

CIVIL DEFENCE SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Abstract: *With the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, civil defense trainings around the world are on the rise. The phrase civil defense suddenly came to the fore and is the subject of daily reports by various media, geostrategic and security experts. With the emergence of the fear of a new global armed conflict, numerous questions, forgotten in the past 20 years, have been revived: What is civil defense? Who is responsible for it? What are its goals and objectives? What happens to the civilian population and material resources during a state of war or any other crisis? Among them, the most important question arises: Does the Republic of Serbia even have civil defense? The paper presents the current state of the civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia with an emphasis on the problems it faces in its functioning and development, primarily regarding the existence of an adequate organizational structure.*

Key words: *civil defense, Republic of Serbia*

1. INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Ukraine has shown the global community that the speed of changes in the modern world calls into question the possibility of predicting future events and that any country in the world can face an uncertain struggle for its existence at any moment. The safety of people and material resources, as well as overall survival, are currently in the center of attention of the entire international community. In the world of security, the 21st century brought numerous novelties that showed that the mere possession of enormous military power is not enough and does not guarantee security. After the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and the global pandemic crisis, the world is currently facing a new/old danger: the outbreak of a new global armed conflict. The conflict in Ukraine has shown all the dangers of regional confrontation and the speed with which it can lead to disruption in the entire world. Although it was claimed years ago that the possibility of a new world war breaking out was minimal, in just a few days the Ukrainian example proved all the inaccuracy of that claim. In just a few days, the regional conflict showed all the problems of the global community and caused an overall economic, energy, emigrant and, it seems, every other crisis.

The biggest problem of any conflict is the defense and protection of the civilian population and material resources. During the military operation in Ukraine, it can be seen that such a conflict requires comprehensive preparations of all the human and material resources of a state.

In such conditions, the role of the civil defense system reaches its full expression, because only that system can enable comprehensive preparedness for defense, implying the direct engagement of the entire society. In light of the ongoing fighting on the ground, security and protection are becoming the concern of every citizen. The growing number of victims and the increasingly serious material destruction on the ground gave civil defense immeasurable importance, because its main activity is the protection, defense and rescue of people and material resources, which triggered an avalanche of trainings and preparations of the civil defense systems all over the world.

All crises that arise at the global, regional and local level also have an impact on the security of the Republic of Serbia. All of them can lead to destructive activities aimed at the civilian population and material resources, so an effective system of their protection - the civil defense system - must be established at the level of the Republic of Serbia. The topic of this paper was created based on research for the preparation of doctoral dissertation and deals with determining the state of the civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia at the highest - state level. Does the Republic of Serbia have a civil defense? Is the population equipped and trained to respond to a new global conflict? Can the civil defense system counter the emerging dangers and mitigate the consequences that may arise from daily dealing with new threats? Answering all these questions provides insight into the current state of the civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia and the need for its improvement.

2. CIVIL DEFENSE AS THE PILLAR OF DEFENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Due to the process of globalization and the general global progress of science and technology, the physiognomy of war has been significantly changed, which has led to the emergence of the so-called a hybrid war that includes countless different ways of warfare that create an unstable battlefield, without firm borders. The factors of modern war are designed to permeate civilian life and every pore of society with the aim of achieving complete domination over the enemy and the collapse of all his capacities so that he does not offer successful resistance, while the main targets of the attack are all vital points, not only the defense system, but of the social system as a whole. In accordance with such a way of warfare and the overall characteristics of modern war, the Republic of Serbia must develop a civil defense system that achieves the organizational and functional connection of the total potential of society and their direction in the effective defense of the country. It is necessary to introduce a new principle of transition from rapid response to risk management and prevention, because "the process of globalization contains numerous unknowns that can take on an apocalyptic character." (Stojanovic, 2005)

Although international law prohibits wars and aggression and all actors of the international community unanimously call for peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts in the world, we can see from the example of Ukraine that this has not yet led to the eradication of armed conflicts and that despite numerous prohibitions, armed conflict is still a way resolving disputes and conflicts. A new global conflict would certainly represent a completely new type of conflict characterized by the use of precision-based weapons, the use of chemical and biological weapons, and most certainly nuclear weapons. All this leads to the conclusion that modern means of armed struggle have unlimited range, high precision and enormous destructive power, which represents a great danger for the civilian population and material resources of the Republic of Serbia. We have already experienced all of this on the example of the NATO aggression against the FRY in 1999, when more than 200 cities were bombed, thousands of civilians were killed, 2.5 million people were left without the means to meet their basic needs and material damage of over 100 billion dollars was caused. This indicates that

the danger of the civilian population and the material resources of the Republic of Serbia from the dangers of war is not impossible, which is another reason for the development of an efficient civil defense system.

