

Statement by the Territorial Defence Forces Command (WOT) Spokesman regarding onet.pl articles

Statement by the WOT Command Spokesman concerning a series of articles on the GROT assault rifle published on 25 January 2021 on the onet.pl website

<https://www.onet.pl/informacje/onetwiadomosci/szokujacy-raport-o-karabinku-grot-ujawnia-pelen-zakres-jego-wad/0yent0v,79cfc278>

Before I address the content of the series of articles on the GROT assault rifle published today by onet.pl, I would like to draw the readers' attention to several crucial factors – I believe that neither their publication by onet.pl nor the timing thereof is accidental. Firstly, the "Raport WTO" magazine decided not to publish the source article written by Mr Paweł Moszner, which alleges that the GROT assault rifle has multiple shortcomings (even though the magazine announced that it would be included in its September issue). Of course, I posit that upon reviewing the article, the Raport WTO editorial office decided that it simply does not meet the trade press standards. Nonetheless, onet.pl editorial office, which values "clickbaits" over substantive content, clearly failed to perform a similar analysis. Secondly, I posit that the article is part of a lobbying effort, especially since similar activities regarding the GROT rifle have already occurred in the past. Thirdly, most of the information that today's onet.pl articles are based on are reports of incidental defects, which occurred in the initial versions of the GROT rifle and which have been removed in its subsequent iterations. The fact that many of the photos included in the articles show pre-production components of MSBS rifles (the components shown in the photos indicate so) is also rather puzzling.

Dear readers, the article published by onet.pl is based almost exclusively on anonymous statements and archival photographs of MSBS GROT's first production batches. The only named person quoted in the article is Paweł Moszner, a journalist, whose study is referred to as a "report" in the article, even though it is by no means an official document. Therefore, assessing a firearm that has undergone a comprehensive certification process before its adoption into service based on an evaluation presented by a journalist can hardly be deemed appropriate. If there is anyone who can reliably comment on the experience of using the GROT assault rifles, it is certainly not people whose opinions are based on single observations – or even generals, who are unlikely to ever have had this rifle in their hands. The only institution that has extensive knowledge and experience in using the GROT rifles is the Territorial Defence Forces Command, which has been using 40,000 of them for more than 3 years.

The WOT Command is a decision-maker in the MSBS GROT assault rifle programme and manages the process of collecting data concerning its use in service and introducing improvements based on such data. Between 2017 and 2020, Fabryka Broni "Łucznik" delivered 43,700 GROT rifles to the Polish Armed Forces. Currently, 40,520 GROT rifles are already in service with the Polish Army while the remaining 3,180 rifles have already entered the army logistics chain and are in the process of being issued to the Polish troops. Since January this year, Polish Army units have been receiving MSBS GROT's latest iteration, marked A2, with 6,963 rifles already delivered.

The complaints submitted throughout MSBS' three-years-long service concerned ca. 4% of the rifles, with most of them being about magazines rather than the design of the weapon itself.

Like in the case of every new design, the MSBS GROT rifle is being developed and improved in close and very effective cooperation with the manufacturer. Individual remarks which sometimes appear in the public space are by no means a benchmark for the WOT Command, as our conclusions regarding the weapon's further development are based on a system for collecting experiences and lessons learned, which already includes nearly 40,000 users.

The WOT Command received a large amount of feedback from the weapon's users – both full-time soldiers and Territorial Defence troops – during the process of gathering lessons learned and user experience information. All feedback submitted is verified by former Special Forces combat team operators currently serving in WOT. It is this feedback (rather than e.g. individual assessments published on social media) that determines the weapon's modification process and further development. Based on the policies adopted, all soldiers who report feedback related to weapon use are rewarded. Additionally, mechanisms for enticing soldiers to submit weapon improvement ideas are also used.

There are numerous examples of lessons learned that resulted in improvements to the GROT rifle. The rifle has been developed from its initial A0 version up to the A2 version that is entering service with the Polish Army units today, with two additional versions currently being designed as well. Important design changes introduced in the A2 version include an extended hand-guard, which prevents accidental gas regulator setting changes. Improvements are also being implemented in the case of the rifle's A1 version that is currently in service with the Polish Army. They include retrofitting the rifles with a simple mechanism to prevent users from installing the gas regulator improperly, as well as the accidental change of the gas regulator setting during use. All modifications are scheduled to be completed by mid-2021. MSBS GROT is being constantly improved according to the soldiers' expectations.

The article does not mention the most common failure that occurred in the case of MSBS GROT rifles, i.e. the broken charging handle lining. By now, 579 such failures were addressed through part repair/replacement. The improved charging handle lining used in the rifle's newest version is no longer susceptible to breaking.

MSBS GROT is being constantly improved and its manufacturer promptly addresses any defects reported. We stand by our claim that issuing this weapon to volunteer soldiers who have just begun forming their firearm-related habits and maintenance culture was the best decision possible. Of course, there is also "the other side of the coin" – doing so has resulted in a lot of feedback, typically from less experienced soldiers, that is often made public. Being an institution that has access to comprehensive data on the weapon failure rates and has already built a system for collecting lessons learned and user experience feedback, such single-case observations are of rather limited use to us. Of course, the risk associated with making such information public was considered when building the lessons learned and feedback collection system, which also includes former special forces operators.

