

Chapter 2C – RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL: GERMANY

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2C.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the recent past, major changes took place, which significantly affected the German Federal Armed Forces (GFAF). Examples are the end of the Cold War, the reunification of the two German parts, the integration within the European Union (EU), peacekeeping operations and the fight against international terrorism. Embedded in the UN, NATO and the European defence policy, new strategies for reshaping are necessary in order to meet these demands. With respect to this, the GFAF has already reacted to these new tasks by adjusting training, service structure, equipment and by downsizing.

With respect to the new strategy, the peacetime strength of the GFAF military personnel will be downsized significantly in combination with a change of the service structure. The previous Services Army, Air Force, Navy and Health Support will be jointly incorporated into three Forces: Rapid Reaction, Stabilization and Support. The Rapid Reaction Force is based on highly trained troops for rescue and evacuation operations with war fighting capability. The Stabilization Force carries out peace keeping operations and the Support Elements take the other Forces into the areas of operation and support and train them. In order to fulfill their tasks, these soldiers must be able to carry out connected operations by means of high-tech equipment.

The German MOD is the providing authority with respect to military personnel. It has the general responsibility for providing temporary-career and regular officers, NCOs and enlisted personnel. It also issues joint regulations on personnel-related policy matters and exercises functional supervision of all the personnel management agencies in the armed forces.

- The supreme legal foundation of the GFAF is based on the constitution. One of the points it specifies is that every decision concerning assignment and promotion must be made on the principle of equal opportunity, and solely on the basis of aptitude, qualification and merit.
- The GFAF requires a specified number of soldiers with the required aptitude and training, at the required time and in the specified assignments.
- The so-called “Personnel Structure Model” (PSM) fixes the peacetime strength of soldiers and puts them into different categories in accordance with the political specifications regarding size, defence structure and the financial limits.
- The legal status of soldiers is as follows:
 - Conscripts (serve under the Compulsory Military Service Act 9);
 - Temporary-career service personnel (enlist voluntarily);
 - Regular soldiers (start as temporary-career service personnel, can be enlisted as regulars later on); and
 - Reservists.

2C.2 RECRUITING

2C.2.1 Introduction

In order to fulfill the filling of demand, selection and classification of applicants/conscripts per annum is carried out for the different groups of soldiers: A Test Center for Applicants for Commissioned Service, NCO-Recruitment Centers and District Recruiting Centers (conscripts).

The selection & classification (S&C) procedures and the criteria differ for these three groups. In general they have to undergo medical checks, aptitude test batteries and assessment centers (the latter not for conscripts).

2C.2.2 Recruiting Issues/Problems

Over the last years the recruiting situation of the GFAF has depended on the status and the function of the soldiers. The averaged filling of demand percentages for the last years have been quite good besides few exceptions (NCOs, special functions). Conscription on the one hand contributes to this positive result (at least 33% of the NCOs/Officers formerly have been conscripts). On the other hand, since 2001, the armed forces were almost completely opened for women (NCO and Officer, not conscripts), which additionally relieved the recruiting issue.

2C.2.2.1 Recruiting of NCOs

2C.2.2.1.1 Description and Root of Problem

As mentioned above, the annual filling of demand for the NCOs is quite good, but not optimal. The comparatively better situation for the officers could be due to the status of the NCOs and their opportunities.

2C.2.2.1.1.1 Current Efforts/Policies to Overcome the Problem

In 2002, the MOD started an attraction offensive and within this a program for NCOs called “new career paths”. Applicants now are given the opportunity to enlist for one out of the three possible career paths (private first class, sergeant and now also staff sergeant) right after of the selection procedure in one of the recruitment centers. The career path exclusively depends on the selection and classification results. Further more the pay and the opportunities for vocational advancement during the term of enlistment have been improved and the enlistment period for privates first class has been extended.

2C.2.2.1.1.1.1 Effectiveness of Effort/Policy

In 2002 the number of applications was best since 1986. It increased at ca. 40% from 2001 to 2002 (not due to female applicants). Besides a drop in 2004, this positive effect most likely stems from the measure “new career paths” and still is ongoing. The problem with respect to privates first class is relieved.

