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# LOCAL GOVERNMENT PREPAREDNESS FOR OPERATING IN CRISIS CONDITIONS: a CASE STUDY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PSZCZYNA

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## Abstract

One of the directives of effective action is the organization of activity. In the literature, several phases of the organized action cycle are distinguished, including planning, which involves analyzing the conditions of operation and seeking means and methods appropriate to both the objectives and the circumstances. In the planning phase, both internal and external conditions of operation are analyzed, and the means and methods necessary to achieve the goal are determined. This phase also includes the development of an action plan. Therefore, the aim of this article is to present the organization of the security system in the Municipality of Pszczyna, oriented toward both military and non-military threats. The study analyzes local legal solutions and planning measures undertaken by the local government in the context of ensuring the safety of the local community.

The Municipality of Pszczyna covers an area of over 22 km<sup>2</sup>, intersected by transit roads DK1, DW 933, and DW 938, the watershed of the Vistula and Oder rivers, and a dense railway network, resulting in a level of population migration comparable to that of a metropolis. Additionally, its location within the vicinity of two large artificial water reservoirs introduces further dangers in the event of a natural disaster.

Meanwhile, the proximity to the borders of Slovakia and the Czech Republic places the municipality in an area of potential threats, including terrorism or risks arising from cultural diversity.

## Keywords

local self-government, threats, preparedness, Pszczyna

## Introduction

In seeking to define the contemporary security threats to Poland, it is essential to recognize the need to treat national security as a process subject to dynamic and constant change. Although it is not entirely possible to predict what might happen tomorrow, accurately identifying the nature of modern threats is a fundamental step in building the national security of any country, including Poland. Therefore, for all elements of the state's security system to effectively perform their designated tasks in times of threat, they must be appropriately organized and prepared in advance, before a threat emerges—since during an actual crisis, organizing and preparing effective measures becomes significantly more complex.

It is both purposeful and necessary to consider national security<sup>1</sup> in connection with threats and the state of international security organization. In ensuring security, international cooperation plays a crucial role, especially within an allied framework. Poland's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—the most powerful international organization guaranteeing security—provides a real foundation for Poland's national security and defense. At the same time, NATO membership has significantly altered Poland's geopolitical and geostrategic position. However, as B. Balcerowicz noted: "[...] every alliance is, above all, an instrument of a state's policy, and membership in it should be treated only as a means to an end, which is to enhance the security of the state."

When characterizing security threats, focus should be placed on those that directly concern the subject in question, as it is often the case that threat catalogues include those that do not directly apply to the researched entity. This not only leads to a misjudgment of the situation but—more importantly—fails to guarantee appropriate solutions. Additionally, the identification of threats should follow a holistic approach, now widely adopted globally, as the classical division between internal and external aspects of security has already become a thing of the past.

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1 See: J. Łepicki, *State security system*, „Security Forum” 2024, Volume 8 No 1/2024; B. Wiśniewski, *National Security Governance System – a few remarks and reservations*, „Security Forum” 2022”, Volume 6 No 1/2022; Wiśniewski B., Sander G. S., *Zagrożenie, kryzys i sytuacja kryzysowa – jako uwarunkowania życia współczesnego człowieka*, „BiTP”, No 41, Issue 1, Centrum Naukowo-Badawcze Ochrony Przeciwpowodziowej – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, Józefów 2016.

## Characteristics of the Gmina Pszczyna

Gmina Pszczyna is distinguished by its strategic location relative to the main industrial and tourist centers of the Silesian Voivodeship. It is situated in the southern part of the voivodeship, between the Upper Silesian Industrial Region and the Beskids, as well as between Kraków and Oświęcim to the east and the Rybnik Industrial Region to the west.

Gmina Pszczyna is part of the Pszczyna County and borders the following municipalities: to the west — Pawłowice and Suszec; to the north — Pawłowice, Suszec, Kobiór; to the east — Miedźna and Bojszowy; and to the south — Goczałkowice-Zdrój, Strumień, Czechowice-Dziedzice, and Bestwina.

The gmina covers an area of 22.49 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 50,531 inhabitants. Administratively, it consists of 12 settlements (osiedla) and 12 village administrative units (sołectwa).

Its advantageous location is also supported by well-developed transportation links. Both a railway line and National Road No. 1, connecting northern and southern Poland, run through Pszczyna. Two airports are located within close proximity: Katowice Airport in Pyrzowice (65 km) and Kraków Airport in Balice (80 km). Within the gmina's territory, there are also two artificial reservoirs: Goczałkowice Lake and the Łąka-Poręba reservoir.<sup>2</sup>

## The Mayor of Pszczyna's Activities in the Area of Security

One of the directives for efficient operation is the organization of action. Literature identifies several phases in the cycle of organized activity. This cycle is a scheme for effective action, and maintaining the correct sequence while consistently following the principles of each phase ensures the achievement of the intended objective. Given that more complex activities require more precise organization, both in theory and in practice, various forms, methods, and approaches are constantly sought to accomplish the intended goals.

