

29 Years Experience in Defence

Zafer Betoner, Retired Navy Captain, has made many contributions to the defence industry and country's defence in line with the duties that he has undertaken in navy. He also took role in some of the reputable companies and shares his experience as a consultant. He works as business development manager in Rohde & Schwarz Turkey. Defence Turkey Magazine has interviewed with Navy Captain Zafer Betoner about his contributions to defence sector, assessments and suggestions about defence industry.



Defence Turkey: First of all could you please introduce yourself to our readers? How did you serve our country and what duties did you have? What contributions have you made to the defence industry and our country's defence in line with the duties that you have undertaken?

I was born in 1956 in Beyoğlu, İstanbul. I completed my primary and secondary education in this beautiful city, which is the cradle of art, history and culture. In 1974, I attended the Naval Academy and joined the Turkish Naval Forces after graduating from Heybeliada Naval High School as an ensign in 1978. I started my first duty as a Communications Officer on the TCG

İzmir Destroyer. Then, between 1980 and 1983, I served as the Navigation/Operations Officer on the TCG Kurtaran Submarine Rescue Ship and as Executive Officer on the TCG Girne Patrolboat. From 1984 through 1986, I completed a Master of Science (MS) degree in Electronic Engineering and a Bachelor's Degree (BS) in Computer Science at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey / California, USA.

After returning to Turkey, I was assigned as an Anti-Air Warfare Officer (AAW) to the TCG Yavuz Frigate, which was built at the Blohm & Voss Shipyard in the Federal Republic of Germany. Following the "Seaguard Close in Weapon System

(CIWS)" training that I attended at Oerlikon Contraves Company located in Zurich, Switzerland, I joined the crew as one of the plank owners of this ship, which was handed over in July 17th, 1987 in Hamburg.

During that time on board the TCG Yavuz, I was responsible for the maintenance and operation of the Seaguard System (CWIS), which is against guided missiles. I was the first naval officer to operate that system, which consists of Search Radar (Dolphin), Target Tracking Radar (Ku Band) and 25 mm guns. From 1989, I served as an Anti-Surface Warfare Officer and afterwards as a Weapon Electronic Officer on the same frigate.



After twelve years of active service, with the insight that I would better serve the Turkish Naval Forces in a technical capacity, I moved to the engineering side and was then assigned to Gölçük Naval Shipyard.

While I was at Gölçük Naval Shipyard, first of all I served as Weapon Group Manager in the Production Department, and later as Shipbuilding Managing Officer in the Planning, Estimating and Design Department. I conducted System Maintenance, Repair and Installation activities, Planning, Work Order Preparation and Material Management functions in shipbuilding activities, (in particular for submarines and frigates), and Project Coordination functions between the Turkish Naval Forces, shipyard and contractor companies. As a result of these duties, I became familiar with the procurement mechanisms and world-renowned players of the of international shipbuilding sector. In addition, in this period I also contributed to studies in the scope of the preparation of the COSAL/COSMAL of the Yavuz Class Frigates and Preveze Class Submarines and the identification/codification activities of their materials, which had been carried out

in Gölçük Inventory Control Center.

In August 1995, I was assigned as Turkish Liaison Officer at HDW. After completing the said Submarine Liaison duty in Kiel, Germany, I was assigned to Turkish Naval Headquarters in Ankara. Between 1996 and 2000, I served as the Chief of the Submarine, Frigate and Mine Hunting Divisions in the Shipbuilding Department of Chief of Techniques at TNHQ. During this four year period, besides the daily management activities of ongoing projects, I was also involved in the procurement and contracting activities of the Gür Class Submarine Acquisition and the Modern Torpedo Acquisition Projects, which had been procured by the MND Foreign Procurement Department. Also, at the same time, I worked the Aydın Class Mine Hunter Acquisition Project, procured by the SSM, as the project manager of both project management groups, including processes such as RfI/RfP preparation, tendering, financing, contracting and contract signing.

Parallel to those activities, I had also been involved with NATO PG 38 (later NSRS) Submarine Rescue System Project (MOSHIP & SRV) for about three years. During the course of these studies, the requirements of a MOSHIP came to our attention

After that, I was assigned abroad as "Turkish Naval Projects Coordinator (TNPC)" by the General Staff, located at the FLW Shipyard in Bremen, Germany - between August 2000 and August 2002. During this period, I conducted coordination activities with the main and subcontractor companies of Submarines, Frigates, Fast Patrol Boats (as also Liaison Officer) and Mine Hunting (also as SSM PCO Head) Shipbuilding Programs in accordance with the directives of the Chief of Techniques, TNHQ.

