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TRAINING AS AN IMPORTANT PREREQUISITE FOR THE EFFECTIVE SOLUTION OF CRISIS SITUATION

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Abstract: *The article deals with the issues of training of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic for the deployment in the disaster and providing assistance to the population during crisis situations arising in the territory of the Slovak Republic. The author's attention is focused in particular on the area of training of professional soldiers in this type of deployment. In the article are also presented the results of empirical research carried out for detection of views and experience of professional soldiers for their readiness to fulfil the tasks of this kind.*

Keywords: *crisis situation, armed forces, training, readiness, survey*

1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of changes in the security environment the significance of the national crisis management is being more and more emphasized in Slovakia. An important and irreplaceable role within the national crisis management is also played by the Slovak Armed Forces (hereinafter referred to as SAF).

The adaptation to the new security environment also means that the SAF have to be involved more in non-combatant operations, e. i. in providing crisis and disaster relief. Experience indicates that the accomplishment of crisis management tasks requires preparation of commanders and headquarters for crisis management as well as preparation of troops for carrying out the tasks related to crisis management throughout the Slovak Republic.

2. PREPARATION OF THE ARMED FORCES FOR NATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT DEPLOYMENT

Activities and issues related to preparation for crisis situations and their management are regulated by the Directives of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as MoD). These directives are applicable for the Slovak Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, offices and installations of the ministry, non-profit and allowance organizations under the competence of the MoD, military prosecution, organizational elements of the Military Intelligence and Military Police, public enterprises and joint stock companies which were founded by the MoD.

Preparation for the crisis management throughout the country requires performance of a number of different activities, such as [5]:

- monitoring and analysing risks and threats which may cause a crisis situation,

- assessment of the security environment in the Slovak Republic,
- coordination of the crisis management tasks with the ministries and other state administration central bodies,
- supporting other control and executive elements of the national crisis management in eliminating security risks and threats,
- providing specialised crisis management training for soldiers and civilian personnel,
- development of crisis management plans,
- coordination of preparation, performance and assessment of crisis management training, etc.

The above-mentioned activities are carried out by individual organizational units of the ministry, depending on their competences.

2.1 TRAINING OF SOLDIERS FOR NATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT DEPLOYMENT

Effective and efficient deployment of the armed forces in non-combatant crisis management operations in the Slovak Republic is dependent upon effective logistic support and adequate technology (available modern and functional armament, technology and material [1], including adequate equipment and suitable protective devices, too) as well as sufficient and adequate readiness of individual members of the SAF.

„When being deployed, the soldiers may face dangerous situations they must be able to face. This, however, is not possible without adequate training. The SAF crisis management deployment experience shows that if the soldier who is deployed is not familiar with the legislature, the research system elements, cooperation principles, protective equipment, safety rules, life threatening objects and dangerous substances, self-protection and self-rescue techniques as well as escape procedures, he may endanger himself, his team as well as health, life and property of the people he is supposed to protect or rescue [2]“.

That is why the Chief of the General Staff of the SAF (hereinafter referred to as GS) specified the priority for the training year 2011 the aim of which was to “reinforce readiness and capabilities of the SAF troops assigned to

perform the crisis management tasks according to situational plans. These tasks are aimed at providing support to public authorities in crisis management and at monitoring the nuclear and chemical situation“[2]. It is important to [3]: „maintain necessary strength and capabilities of the SAF at the readiness level, which allows them to carry out the national crisis management tasks, including readiness of headquarters to manage these tasks according to situational plans. Performance of these tasks should support public authorities in crisis management and monitoring of nuclear and chemical situation“. Following the above-mentioned priority, the Chief of the General Staff issued an ordinance (November 2011) regarding the SAF crisis response operations deployment. This ordinance includes the methodological instructions aimed at unification of processes and activities the SAF members may conduct during their deployment.

