

Annex D – TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) TASK GROUP ON RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL HFM-107/TG-034

D.1 ORIGIN

D.1.1 Background

In many countries, achieving recruitment goals becomes increasingly challenging. At the same time, the Military is facing an important loss of often highly qualified personnel who choose to leave. This has become a major concern to military commanders as is illustrated by ADM Vern Clark, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations: “My top #1 priority is recruiting Sailors, retaining Sailors and fighting the attrition of Sailors. (sic)” (Assuming the Watch, July 2000). The recruiting and retention (R&R) problem can be related to a variety of causes including:

- The situation on the labour market (demographics, economics, ...).
- The correlation between prevailing values in society and in the Military organizational culture.
- The content of the jobs (job content, wages, organizational climate, operations, geographical mobility, promotion system, ...).
- The management of the major processes of recruitment, selection and classification, turnover and retention.

The difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers is aggravated by the fact that many military personnel leave voluntarily. Nowadays it is not unusual that 30% or more of the enlisted recruits do not complete their first term. In addition, many military personnel choose to return to civilian life later in their careers, attracted by more appealing opportunities. This happens frequently in specific trades (pilots, ICT personnel, ...) that are hard and expensive to recruit and train.

D.1.2 Justification (Relevance for NATO)

Forces lacking the appropriate personnel because of R&R problems are no longer fully operational. In addition, many nations throughout Europe are in transition from a conscript to an all volunteer military force. These issues have consequences for R&R policies. This not only has an obvious quantitative dimension but also an important qualitative one. In order to meet recruitment goals, the pressure to lower entry standards will increase because retention problems do not affect different trades (Military Occupational Specialties) in the same way. Another reason to counter early turnover and retention problems is that they are extremely expensive for the Military. Furthermore, serving personnel frequently have to work harder to cover gaps potentially leading to discontent and disruption, thus increasing the turnover rate. R&R is a very complex issue. This complexity has to be recognised for there are no single and obvious solutions. It is important to understand the mechanisms underlying the problems in order to take appropriate actions. For that purpose, analysing the research data from different countries facing distinct as well as convergent R&R problems is paramount.

D.2 OBJECTIVES

D.2.1 Scope

This TG will focus on the questions: “Why do people join the Military? Why do they decide to stay in or leave the Military?”

These questions encompass four distinct phases in the R&R process:

D.2.1.1 Recruitment

Recruitment is the process which occurs prior to enlistment. It deals specifically with marketing, advertising and the establishment of a trusting relationship between the recruiter (organization) and the candidate. This process is critical in ensuring that the prospective candidate has realistic expectations of what the military has to offer, in effect establishing the mutual psychological contract.

D.2.1.2 Selection and Classification

The importance of selection and classification for the R&R issues lies in:

- The management of the selection process (not losing applicants during the selection process due to long waiting times, excessive selection burden, ...).
- The use of adequate selection standards (setting standards too high will eliminate a significant portion of qualified candidates whereas standards which are too low will lead to unacceptable training costs).
- The use of classification tools that optimize the use of the abilities and preferences of the applicant pool.

D.2.1.3 Retention

The process of keeping adequate numbers of suitable personnel in the Military, in order to meet the needs of the organization. The primary concern will be to identify the factors contributing to the retention goals of the organization.

D.2.1.4 Turnover

Turnover refers to the people that leave the military, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. The primary concern will be to examine voluntary turnover that is avoidable and undesirable to the organization.

There are variations between nations regarding R&R contexts. However, the existence of similar problems suggests that it would be beneficial to address these issues collaboratively.

D.2.2 Goals

The main goal of the TG is to foster a true understanding of the mechanisms that influence recruitment and retention outcomes. In order to achieve this goal, a generic military model will be developed. This model will be based on the empirical evidence acquired within the framework of resources available to the TG. It is intended that the model will enable the description, analysis and prediction of military R&R outcomes. The work of the TG will conclude with recommendations to the military leadership of participating nations for improving R&R in their organizations.

Initially the TG wishes to address the following areas in more detail. However, the final model may not be limited to or include all of them¹:

D.2.2.1 The Psychological Contract

Psychological contract comprises the implicit (and often unspoken) expectations with respect to mutual obligations held by the organization and the individual. The individual commits to making certain sacrifices

¹ A possible contribution to counter-terrorism was discussed, but was deemed to be not directly relevant.

and in return obliges the organization to compensate fairly for the given labour. If the organization fails to meet the expected obligation by the individual s/he will either (try to) terminate the working relationship or reduce his/her effort to the level at which the employee believes the contract is more properly balanced.

D.2.2.2 The Influence of Information on Turnover

Recruits who drop out of initial training often complain that they were misinformed by recruiters or recruiting materials. As a consequence, their perception of the organization was unrealistic, and their pre-entry expectations remained unmet. This TG will examine to what extent information influences early turnover, and how the information should be shaped in order to provide a realistic job preview and reach recruitment goals at the same time.