The phases of organized activity include:<sup>3</sup>

- defining the goal as a necessary condition for effective action;
- planning, including analysis of operational conditions and the search for means and methods appropriate to the goal and the conditions;
- acquiring the resources necessary to implement the plan;
- implementing the plan, i.e., using the resources in the order and manner outlined in the plan;
- control, i.e., verifying whether the actions taken are consistent with the assumptions.

2 [www.pszczyna.pl](http://www.pszczyna.pl), [www.powiat.pszczyna.pl](http://www.powiat.pszczyna.pl) [dostęp: 12.04.2025 r.].

3 More: J. Zieleniewski, *Organizacja zespołów ludzkich. Wstęp do teorii organizacji i kierowania*, Warszawa 1982, p. 307–330.

T. Kotarbiński refers to the first three phases as “preparation”—i.e., the preparatory stage of the action cycle. At this stage, setting the goal is the first step toward achieving it. The goal should be based on a diagnosis covering past and current situations, as well as future forecasts, and should meet the following conditions:

- Specific – it must not be vague or ambiguous;
- Understandable – clearly defined to avoid multiple interpretations;
- Achievable – feasible given the level of knowledge and current technical conditions;
- Limited – in proportion to available resources, as goals that exceed resource capabilities often lead to difficulties and high costs.

In the planning phase—i.e., the organization of the action process—an analysis is conducted of both internal and external conditions, and the necessary means and methods to achieve the goal are identified. This phase also includes the development of the action plan. The next phase—acquiring the necessary resources—comprises activities aimed at organizing the structure that will later carry out the plan. The implementation phase involves the proper use of gathered resources with the methods prescribed in the plan. It must be emphasized that the result of this phase should be the achievement of the final goal, not merely the execution of the plan, as the plan is only a tool. The control phase—necessary and final—appears in every concept of the action cycle and involves comparing actual outcomes with intended ones. This ensures that actions taken align with what was planned.

To efficiently fulfill tasks in the area of local security, the Mayor of Pszczyna issues directives. Planning also plays a key role. These directives support the effective execution of tasks in the following areas of safety:

- Mayor’s directive on appointing, composing, organizing, locating, and outlining the procedures of the municipal crisis management team;<sup>4</sup>
- Mayor’s directive on designating buildings for public use in the event of mass emergencies;<sup>5</sup>
- Mayor’s directive on the location and operational range of potassium iodide tablet distribution points within the Municipality of Pszczyna;<sup>6</sup>
- Directive No. SG.120.1.116/2020 of 09.10.2020 on establishing the principles for developing the “Operational Plan for the Functioning of the Municipality of Pszczyna in Conditions of External Threats to State Security and During Wartime”;<sup>7</sup>

4 Zarządzenie burmistrza nr SG.120.1.206/2022 z dnia 24.06.2022 r. w sprawie powołania, wyznaczenia składu, organizacji, siedziby i trybu pracy gminnego zespołu zarządzania kryzysowego.

5 Zarządzenie burmistrza nr SG.120.1.84/2017 z dnia 12.01.2017 r. w sprawie wyznaczenia budynków dla potrzeb ludności w wypadku masowego zagrożenia.

6 Zarządzenie burmistrza nr SG.050.2008/2022 z dnia 30.11.2022 r. w sprawie umiejscowienia punktów tabletek jodu potasu i zasięgu ich działania na terenie Gminy Pszczyna.

7 Zarządzenie burmistrza nr SG.120.1.116/2020 z dnia 09.10.2020 r. w sprawie ustalenia zasad opracowania „Planu Funkcjonowania Gminy Pszczyna w warunkach zewnętrznego zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa państwa i w czasie wojny”.

- Directive No. SG.120.1.260/2023 of 02.03.2023 on establishing the HNS (Host Nation Support) Point in the Municipality of Pszczyna;<sup>8</sup>
- Directives related to the announcement of a state of epidemic due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (12 directives).

