

soldiers employed by contract. We have to accept that the young people we are employing today are already highly educated. We are trying to train them through a direct and indirect system, using the indirect system especially for the technical branches and for training the NCOs. Previously the Romanian Air Force had many officers, more-or-less equal in number to the NCOs. We are now trying to respect a NATO rule to have one officer to 3 NCOs. These are major and difficult modifications because at the same time we are changing structures, training people, and performing the required missions.

Could you share with us some of the Air Force's lessons learned based on the experiences of your Airmen serving abroad in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in the Balkans?

I'm thinking of at least 3 particular examples. We had a good experience as Lead Nation during the Kabul International Airport mission. That demonstrated to me that, in future, I also have to have permanently prepared personnel for ground activities because if we are going to have expeditionary missions, I will not go only with pilots. I will need those who act on the ground, especially logistic and force protection personnel. This was one example. Secondly, our participation in Operation Althea in Bosnia was a good experience, which compelled some changes to our training manuals, in particular the in-theatre night training with helicopters and the use of night vision goggles. In addition, a third example is in regard to the capability to operate the C-130 in theatre: what does the pilot training for specific zones and the maintenance of the aircraft mean when you deploy? I have to say that at the moment, we cannot operate from a bare base

without facilities and host nation support. In 4 or 5 years, once we receive the new multirole aircraft and new logistics, I could say that we will be able to do this. And, I could also say with pleasure that, wherever we as a nation deployed, we have received very good support from our coalition partners.

How is the Romanian Air Force able to sustain simultaneous missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in the Balkans?

It is very hard for me to say that I can get involved in all areas. At this moment, of course keeping in mind the proportion amongst the nations, we can get involved in 2 theatres or, let's say, 2 areas, but not with the same aviation categories in each. For example, we can go with helicopters in one area and fighters in another, or with both in the same place. We cannot do more at the moment.

Where do you see the Romanian Air Force applying its focus in expeditionary operations?

I think that, without doubt, the transportation aspects can be set - airlift and combat search and rescue. Once our multirole aircraft arrive in Romania, probably in 2011 or 2012, I could perform more missions in theatre. Until this date, for me with the MiG-21 LanceR, it will be very, very hard, although not impossible, but will be very difficult to deploy these airplanes anywhere, especially without support.

We have deployed 4 MiG-21 LanceRs to the Baltic countries for air policing, however, the costs are not the same when we discuss a deployment to Iraq, for example.

Where is the Romanian Air Force applying its modernisation effort to become a force of the future?

There are 3 aspects to deal with the modernisation process. Let's start with the personnel training, which we already discussed and which is done 100% according to NATO standards. Secondly, talking about the new acquisitions, all are complying with the NATO requirements and, additionally, I try to create the structures and the logistics to have them deployable. Any acquisition on this topic is sustaining this idea. At the same time, regarding the Romanian Air C2 system, I am trying to comply with all the NATO rules. I cannot talk about a deployable Air C2 system because, as you know, NATO has only projected 2 such systems - the 2 Deployable CAOCs.

What are your views on Romania's integration into NATO's Battlespace Management, now and in the future?

If we keep the proportions, the first aspect we are debating directly with NATO, at the moment, is the implementation of an ARS¹ in Romania. As you know, NATO has decided to establish 16 fixed and 2 deployable ARS in different countries. The new countries joining NATO were not taken into account; however, a requirement and a recommendation of the NATO Military Committee (NMC) from 2003 states that NATO countries should have such a facility. We have already forwarded a request on this to NATO and we are now awaiting a decision. Even though SHAPE, to a certain extent, is vacillating, we are waiting for the NMC decision. All NATO decision makers are aware of this aspect. As well, I believe it is fitting and we must have this ARS in Romania, because in this very short period we have quickly complied with the imposed rules in terms of