2.2 SURVEY OF VIEWS OF PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS ON THEIR DEPLOYMENT READINESS

The research and development project called “The Potential and Limits of the SAF Logistic Support in Non-Combatant Operations” developed by the Department of Management of the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik included also a questionnaire survey which was conducted in November 2011. The objective of the questionnaire survey was to find out the professional soldiers’ opinion on their deployment readiness. The questionnaire was anonymous so that the respondents could be more candid. It was completed by 106 professional soldiers (89.6% man, 10.4% women) of different appointments and postings from 22 SAF units, offices and installations. The respondents were chosen on purpose. 47% of the respondents (50 professional soldiers) attended the 3-month Junior Command and Staff Officers Course¹,

¹ Note: Course is a part of the SAF officers’ lifelong education and is organised by the Lifelong Education



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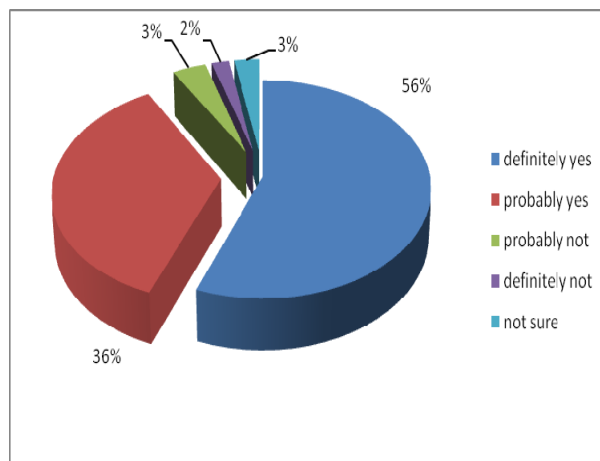
the rest – 53% of the respondents (56 professional soldiers) were members of the Training Battalion Martin².

The information obtained from the questionnaire was statistically processed and evaluated by means of descriptive statistics tools in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet application. The results were presented in text and graphs.

The survey results revealed that up to 54.7% of the respondents have served in the SAF more than 15 years (35.8% from 10 to 15 years, 7.5% from 5 to 10 years and only 1.9% less than 5 years). A sufficiently long period of operation in the SAF creates a presumption for getting rich personal experience that allow the respondents to have not only more professional but also more objective attitude to the researched issue.

Almost 92% of the respondents answered "Yes" to the question whether the crisis response training and disaster relief exercises are necessary for professional soldiers. See Figure 1 for more details.

Fig. 1 Is the crisis response training necessary for professional soldiers?

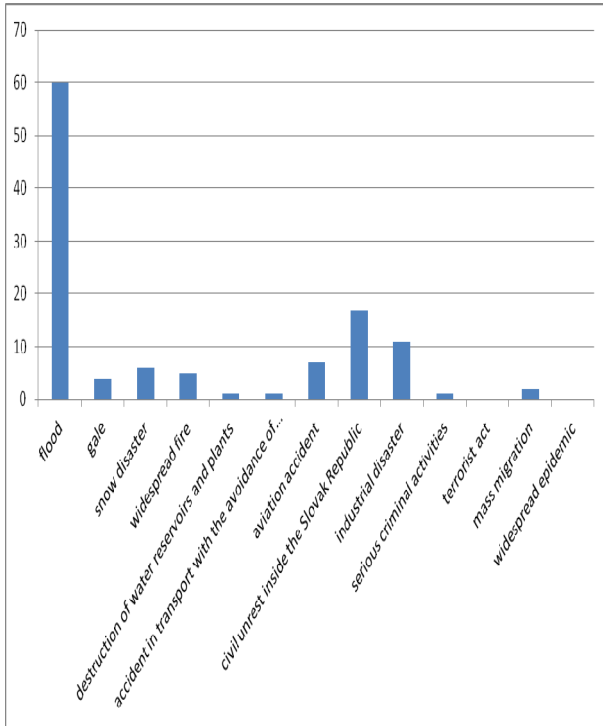


Since we wanted to keep the research results as objective as possible, we decided to obtain the opinions on this issue only from those respondents who already had experience with this kind of deployment. Our set of respondents so narrowed to 69 professional soldiers, who made cca 65% of all respondents. In our next question, we asked the remaining respondents to specify the crisis response operations they have been deployed in. When formulating this question, we followed the crisis typologies presented in specialized literature [4]. Having compared the number of answers, we found out that the professional soldiers are most commonly deployed in disaster relief operations (the most in floods). The survey results revealed that respondents from this sub-group have been assisted in the civil unrest inside the Slovak Republic quite often. Respondents have been deployed in industrial disasters and aviation accidents, too. See Figure 2 for more details.