At the municipal level in Pszczyna, the following plans have also been developed:

- Crisis Management Plan of the Municipality of Pszczyna;
- Operational Plan for the Functioning of the Municipality of Pszczyna under Conditions of External Threats to State Security and During Wartime;<sup>9</sup>
- Courier Action Plan of the Mayor of Pszczyna;<sup>10</sup>
- Plan for the Organization of Iodine Distribution within the Municipality of Pszczyna;<sup>11</sup>
- Special Conditions Water Supply Plan;<sup>12</sup>
- Plan for the Preparedness of Healthcare Entities in the Municipality of Pszczyna for National Defense Needs.<sup>13</sup>

In order to optimize the use of forces and resources during response to crisis situations, the elimination of their effects, and the restoration of critical infrastructure and resources, the “Crisis Management Plan of the Municipality of Pszczyna” has been developed. The essence of crisis management lies not only in responding at the moment of the occurrence of a crisis situation but, most importantly, in undertaking actions aimed at preventing such a situation and restoring conditions to their pre-crisis state. Therefore, a very important part of the plan consists of crisis response procedures, in the form of precisely outlined tasks to be carried out by individual emergency services responding to specific crisis scenarios. The plan is linked with external plans and operational procedures of services responsible for emergency operations, public safety, and the provision of key services essential for societal functioning (e.g., potable water, electricity, heating).

The “Operational Plan for the Functioning of the Municipality of Pszczyna during External Threats to State Security and Wartime” is the primary document that outlines specific tasks and activities, including personnel composition, necessary resources, and time required for their execution in the event of an external threat to national security or wartime. The operational tasks included in the Plan are assigned to specific departments, divisions, and organizational units within the Municipality of Pszczyna. This plan is a classified document and may only be accessed by department heads, managers, and directors authorized to handle classified information with the “restricted” clause. It is subject to approval by the Silesian Voivode.

8 Zarządzenie burmistrza nr SG.120.1.260/2023 z dnia 02.03.2023 r. w sprawie powołania punktu HNS Gminy Pszczyna.

9 Obecnie obowiązujący dokument to ZK.5560.009.2021 z lutego 2021 r.

10 Plan Akcji Kurierskiej Burmistrza Pszczyny, Pszczyna 2015.

11 Plan organizacji akcji jodowej na terenie Gminy Pszczyna, Pszczyna 2023 r

12 Plan zaopatrzenia w wodę w warunkach specjalnych, Pszczyna 2023 r

13 Plan przygotowań podmiotów leczniczych Gminy Pszczyna na potrzeby obronne państwa, Pszczyna 2019.

Another plan is the “Courier Action Plan of the Municipality of Pszczyna.” This plan is prepared by the local public administration to facilitate the delivery of conscription notices to military reservists for immediate-call military training and for active military service in the event of mobilization and wartime. The courier operation within the Municipality of Pszczyna is activated upon receiving a signal from the Military Recruitment Center or the District Office. An authorized courier delivers documents to the municipal office, after which the person directing the Courier Action – typically the Secretary of the Municipality of Pszczyna, authorized by the Mayor – initiates the procedure of delivering conscription notices across the municipality. This is carried out by designated and trained couriers who hold clearance for classified information with the “restricted” clause, as parts of the plan are classified.

In October 2023, the Silesian Voivode issued a directive to prepare the Silesian Voivodeship for the effective implementation of a potassium iodide distribution campaign in case of radioactive contamination.<sup>14</sup> The Mayor of Pszczyna issued an ordinance outlining the method for distributing potassium iodide tablets within the municipality. Accordingly, the “Plan for the Organization of the Iodine Distribution Campaign in the Municipality of Pszczyna” was developed. Based on this framework, 23 locations were designated across the Municipality of Pszczyna for the collection of potassium iodide tablets. It is worth noting that in the event of nuclear contamination, timely ingestion of such a tablet is crucial as it blocks the absorption of radioactive iodine and prevents its accumulation in the human body.

The distribution of tablets does not begin immediately after an incident (e.g., a power plant failure), but only once a radioactive cloud reaches the relevant area. In the event of such an incident, residents will be promptly informed through local and national media, the municipal website, the Public Information Bulletin, and posted announcements.

To ensure the local community has access to water in quantities essential for survival, the functioning of public utility units, and agricultural-food sector businesses during technical failures, natural disasters, or wartime, a document called the “Water Supply Plan under Special Conditions” is developed.

This document outlines the operation of public water supply facilities under extraordinary circumstances. The preparation and supervision of water deliveries during crisis situations within the Municipality of Pszczyna are managed by the Municipal Engineering Company (Przedsiębiorstwo Inżynierii Komunalnej – PIK) in Pszczyna, which maintains 24-hour emergency teams capable of repairing failures or mitigating threats as they arise.

