

Grupa Reagowania Operacyjno Mobilnego (GROM) - Unit Profile



Poland's Best—The Special Operations Unit GROM

[GROM Image Gallery](#)

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Introduction

Poland's Operational Maneuver Reconnaissance Group (GROM) (also referred to as Thunderbolt) is the nation's elite Special Forces (SF) unit. Created 10 years ago to combat terrorist threats, the GROM is Poland's equivalent to the U.S. Delta Force and the British Special Air Service (SAS). GROM personnel undergo rigorous training and have gained international recognition through their participation in several multinational operations.

The Polish GROM

Almost a decade ago, Polish intelligence sources notified the government that the country faced threats from terrorist organizations such as the Hezbollah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command. These threats were prompted by Poland's role in the secret mass migration of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel. In response, former Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki issued a top secret directive creating a new Special Operations unit, and in 1990 the GROM was established with assistance from U.S. and British specialists. Subordinated directly to the Minister of Internal Affairs, the GROM became the first Polish military unit to cooperate with the U.S. Army.

It was not until 1994 that Poland disclosed the fact that such a unit

existed in the country. In January 1999, the GROM was transformed into a special military formation to comply with NATO standards. Today it is considered to be the best commando unit among the newest members of NATO (i.e., Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic). The GROM traces its history to the CICHOCIEMNI ("dark and silent"), a Polish special operations unit during World War II.

While the GROM is modeled on the British SAS, more specific data about its size and organization are not publicly available. It is thought to consist of approximately 300 personnel, including women who gather intelligence. The unit operates in four-member teams. GROM soldiers must be prepared to perform tasks ranging from rescuing hostages to protecting dignitaries; such missions can take them anywhere in the world. GROM soldiers are free to choose their own combat weapons. The favorite weapon appears to be the 9-mm MP-5 machine pistol shown in figure 1. Sidearms include the Browning HP, the CZ-85 (see figure 2), the Glock Model 19, and the SIG-Sauer P228 (see figure 3). Another popular weapon is the 7.62-mm caliber AK. Snipers employ the PSG-1 7.62-mm caliber rifle (see figure 4).



Figure 1. MP-5 Machine Pistol



Figure 2. CZ-85 Pistol



Figure 3. SIG-Sauer P228 Pistol



Figure 4. PSG-1 7.62-mm Sniper Rifle

The GROM recruits individuals from all walks of life. In an effort to ensure responsible and experienced personnel, it seeks candidates who are around 30 years of age and have families; consequently, it does not accept younger recruits from active service. The unit looks for individuals who are intelligent and well-rounded (each member, for example, knows at least two foreign languages). GROM members tend to be somewhat independent in character; however, intellectuals are not sought because, according to a GROM psychologist, they prove to be too individualistic in an environment where team work is essential. The GROM attempts to use its operators for as long as possible, because their experience is difficult to replace. According to the unit's commander, General Slawomir Petelicki, there are officers aged 45 in this unit who are more fit than younger soldiers. Those who eventually leave the GROM often become instructors in military units.

GROM personnel are highly trained and motivated. General Petelicki, for example, is an expert in intelligence operations, long-range reconnaissance, and diversionary activities. It takes a minimum of 3 years and costs about 1 million dollars to train a GROM operator. All training is conducted with live ammunition. Candidates undergo long and complicated psychological testing. An operator's reactions must be quick

but composed under stressful situations. In a typical training session, a soldier is placed in a dark room full of figures representing terrorists and hostages. He must then choose the proper silhouette at which to shoot. In another exercise, he is shown a photograph of a target, after which he must burst into a room filled with post-explosion smoke, select the proper target among the many present in the room, and then shoot at it.

The GROM is also trained in other operations. It is responsible for protecting strategic state reserves, such as oil drilling platforms in the Baltic Sea. Members take part in open-sea rescue operations. They must learn to dive in various conditions and use underwater equipment that does not leave traces on the water surface. GROM operators are the only soldiers in the Polish armed forces to perform free-fall jumps in winter. The GROM must also be prepared to conduct protection, evacuation, and rescue operations outside the country. In fact, its missions outside of Poland have earned it international recognition.

In autumn, 1994, Poland was prepared to deploy 51 members of the GROM to Haiti 6 hours after the Polish government decided to assist the UN mission on the island. The unit was tasked to protect international dignitaries sent to Haiti to implement the democracy restoration program. These dignitaries included UN Secretary General Butrus-Ghali, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, and several U.S. senators and high-ranking military officials. In 1997, the GROM became the first unit in the former Yugoslavia (Slavonia) to arrest a suspected war criminal. Slavko Dokmanovic, known as the "Butcher of Vukovar," was apprehended without a shot being fired, despite the presence of his security service. More recently, the GROM protected the chief of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission, Ambassador William G. Walker, on his visit to Kosovo. It is said that Ambassador Walker personally asked for GROM soldiers to serve as his bodyguards. This choice could have been influenced by the fact that the Poles understand Serbian and Croatian. Apparently, the GROM has participated in other operations as well, but details have not been revealed due to security concerns.