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² Note: Battalion is a unique body, which carries out all important trainings. It organizes and carries out the initial vocational training of professional soldiers, as well as the specialization courses. Battalion also conducts basic training and further training for non-commissioned career.

Fig. 2 The crisis management operations the respondents have been deployed in

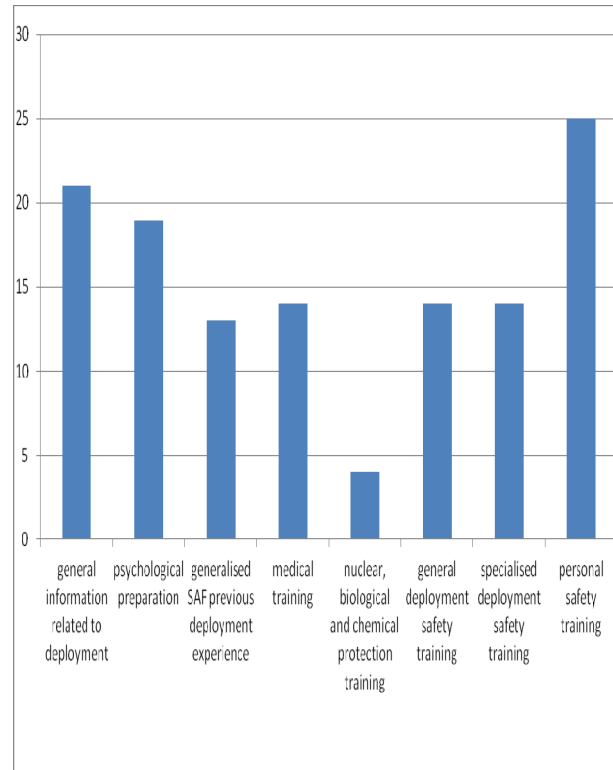


According to further research results, only 62.3% of the respondents from this sub-group have completed the disaster relief training.

The research also shows opinions of the respondents on the SAF members' deployment readiness. We suppose that respondents' opinions would be markedly influenced by their personal experience. Only 29% of the respondents think that the SAF members are fully ready for deployment. On the other hand, 37.7% of the respondents stated that they were not fully prepared for deployment and the remaining 33.3% were not able to express their opinion on this issue. In our next question, we asked the respondents to determine the areas in which soldiers are not sufficiently trained (once again, we assumed that the views of interviewed soldiers will be influenced by their personal experience). The respondents mentioned the following areas: personal safety training (e. g. use of protective equipment during rescue operations, self-protection and self-rescue procedures), lack of general information related to deployment of the SAF members in crisis management operations (e. g. knowledge of particular legislative) and insufficient psychological preparation of soldiers. On the other hand, the respondents feel confident and trained enough in the field

of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) protection. See Figure 3 for more details.

Fig. 3 Areas which the respondents regard as not trained sufficiently



3. CONCLUSIONS

One of the significant factors which have an impact on effectiveness and efficiency of the SAF deployment in non-combatant crisis response operations and disaster relief operations is an adequate preparation for this type of deployment, an inseparable part of which is also training of personnel to be deployed.

The SAF training systems and programmes significantly enable also the SAF crisis response operations training. Despite it, the results of the conducted empirical survey showed that the readiness of professional soldiers for national crisis response operations needs to be improved especially in the personal safety training and the psychological preparation of soldiers. The survey also showed that soldiers suffer from the lack of general information related to deployment. On the other hand, we can be satisfied with the



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preparation of soldiers in the field of nuclear,
biological and chemical protection.

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