PIK is also responsible for maintaining the operational readiness of the fire hydrant network and a water-drawing point for firefighting purposes located at the 1,000 m<sup>3</sup> water reservoir in the Piastów Housing Estate in Pszczyna. This additional

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<sup>14</sup> Zarządzenie nr 315/23 Wojewody Śląskiego z dnia 18 września 2023 r. w sprawie aktualizacji planów operacyjnych funkcjonowania organów administracji.

water source enhances the capabilities of the existing water supply infrastructure and ensures the continuity of water delivery in case of a network failure or power outage at water pumping stations.

The preparation of healthcare entities for the state's defense needs aims to create legal and organizational conditions for the provision of healthcare services, i.e., actions to preserve, save, restore, or improve health in the event of external threats to state security and during wartime. Within this scope, the Municipality of Pszczyna also operates a Plan for the Preparation of Medical Entities in the Municipality of Pszczyna for State Defense Needs, which defines the organizational structures and rules for both public and private healthcare institutions and teams responsible for medical services in crisis situations, states of emergency, or wartime conditions.

The primary tasks include providing medical services to the injured, wounded, and ill, as well as enabling the swift release of hospital beds. Designated buildings are equipped with facilities for temporary hospital beds—referred to as “Substitute Hospital Facilities” (ZMSz)—which serve as a supplement to the existing hospital bed base.

As of the entry into force of the Council of Ministers' Regulation of November 15, 2023, on the preparation and use of healthcare entities for the needs of national defense, the previous regulation from June 27, 2012, concerning the conditions and procedures for preparing and using healthcare entities for defense purposes and the competencies of the relevant authorities, was repealed.<sup>15</sup> That earlier regulation had been issued under the now-repealed Act of November 21, 1967, on the universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland.

The new legal act introduces updated solutions in the area of defense preparations of healthcare entities, which is why this domain is now undergoing changes within the Municipality of Pszczyna.

When discussing the actions undertaken by the Mayor of Pszczyna in the area of security, it is also essential to mention the initiative taken under the framework of HNS – Host Nation Support.<sup>16</sup>

This refers to civilian and military assistance provided by a host nation during peacetime, crisis situations, and armed conflict to NATO forces that are moving through, stationed in, or operating within its territory.

In such circumstances, the Municipality of Pszczyna bears responsibility for transport, traffic control, maintenance and service, storage, and the provision of water, fuel, and food. The host country designates, based on operational needs, the storage or stationing locations as well as the area of responsibility for the foreign troops.

To that end, a Host Nation Support (HNS) Contact Point Instruction has been developed. This instruction was prepared based on the Guidelines of the Silesian Voivode dated February 11, 2008, concerning the preparation and coordination of

15 Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 15 listopada 2023 r. w sprawie przygotowania i wykorzystania podmiotów leczniczych na potrzeby obrony państwa (Dz. U. poz. 2482).

16 Instrukcja punktu kontaktowego HNS, Pszczyna 2008.

support for allied armed forces during peacetime, crisis situations, and wartime for units deployed, performing tasks, or transiting through the Silesian Voivodeship.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of issuing this document is to ensure the preparation and subsequent activation of the HNS Contact Point of the Mayor of Pszczyna.

## Conclusion

The implementation of security-related tasks by local government units requires the mayor, as the head of the municipal executive body, to lead activities associated with monitoring, planning, responding to, and mitigating threats within the administered area. In the field of local security, the Municipality of Pszczyna carries out its responsibilities in accordance with applicable legal norms and within the scope of its financial capabilities. At the same time, the evolving nature of modern threats necessitates the continuous improvement of the legal and organizational solutions in place.

In the area of defense, the local government of Pszczyna maintains military service registers, has a prepared system for delivering call-up cards for military exercises, issues decisions designating individuals for courier functions, and plans personal and material services for times of peace and war. It also issues administrative decisions imposing service obligations and summonses for their performance, as well as keeps records of movable and immovable property useful for defense purposes.

In the area of public safety, the activities carried out focus, among other things, on planning aimed at ensuring operational efficiency under threat conditions.

To summarize, thanks to well-developed and regularly updated plans and instructions for action in case of both military and non-military threats, as well as the annual training sessions organized for municipal office staff and organizational units, Pszczyna is a municipality well-prepared to respond effectively in the event of an emergency.

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*Plan zaopatrzenia w wodę w warunkach specjalnych*, Pszczyna 2023 r

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<sup>17</sup> Wytyczne Wojewody Śląskiego, z dnia 11 lutego 2008 roku w sprawie przygotowania warunków organizacyjnych i technicznych planowania i realizacji zadań obronnych z zakresu przygotowania i koordynacji wsparcia sojusznicznych sił zbrojnych w czasie pokoju, sytuacji kryzysowych i wojny, wykonujących zadania lub przemieszczających się przez obszar województwa śląskiego.

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