przeszkolonych rezerw niestabilna sytuacja wewnętrzna, co bardzo boleśnie dało o sobie znać w czerwcu 1967 r.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wojna arabsko-izraelska 1967, Narodowa Armia Ludowa Algierskiej Republiki Ludowo-Demokratycznej, dekolonizacja