Civil defense is currently the most effective defense concept considering the characteristics of the modern security environment and the determination of the Republic of Serbia for the concept of total defense. Civil defense, as part of the national security system and the country's defense system, should be ready to protect the civilian population and material resources in peace, war and emergency. In the concept of total defense prescribed in the Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, civil defense is an indispensable part of the defense and protection system of the Republic of Serbia, which is primarily aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the civilian population and material resources. Therefore, the civil defense of the Republic of Serbia represents one of the pillars of total defense.

In the Defense Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, it is defined that "civil defense is part of the unified defense system organized at the level of the Republic of Serbia, autonomous provinces and local self-government units, (Defense Strategy of the RS, 2019), while in the Law on Defense it is defined as "part of the defense of the Republic of Serbia, which includes a set of measures and activities aimed at: preparations for the defense of the Republic of Serbia with non-military means, ensuring the successful functioning of state bodies, bodies of autonomous provinces and local self-government units, business companies and other legal entities, protection and rescue and provision of living conditions and the work of citizens and meeting the needs of the defense forces in a state of emergency and war. (Law on Defense, 2018) Civil defense is an integral part of the country's defense and protection system, which represents a form of civil organization of the state and society with the main goal of protecting and defending the population and material resources. (Jakovljevic, 2006) It is an indispensable part of the unified defense system of the Republic of Serbia. It is "part of the defense and protection system of the country, which represents a form of civil organization of the state and society, which assumes the maximum engagement of all potentials of the civil society sector in order to protect, defend and save the population, material and cultural assets, the economy, authorities and the ecosystem from all catastrophic threats in peace and war, and the creation of the most favorable conditions for protection and defense and for unarmed opposition to an attacker (aggressor in war)". (Jakovljevic, 2006) On the basis of the above, it can be concluded that civil defense should represent a set of well-organized and functionally coordinated elements, whose actions fulfill the prerequisites for successfully overcoming various crisis situations in peacetime and wartime conditions. (Misovic & Kovac, 2006)

The Strategic Concept of Defense expresses the determination of the Republic of Serbia for the concept of total defense, which enables a comprehensive response of the defense system to challenges, risks and security threats significant for the defense of the Republic of Serbia, relying on its own forces and potentials. Total defense includes military and civil defense, and is planned, organized and implemented in peace, emergency and war. (Strategy of Defense of the Republic of Serbia, 2019) Within the defense system of the Republic of Serbia, civil defense is focused on preparations for the defense and defense of the Republic of Serbia with non-military means and is implemented in peace, state of emergency and war as "a set of measures and activities aimed at ensuring the successful functioning of state bodies, bodies of autonomous provinces and local self-government units, business companies and other legal entities, creating conditions for the life of citizens, meeting the needs of the defense forces, planning and implementing citizen training plans for the defense of the country, coordination of protection and rescue operations, execution of military, labor and material obligations as well as mobilization." (Strategy of Defense of the RS, 2019) The views expressed in the

Strategic Concept of Defense represent the starting point for the design and development of the civil defense system as one of the pillars of defense of the Republic of Serbia.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE CIVIL DEFENCE SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The civil defense of the Republic of Serbia, in addition to the military defense, represents one of the foundations of the defense system and should be the most organized force of society that provides all the necessary assistance to the vulnerable population and preserves material resources. Although in practice that process has not been fully implemented, the civil defense system must be brought to the level where it can effectively fulfill all its missions and tasks and provide the necessary protection. The civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia consists of various elements and subsystems, which enable the achievement of the goals and objectives of the system. However, there is no normative regulation that precisely defines all these elements, and this represents a major problem in creating an efficient system.

The civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia does not currently have its clearly defined structure in any normative-legal act, but it can be derived based on detailed analyzes of various acts by which the state regulates this area, in which it can be determined that the civil defense system is unequivocally part of the national security system and an indispensable part of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia. According to the highest normative acts in this area, the civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia is under the competence of the state and institutions of the Republic of Serbia. Based on this, it can be said that the management part of the defense system is also the management part of the civil defense system. According to the existing strategic and legal provisions, the management of the civil defense system is the responsibility of the management part of the defense system, which is represented by the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, the President of the Republic, the Government, the Ministry of Defense, the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces and the National Security Council. Civil defense management is also carried out within the framework of state bodies, bodies of autonomous provinces, bodies of local self-government units, companies and other legal entities. (Strategy of Defense of the RS, 2019) Management of the civil defense system is the responsibility of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, i.e. the Ministry of Defense. (Kastratovic, 2015) The National Assembly is in charge of creating adequate normative-legal regulations in the field of civil defense, while the implementation of defense policy and civil defense policy, adoption of by-laws and other general acts is the responsibility of the Government of Serbia. The Ministry of Defense coordinates and implements the established defense policy through the Minister of Defense, the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces and the Serbian Armed Forces.