This was a period in which I had the chance to reinforce the experience I had previously gained in project man-

agement practices and skills on international platforms and had the chance to work with the representatives of the shipbuilding sector and their subcontractors in Europe.

In August, 2002 at the end of my TNPC mission, I was assigned to the Defence Industry Foreign Relations Department of the Ministry of National Defence as a Chief of the Planning, Management and Publicity Division as a senior navy captain. At the same time, in 2004, I also acted as the Deputy Chief of Multilateral Foreign Relations Division for a period of one year. Between April 2005 and August 2005, I served as Acting Head of the Defence Industry Foreign Relations Department.

The promotion of the Turkish Defence Industry via briefings, the general management of IDEF-03 and IDEF-05 Exhibitions, assisting the National Armament Director in NATO CNAD and WEAG/EDA were the main activities that I handled during this term. In this period, we also organized a panel for the first time with the participation of Turkish Armed Forces members and Defence Industry Companies in the scope of Multilateral Foreign Relations, with the coordination of our department.

Another interesting development in this period was the effort we spent establishing a 'Military Aid and Sales Division (AYS)' Studies were already underway in this area with the evaluation of Turkish Military Aid/Sales concept in order to establish the Turkish Military Sales System under the umbrella of the MND. This was planned in order to manage procurement activities, a significant part of logistic aids, in a more reliable and direct way. It was aimed at supporting the organization to be built under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence Defence Industry Foreign Relations Department, via an interactive Information Management System. It was expected that this software would



produce the required advice, standard procedures and paperwork for marketing and proposal preparation, contract enforcement, program management-delivery-payment and after sales support processes. This would be achieved by evaluating the inputs made up of present data of the countries and the manufacturing companies, the aid priorities, the excess material inventory, the strategic target plans, and the defined critical technologies, and so on..

The Information Management System, the feasibility of which was made by TUSAŞ, was the most exciting part of the project for me. In these processes having a private establishment that would act as a complementary identity by undertaking the activities as marketing, purchasing, customs, liability, payment follow-up etc., was also discussed, which cannot be conducted by the AYS Organization. I wish every success to those of our colleagues who now working in that division.

As a result of all the activities I have mentioned, I had the chance of work-

ing in close cooperation with the Turkish Defence Industry. In turn, it gave me the opportunity to learn our Defence Companies as well as to have a lot of friends from MND, SSM, and other Forces besides Turkish Navy.

Before moving on to another subject, I also would like to mention the network of the so called Turkish Defence Industry Communication Group (TurDefInd), which I established when I was working at MND. Each and every activity and piece of news about our sector is instantly shared through this group. The idea of having a group via Internet was driven by the need to communicate in a faster and easier way. Also, at the same time, to create synergy among all users; the buyers, suppliers and researchers working in our Defence and Armaments sector. I started to realize this requirement during IDEF-03 and this group played a major part in the success of IDEF'05. I hope that its benefits are being reaped in this fair too. This group (TurDefInd) has approximately seven hundred group members; in fact it almost reaches one thousand readers by the internal distribution of our members. There is also an international version of that group. Everybody who serves in the defence sector is invited to join our groups respectively. I especially want to emphasize the importance of the participation of our SMEs (Small and Medium sized Enterprises), which we believe are the inevitable backbone of our sector.

Defence Turkey: Significant developments have been made in our defence industry, including Naval Defence technologies. Yonca Onuk is one of the companies that have made considerable progress in this area. What are your assessments of the period when you were at Yonca Onuk?

I had the chance to get my first experience in the private sector by working at Yonca-Onuk Shipyard as Marketing Manager for almost seven months.

During that period, besides marketing activities, I participated in the tender activities of MRTP33 Fast Patrol/Attack Craft project for Pakistan Naval Forces, which will be delivered this year and next year.

I am also proud and honored to have been part of the negotiation and RfP answering phase of the Fast Intervention Craft Project (ONUK MRTP 20/U), which was recently contracted in March this year. It may not be a major project for the TNFC, but it will be remembered as a very important milestone in our defence shipbuilding history as a first; in which our Naval Forces requirements were met by a fully Turkish Shipyard from design to development and without any licence necessity as well.

I have always been a supporter of Yonca-Onuk JV since I believe that it is, in every sense a Turkish Defence Company, and I will always believe so. Unfortunately, because of family and school commitments, it was not possible to move to Istanbul, so I had to say farewell to the beloved Yonca-Onuk Family and return to Ankara.