Presently, the GROM is the subject of intense debate within the Polish government. The issue revolves around which branch of the government should exercise control over this unit. Some argue that since the GROM is a military unit, it should be transferred from the Ministry of Interior Affairs to the Defense Ministry. Some go farther and state that, once the GROM is transferred to the Defense Ministry, it should have a separate budget and be subject to the government Anticrisis Center and be at the disposal of the Prime Minister. In either case, it appears that the decision to deploy the GROM on missions will not be made subject to public debate. This is to keep in line with the unit's purpose—to act in surprise during crises.

Summary

There is no doubt that the GROM will continue to be the most elite unit in the Polish military for years to come. It has served Poland well in the past and remains an important component of the armed forces. In its short history, the GROM has evolved from an antiterrorist organization to an SF unit capable of accomplishing different missions. Thus, not only does the GROM contribute to the overall readiness of Polish forces to act in an emergency, but it also serves to bolster the number of SF units within the NATO alliance.

Unit Profile #2

Although a new unit, (created in 1991) Poland's GROM has worked hard and diligently at becoming a first class CT unit. GROM operators are pulled from Poland's special warfare community, both army and naval forces. It is known that GROM operates in four-person teams, each team being a highly proficient and cohesive unit. Women are also present in GROM, but due to security reasons, their functions are unknown (although it is believed they are routinely involved in intelligence gathering and stakeouts). All members of a team are fully trained as combat assault personnel. It is interesting to note that fully 75 percent of GROM operators are certified paramedics or male nurses. In addition, there are several Medical doctors attached to the unit. These doctors also act as combat assault personnel, carrying their medical kits along with their assault ones.

GROM also has fully functioning support teams, ranging from technicians and analysts to EOD (Explosives Ordinance Disposal) personnel. Many of the people running these support teams are former operators themselves, either too old to participate in the assaults or unfit due to an injury. These former operators bring and maintain experience and skills. In addition, each GROM operator is expected to know at least two languages. Because Poland's terrain is so diverse, operators train in different settings and locations. Urban as well as alpine and mountainous settings are used. In addition, because of Poland's many ports, GROM personnel are trained in maritime operations and are fully SCUBA qualified. Because of their dedication and skill (particularly in the VIP protection arena) GROM was selected in 1994 to take part in Operation Restore Democracy, the American led invasion of Haiti. Initially they were sent to train with members of the US 3rd Special Forces Group in Puerto Rico. There, they were educated in Haitian politics and social systems and allowed to acclimate to the climate. Upon deployment to Haiti, GROM operators provided security for several important VIPs, including former UN General Secretary Boutros Boutros Ghali and former US Secretary of Defense William Perry.

Today GROM is preparing to protect another US official, Ambassador William Walker, head of the 2000-strong Kosovo verification team. "We are especially happy if we can cooperate with and support our American allies," says Gen. Slowomir Petelicki, GROM's commander. "They helped us create

this unit."

Reader-submitted Unit Information:

Official date of born for GROM is 13 July 1990.

First CO:

- Col Petelicki (now he's a retired general). He was born in 1946 in Warsaw. In 1969 he finished University of Warsaw as a lawyer. From 1969 to 1990 he was an Intelligence Officer (10 years in foreign ops). In 1990 -1995 he was a CO of GROM. In this time he received Krzyz Zaslugi Za Dzielosc (Cross for Bravery?), Krzyz Oficerski i Komandorski Orderu Odrodzenia Polski (Officer's and Commandor's Cross of Reborn of Poland ?), US medals - For Military Merit and Army Commendation Medal (for operation Restoration of Democracy - Haiti, by US ARMY general major David C. Mead). Gen. Petelicki is also a honorary member of 5th and 10th Special Forces Group (Green Berets) and he's after a full training in this units. After a short break , from 6th December 1997 he became GROM's CO again.

Polish Special Unit GROM has a new commander:

plk. (col.) Roman Polko. He's a former CO of the 18th AirAssaultBattalion/6th AAB. He was also CO of the Polish-Nordic Bat. in KFOR/ Kosovo. Few years ago he finished Ranger Course and Pathfinder Course in USA.

GROM is a fully professional unit. GROM members are former soldiers and officers of:

- 6th Air Assault Bde
- 1st Ind. Special Regiment
- Special Companies (canceled in early 90's - one of strange decisions of polish gov.)
- UDT from Polish Navy
- AT squads from Police, UOP and similar units
- Intelligence

In GROM there are women as a soldiers, also. Probably few of these girls served during Restoration of Democracy (Haiti). GROM soldiers always train with sharp ammo with GROM commanders as hostages. They train also in time of police actions against real "bad guys" (we have in Poland strong organized crime groups. Few weeks ago "polish FBI" and UOP was smash one of the dangerous group named "Pruszkow"). It's not a secret that GROM in his first steps on warfare arena received help from British SAS, US Special Ops like Navy SEALs and Delta.

Equipment, tactics and training systems are also similar f.e.: - Pro-Tec helmets

- gear
- boots (HiTec?)
- guns: P-8 H&K USP, Glock, SigSauer, Browning HP
- pm's: H&K MP-5 SD
- sniper rifles: Mauser 86 7,62 mm , PSG-1, Remington
- shotguns: Remington Wingmaster