The subjects and forces of the civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia are not precisely defined in any legal document of the Republic of Serbia, but by analyzing the normative acts in the field of civil defense, it can be concluded that they include (Law on Defense, 2019):

- state bodies,
- state administration bodies,
- bodies of autonomous provinces,
- bodies of local self-government units,
- The Army of Serbia,
- companies,
- other legal entities,
- entrepreneurs,
- citizens.

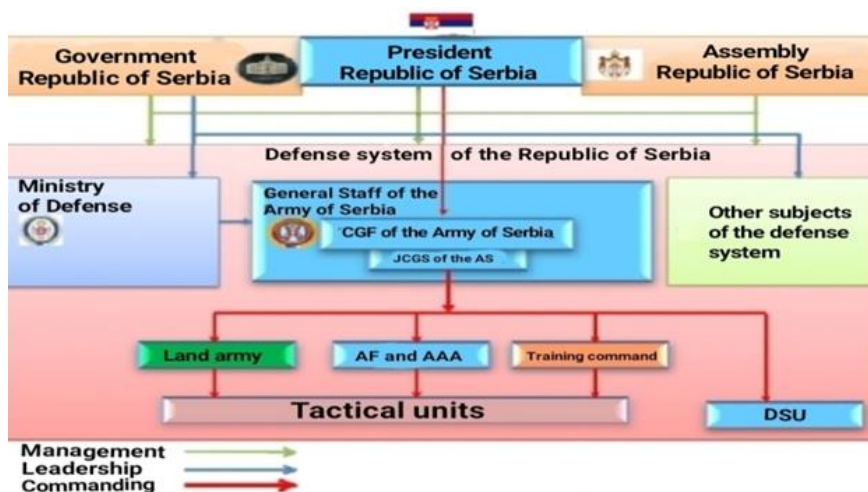


Figure 1. Management, leadership and command in the RS defense system
Source: (*Doctrine of Command in the Serbian Army*)

Considering the numerous problems that the civil defense of the Republic of Serbia faces in practice, a comprehensive reorganization of the entire system is needed, primarily by providing precise normative-legal regulations, and then by establishing a system based on new principles, because existing security threats place new demands on the system of civil defense. In this light, and bearing in mind the experiences of different countries, it is evident that the civil defense of the Republic of Serbia must be dimensioned based on the principles of crisis management. (Komazec, 2006) Future research should be focused on finding opportunities to establish a civil defense system capable of preventing crises, confronting them and eliminating their consequences, while the priority should be to reduce the threat to the civilian population and material resources.

The civil defense system is a system that represents a set of elements, where all elements interact with each other and serve a common purpose. Such a system is established in order for society to successfully respond to any type of crisis situation, so its organization based on the principles of crisis management is necessary. The civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia must have a clear organization in view of the state's commitment to civil defense in strategic documents. The Republic of Serbia must develop a civil defense system with a precisely defined organizational structure in order to ensure the unity of the system at all levels of its organization. Currently, civil defense is presented as a term that includes what is outside the military sphere of defense and there is no clear and precise systematic organization of it. In the current state of civil defense, each element functions as a separate unit with certain authorities that coordinate their work, and everything is mainly reduced to civil protection.

The civil defense of the Republic of Serbia must be organized as a system, i.e. a subsystem of the defense system with a unique vertical and horizontal organization, a system of a civil-military character, with mandatory and voluntary participation of citizens in it, all of which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense. The organization of the RS civil defense system should follow the territorial structure of the Republic of Serbia, i.e. it should be developed according to the administrative-territorial division of the state and be represented at all levels of the state organization. In order for the civil defense system to develop, it is necessary to have a comprehensive organization that would enable its smooth functioning.

4. CONCLUSION

The civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia represents a strategic component and is intended to protect the civilian population and material resources in peace, war and emergency. In recent years, the need for its comprehensive reform within the unified national security system has been recognized in order to ensure the effective implementation of the function of meeting the needs of the army, state authorities and citizens, and the function of protecting and rescuing the civilian population and material resources. With the growing role and importance of the civil defense system of the Republic of Serbia within the national security system, the need for its faster reform, development and improvement is also growing.

In modern conditions, the civil defense system must be seen as a system within the framework of crisis management, because it is primarily intended for confronting crisis situations, and in order to function successfully in any conditions, it is necessary to manage it as an organizational system through the processes of planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling. The context of civil defense functioning within the defense system of the Republic of Serbia has not yet been fully implemented in practice. In addition to problems in strategic and normative-legal regulation, competences and functioning itself, it is also accompanied by problems of implementation in the defense system, as a process whose methods of establishment are undefined and unclear. There are numerous issues of its implementation that are still unresolved, especially issues of qualified and trained personnel who can successfully manage such a system, and the management of the defense system (civil defense) is an indispensable condition for its efficient and effective functioning.

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