It must be taken into account that the introduction of a new weapon design – one which requires a more rigorous maintenance culture than the previously used firearm types – is a vital challenge to overcome and requires WOT soldiers and other personnel to acquire experience concerning its use – including developing the maintenance culture required. While collecting data on the rifle's usage, a simple relationship between personnel qualifications, training quality and weapon failure rates was discovered. A good example in this case is the fact that the failure rate is close to zero in certain brigades and battalions. Therefore, developing the qualifications of instructors responsible

for forming proper firearm use habits among soldiers is a core focus of the Territorial Defence Forces Command.

Below I provide examples of the most glaring errors and obvious attempts to manipulate the readers made by the authors of today's publications:

Manipulation attempt:

Quote from Onet.pl's article: "At the time of signing the contract, Grot had not yet undergone the qualification trials that would allow it to enter service with the army".

The truth:

MSBS GROT had passed all the required qualification trials before the first rifles left the FB factory. This was required by the provisions of the contract signed during the MSPO 2017 trade fair, based on which the Polish Armed Forces would only accept the weapon if it passed all the necessary qualification trials before delivery. The qualification trials ended in November 2017. The first rifles were delivered in December 2017. Additionally, per the applicable regulations, the products' compliance with the Ordering Party's requirements was verified based on the requirement to test all products intended for national defence and security needs.

Untrue information:

The decision to introduce the Grot rifle into service with the army was not signed by the Chief of Staff of the Polish Army, who approves all new weaponry by order, but rather by the Chief of the Armed Forces Support Inspectorate – as late as on 17 May 2018 (...).

The truth:

Based on the Ministry of Defence Decision No 444 of 30 December 2013, the Chief of Staff of the Polish Army is authorised to put equipment into service with the Polish Armed Forces in cases where doing so requires organisation changes in the Polish Armed Forces. However, no such changes were necessary when introducing the GROT rifle, therefore in accordance with the above decision, the rifle was introduced into service by order of the Chief of Armed Forces Support Inspectorate.

Untrue information:

Quote: "During some shooting sessions, we had gas regulators fall out of each of the five rifles we were using (...). During testing, GROM soldiers discovered such issues as problems with bolts falling apart, cocking handles breaking off, and rifle slings that detached on their own and were difficult to put back in place."

The truth:

The report submitted after the completion of familiarisation testing of the GROT rifle prototypes delivered to Polish Special Forces Units does not include any of the observations mentioned in the article. It must be emphasized that the familiarisation testing was carried out using prototypes that did not feature the improvements that were added to the rifle's subsequent iterations.

Untrue information:

"One of the most serious issues with the weapons was that they overheated to such an extent that they could no longer be used."

The truth:

On 3 November 2017, FB Łucznik carried out comparative tests of the hand-guard temperature of MSBS GROT, HK-416D and BERYL rifles during intense fire.

The results of the tests showed that during intense fire (greatly exceeding the standards required by the weapon's tactical purpose), the temperature of the MSBS GROT rifle's hand-guard did not differ from that reached by other modern rifles of similar design. For example, the average hand-guard temperature in the case of the MSBS GROT rifle was 10 degrees Celsius lower than in the case of the HK-416D rifle, whereas compared to the BERYL rifle, GROT's hand-guard was even up to 50 degrees cooler. The results of research conducted with experts from FB Łucznik and the Military University of Technology confirm the above claim. The comparative tests were recorded on video as well.

Manipulation attempt:

Quote: "GROT's piston and gas regulator fall out."

The truth:

A gas regulator may fall out if it is accidentally set to an improper position outside of its operating range. To date, 0.44% of complaints related to GROT rifles concerned the loss of a gas regulator. This problem has already been resolved thanks to the design changes introduced in the rifle's A2 version, i.e. the extended hand-guard (with the gas regulator switch secured against accidental adjustment). In the case of the A1 version, works aimed at retrofitting all rifles with modifications that will prevent user errors and accidental adjustment of the regulator are scheduled to commence soon.

Manipulation attempt:

Using the incidental cases of damage to the bolt and cam plug to substantiate the author's claim that the weapon's design is defective.

The truth:

Incidental cases. Complaints concerned three failures of a bolt assembly with an insert and two cam plug failures; considering the number of rifles in service (more than 40,000), such failures only occurred in 0.0125% of them.

Manipulation attempt:

Using the incidental cases of cracked firing pins to substantiate the author's claim that the rifle's design is defective.

The truth:

To address the complaints related to the firing pins (0.19% of the total number of failures of MSBS rifles used in the Polish Armed Forces), FB Łucznik developed and introduced a new type of firing pin in the A2 version to ensure its increased durability during dry-fire training.

Manipulation attempt:

Using cases in which elements of weapons left without proper maintenance specified by the manufacturer began to rust to substantiate the author's claim that the rifle's design is defective.

The truth:

The GROT rifle is mostly made from corrosion-resistant materials (aluminium and composites). Components that may be affected by corrosion, if they have not been cleaned and maintained

according to the user manual, include parts of the barrel assembly, as well as the bolt and the trigger and breech mechanism. Showcasing rusted weapon components only serves to show its user's low technical knowledge and disregard for the maintenance procedures described in the user manual.

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