D.2.2.3 Management of Selection and Classification (S&C)

- Management of the selection process
 - During the selection process, many applicants are lost although they meet selection criteria. The causes may include a negative image given by the selection centres, long waiting times, excessive selection burden (e.g., time, preparation, costs), etc.
- Management of selection standards
 - Modifying entry standards affects both the realization of recruitment goals and the level of turnover during training, but in a different direction. Modelling the link between entry standards and turnover, together with side effects such as training costs is needed to get a sound base to set adequate selection standards in changing recruitment contexts.
- Management of classification issues
 - In a multi-applicant, multi-job environment, the number and quality of enlisted personnel significantly depends on the classification strategy used. Topics include sequential vs. batch classification, integration of applicants' preferences in the decision process and used classification algorithms.

D.2.2.4 Values Research

It is not only important to understand the changing demographic profile of the various nations on R&R, psychographics is also very relevant. That is, people's attitudes, views, preferences and the framework from which they see and understand their environment. Generational theory, although an indicator of the evolution of values, does not capture the numerous "value tribes" within and across age cohorts. For example, according to a Canadian psychographic map² there are no less than five distinct value tribes within the generation X cohort alone. It is important to explore and better understand these value groups and their propensity to be attracted to a military life.

D.2.2.5 Individual Needs

The TG will examine the influence on R&R of how far the Armed Forces are able to meet the individual needs of potential recruits and serving personnel. The group will address the implications for personnel managers of individuals' needs (e.g., the requirements of service personnel and their families when being posted).

² Generated by Michael Adams (1998), *Sex in the Snow*. Penguin Books: Toronto, Ontario.

D.2.2.6 Transition

Transition is a process encompassing the reaction (positive or negative) to significant changes in life circumstances. The concept of “transition” relates to both individuals and organizations. In the context of this TG there are three important areas for R&R:

- Movement by individuals from a civilian to a Service culture, where assumptions, attitudes, expectations and practices are different and unfamiliar. This aspect may be summarized as “cultural shock on joining”.
- Changes in attitudes, expectations, aspirations and behaviour which an individual undergoes during his or her service. For example, an unmarried soldier may desire interesting operational postings but once married, the same individual may feel reluctant to leave home for long periods. Reasons for staying in the Service change as these transitions take place. This aspect may be summarized as “changes in needs and wants during Service”.
- Changes in the organization, brought about by technology, or by movement in policy or operational stance. An example would be force reductions following the end of the Cold War. These reductions have the effect of changing the organizational context in which individuals serve, and hence require a rethink of organizational commitment. This can be summarized as “the effects of significant organizational change”.

D.2.2.7 PERSTEMPO/OPSTEMPO and Quality of Life

Ops tempo refers to the deployment of members on an operation. PERSTEMPO refers to all activities, including OPSTEMPO that remove members from their home stations for a period of time. Quality of life refers to those non-monetary benefits, for example, base housing, that impact positively or negatively on the wellbeing and morale of members and their families. The general purpose of research in those areas is to determine their impact on the “stay or leave” decision of members.

D.2.2.8 Pay and Benefits

This refers to salary, medical (and dental), recruiting and retention bonuses and other benefits that are given in exchange for military service.

D.2.2.9 Gender and Minority Issues

Two significant demographic shifts are taking place in most western countries:

- Firstly, there has been a decline in the traditional male youth cohort and a steady growth of visible minority members.
- Secondly, there has been an increase in female employment.

These factors must be reflected in the composition of the Military to meet recruiting targets and maintain its relevance in society. Social and cultural differences impede on the Military’s ability to recruit, integrate and retain women and visible minority members. These influences must be identified and understood in the context of military values and culture in order to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of women and visible minorities to sustain military operations.

D.2.2.10 Methodology

In order to develop the model, the TG will undertake the following activities: Information exchange, literature review, presentations of R&R strategies, establishment of a network of R&R specialists, and visits to pertinent facilities.

D.2.3 Deliverables

The TG will deliver a final report of its activities that will include current information about the R&R strategies of the member countries, the generic model (e.g., linear structural equations) and specific topics as described above.

It also will create a database of recruitment/retention research and country data.

The TG will propose to organize a workshop or symposium as an RTO activity to disseminate its results.

D.2.4 Duration

An immediate start of this TG after approval by the RTB is requested in order to maintain the momentum gained by the exploratory team. The duration of the TG is three years (April 2003 – December 2005). The TG will meet twice a year for three to four days per meeting.

D.3 RESOURCES

D.3.1 Membership

Countries: BEL, CAN, DEN, DEU, NLD, ESP, TUR, GBR and USA.

D.3.2 National and/or NATO Resources Needed

The appointed persons will be funded by their respective nations to attend TG meetings and to host meetings.

D.3.3 RTA Resources Needed

If the TG is to organize a symposium in 2005, the usual RTA support will be requested.

D.4 SECURITY CLASSIFICATION LEVEL

The security classification level of this activity is 'NATO UNCLASSIFIED'.

D.5 PARTICIPATION BY PARTNER NATIONS

This activity is 'OPEN.' Partners for peace nations are welcome to join the TG.

D.6 LIAISON

Nil.