2C.2.2.1.2 Proposed Alternative Solutions

The selection & classification (S&C) procedure was renewed. Validation studies will show, which instruments do well and whether additional instruments are necessary. Also an expert system will be implemented in order to optimize the S&C procedure. Concerning classification a program like “Smart Classification” from

LtCol Psych F. Lescreve (Belgian Defense Directorate of Human Resources – Accession Policy) shall be introduced in order to classify groups of applicants by means of mathematical optimization.

2C.2.2.2 Recruiting Concerning the Flight Service (NCO and Officers)

2C.2.2.2.1 Description and Root of Problem

As mentioned above, the annual filling of demand for the flight service could be better. This function is highly attractive with a high number of applicants, but since the medical and psychological demands are high, not only the number of applicants, but much more their quality is crucial.

2C.2.2.2.1.1 Current Efforts/Policies to Overcome the Problem

The marketing was extended and the S&C procedure for the flight service was improved.

2C.2.2.2.1.1.1 Effectiveness of Effort/Policy

The filling of demand for the flight service is relieved.

2C.2.2.2.2 Proposed Alternative Solutions

The S&C procedure for the flight service will be further optimized.

2C.2.3 Summary Concerning Recruiting

Altogether the recruiting situation in the GFAF is quite manageable, except for few special functions. There sub-optimal recruiting situation for NCOs looks much better now due to the concept of “new career paths”. This almost acceptable situation is also partly due to conscription as at least one third of the NCOs/Officers formerly have been conscripts. The increasing percentage of female NCO/Officers additionally will relieve the retention issue.

2C.3 RETENTION

2C.3.1 Introduction

The above mentioned filling of demand numbers vary from year to year in order to maintain the number of adequate military personnel. The GFAF provides attractive vocational trainings for NCOs and attractive course of studies/training for officers. In order to maintain the turn of this investment, different measures have been carried out to keep turnover rates low. For this purpose contracts include fines for quitting prior to the term of enlistment. Also questionnaires have been used to gather information what soldiers (on duty or retired) think about and expect from the GFAF concerning: attitude, climate, contentedness, command, social environment, motivation, etc.

2C.3.2 Retention Issues/Problems

Retention problems occur with respect to officers taking their course of studies (in general at one of the two GFAF universities). Depending on the force, the course of studies takes place during or after the officer training course.

2C.3.2.1 Officers with Course of Studies, which are of Interest for the Private Economy

Some courses of study are of special interest for private economy (e.g., computer science, (electrical) engineering). There is a risk that these students contract out, when private companies are interested in them.

2C.3.2.1.1 Current Efforts/Policies to Mitigate the Problem

Not clear.

2C.3.2.1.1.1 Effectiveness of Effort/Policy

Not clear.

2C.3.2.1.2 Proposed Alternative Solutions

Enhancing commitment with GFAF.

2C.3.2.2 Officers who Fail their Course of Study

The courses of studies are based on trimesters instead of semesters and are insofar quite demanding. Although the learning situation for the students is quite comfortable, a significant percentage of them fail.

2C.3.2.2.1 Current Efforts/Policies to Mitigate the Problem

S&C will be optimized in order to predict those students with higher probability of failure. Based on this, courses of study will be denied or extra training will be offered at an early stage.

2C.3.2.2.1.1 Effectiveness of Effort/Policy

Not clear.

2C.3.2.2.2 Proposed Alternative Solutions

With respect to validation studies, criteria for the courses of studies shall be more precisely defined and corresponding predictor variables be operationalized. Emphasis should also be put on personality factors like motivation.

2C.3.3 Summary Concerning Retention

Altogether the retention situation in the GFAF is quite manageable with minor exceptions.

2C.4 CONCLUSION

The problems of the GFAF concerning recruiting and retention are quite manageable. The above mentioned countermeasures offer a chance to optimize this in the future. In order to maintain this momentum, it is necessary to be prepared for effects like prospering economy, upcoming “XXL”-generation and extension of peace keeping operations. In anticipation of this, ongoing research is necessary to overcome current obstacles and to mitigate future ones.