Defence Turkey: From 2007, Rohde & Schwarz Turkey began its activities with a new institutional structure. What are the short-term targets with this new structure? What kind of developments have been made in the last four months?

I started working at Rohde & Schwarz Turkey as Business Development Manager at the beginning of this year. It started operating as of the first of January, 2007 and was established in order to increase its services and investments in our country which actually operated as a liaison office for many years. On February 15th, 2007, an opening cocktail party was held to mark the occasion.

The vision of "Rohde-Schwarz Elektronik ve Telekomünikasyon Ürün ve Sistem Ltd. Şti." is to provide the

best services to the local market with innovative and high quality products, and to cooperate with our companies as a solutions partner. Its main aim is to create long-term cooperation possibilities and realize local manufacturing investments in its capability areas; especially for mission critical environments by observing the developments in the sector.

In this scope, Rohde & Schwarz Turkey has decided to participate in the IDEF '07 Fair for the first time and the necessary preparations are underway in order to meet customer requirements and integrate the sector in the best possible way.

On this occasion, I do not want to miss the opportunity to thank the young founders of BGM Engineering Limited, who gave me both the chance and excitement to contribute to their new establishment. The newly founded BGM Engineering, in which I merely participate in as a consultant, has the design and manufacturing capability of 'advanced composite.' BGM Engineering is contributing to leading companies like Proteksan-Turquise, Aselsan A.Ş. and Yay Gemi Yapım San. Tic. A.Ş. as solution partner. BGM Engineering provides engineering services to ASELSAN, one of our major companies in our defence sector, in the STAMP turret and ULS armed tactical vehicle projects. Our target is to spread the services and capabilities of BGM Engineering to all Defence Industry projects. BGM Engineering also provides a good opportunity for key foreign contractors which wish to realize the Local Contribution and Offset regulations.

Defence Turkey: Recently, major developments have been observed in our defence industry. In line with these developments, what are your evaluations of the development of the Turkish Defence Industry? As a person who has served in different divisions of the defence

industry, what are your assessments and suggestions in order to increase effectiveness of the Turkish Defence Industry on more international platforms?

As I have often said, I think that "The societies that have no national vision, cannot claim their national values, cannot create new technologies and those who at the end do not have a strong and capable defence industry are destined to vanish and be slaves of others." So, I say that "We have to keep trying side by side, without becoming tired or bored, in order to bring our young Defence Industry up to a more powerful, more indigenous and more technology producing position." For a more powerful and developed defence industry, which has already proved its existence, we have to continuously ask ourselves the following questions:

- Are the technologies that we have sufficient?
- Are we going to be able to produce solutions for every capability we need?
- Are we able to create technologies?
- Are our R&D activities and spending enough?
- Are we creating trademarks?

The main guide to me of what must be done for the further development of our defence industry is the Defence Industry Policy and Strategy Document that has been prepared as a result of a study, which has been carried out by a committee consisting of experienced experts in our defence sector. This document was decreed on May 25th, 1998 by the Council of Ministers with the decree number 98/11173 and was published in the Turkish Official Gazette numbered 23378, on June 20th, 1998.

The purpose of this document is the determination of the missions for the production of the weapons, systems, tools, equipment and ammunition that are required by our Armed Forces with the Turkish Defence Industry's means

and capabilities, determination of the essentials about the short, medium and long term planning in order to reach these targets and the general principals of the cooperation of the Turkish Defence Industry with the international defence market. Basically, this document describes the principles which are to be applied in order to develop the Turkish Defence Industry and to provide solutions for the requirements of the Turkish Armed Forces locally at maximum level.

Another point that I want to emphasize is that the realization of the growth of our defence industry will be achieved as such by creating its own infrastructure. Our major players and the manufacturers of our defence industry should aim to provide working areas/projects to our universities, SMEs and other research and training institutions, as well as to develop existing defence cooperation. In addition, I think that an understanding that provides original solutions for the customers / end users, as a mission with reformist foresight will contribute to this process by considering our country's strategic position and the changing regional stabilities in line with progressive technologies and changing capability requirements.

I believe that our achievements on international platforms will increase day by day by attempting to be the leader or a major player of the giant projects in the international procurement chains with the vision of aiming to become integrated with the world in every area, with a competitive stability, along with the integration of the infrastructure aiming the development process that I have mentioned above.

Finally, I want to emphasize proudly that all the experience I have had and will have in the military and private sector, will always be of service to our industry. I want to end my comments, with a marine expression, by wishing fair seas and tail winds to the Turkish Defence Industry. ■