

THE AUSTRIAN MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY DOCTRINE

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ABSTRACT

During the year 1999 the Austrian Military Psychology Service developed a new doctrine.

Contrary to former concepts, which more or less just listed the various tasks of military psychology, the new doctrine approaches the subject from the aspect of the "psychic fitness for duty" of the individual soldier.

The central part deals with

-the generation, development and up-keeping

-the examination and testing and

-(in case of loss) the re-development

of the psychic fitness for military duty of the Austrian soldier.

Since the term “psychology” has lately been frequently used (or should I say misused) for rather weird concepts, and since the necessity for the use of psychology in the military has greatly increased, the Austrian Military Psychology Service had to develop a new doctrine for the deployment of psychology in the Austrian Armed Forces.

It was postulated that psychology should be deployed wherever it can contribute to the effort of the military in fulfilling its constitutional tasks.

The constitutional tasks of the Armed Forces are (in short)

- to defend the country, and, in support of civilian authorities
- to protect the country’s constitutional institutions and the democratic rights of its citizens,
- to help uphold law and order, and
- to help in case of natural or man-made disasters.

To fulfil these constitutional tasks, the Armed Forces must meet certain requirements.

Each soldier must be assured that he is taken as an individual worth not only the best equipment and logistics but also optimal placement, training and leadership.

This is where psychology can help, and therefore the general aim of military psychology in the Austrian Armed Forces has been defined as follows:

The general aim of military psychology in the Austrian Armed Forces is to supply and apply scientifically proven psychological methods and means as contribution towards the task of the Austrian Armed Forces.

From this central aim the two main tasks of Austrian military psychology were deduced:

Matters of:

◆ **Basics of Military Psychology**

This includes development and quality control of psychological methods, opinion polls and applied psychological research

◆ **Applied Military Psychology**

This field concentrates on the fulfilment of military tasks and therefore includes

- the generation, development and maintenance,
- monitoring and testing, and (in case of loss) the
- re-building

of the soldier’s mental fitness for military duty

The two main tasks are broken down into various subtasks:

I) Basics of Military Psychology

a) Methods of psychology applied within the Austrian Armed Forces

- 1) Development of psychological methods and means
- 2) Quality control of psychological methods and means
- 3) General control of psychology in the Austrian Armed Forces

b) Methods of opinion polling in the Austrian Armed Forces

- 1) Establishing of rules and regulations for the organisation and use of opinion polling
- 2) Monitoring and advising in opinion polling by other elements of the Austrian Armed Forces
- 3) Application of opinion polling in feedback systems

c) Research in the field of Applied Military Psychology

- 1) Application of psychological research for the development, evaluation and improvement of psychological methods in the Austrian Armed Forces
- 2) Monitoring and, if of advantage, promotion of psychological research outside the Austrian Armed Forces
- 3) Monitoring and counselling of applied psychological research conducted by other elements or experts of the Austrian Armed Forces

II) Applied Military Psychology

- a) Generation, development and maintenance of the mental fitness for military duty
 - 1) Providing psychological support for decision-making for military leadership
 - 2) Participation in the selection of personnel: setting up, evaluation, optimisation and maintenance of a psychological aptitude testing system
 - 3) Training matters concerning the psychology of combat
 - 4) Organisation of training in Critical Incident Stress Management
 - 5) Advice in matters of Psychological Warfare

- b) Monitoring and testing the mental fitness for military duty
 - Application or monitoring of periodical feedback by questionnaire about soldiers' opinions, experiences and motivation as information for military leaders
 - Opinion polling of selected personnel on selected subjects on demand
 - Survey of the soldiers' morale especially for the psychological situation report
 - Advising commanding officers about improving the soldiers' morale

- c) Re-building of the mental fitness for military duty
 - 1) Establishment, control and application of a Clinical Psychology-system in the military hospitals
 - 2) Establishment, control and application of a Clinical Psychology-system in the reserve-hospitals of the Medical Corps
 - 3) Establishment, control and application of the Helpline-Service, a twenty-four-hour emergency telephone number for members of the Austrian Armed Forces in distress
 - 4) Establishment, control and application of the Critical Incident Stress Management system, including care of Post Traumatic Stress Disorders

To perform the above tasks, the following organisation was developed for the Austrian Military Psychology Service:

Basically it consists of (see also graphic: Austrian Military Psychology Service):

- ◆ **a central command and control unit**
 - and
 - ◆ **a number of field units**
- in various elements of the Austrian Armed Forces

The central command and control unit

The head of this central unit is responsible for all the matters listed above, and also for all other specific psychological matters and activities in the Austrian Armed Forces, and especially for the adherence to a unified standard of military psychology.

He is also responsible for

- ◆ the operation of the service according to ethical principles, so that the different needs of service in a military organisation the requirement to fulfil a military task, and the responsibility for the welfare of the individual soldier can be reconciled.
- ◆ keeping military psychology within the confines of science, as it must not be influenced by esoteric or superstitious trends on one side or degrading or inhuman practices on the other.
- ◆ operation of the service according the federal law for the application of psychology in Austria.

To do this, a number of conditions had to be met:

The central command and control unit of the Military Psychology Service is situated in the Ministry of Defence.

It is organised in subunits for
Administration and co-ordination,
Applied military psychology
Methodology and applied research
Psychological training and care-giving, and
Air- and road traffic psychology

- Its head has, within the responsibility of his unit, the right to issue executive orders on behalf of the minister of defence.
- He supervises the psychological personnel in all matters within his responsibility, e.g. their training (but not disciplinary matters).
- He can, if need be, detach psychologists on short-term assignments from their permanent post to other jobs.
- The head of the Military Psychology Service, as well as the heads of his sub-units must be psychologists by training.

The Field Units

Induction and Recruitment:

- 2 psychologists in each of the Induction Centres

It is planned to take one of the two out of the Induction Centre and place him in the staff of his territorial command as counsellor to the territorial commander and for care-giving duties with the troops within the territorial command area.

- 1 psychologist in the Recruitment Centre

Medical Installations

- 1 clinical psychologist in each of the 3 military hospitals

The military hospital in Vienna needs a second clinical psychologist.

- 3 clinical psychologists in each of the reserve field hospitals

Air & Road Traffic Psychology

- 3 aviation psychologists in the unit for air & road traffic psychology of the army hospital Vienna

a reserve-psychologist should be included in the Operations-Branch of the staff of the air-regiments.

Peace-Keeping

- 3 Psychologists in the Austrian International Peace Support Center

As two of them work in selection, it is difficult to use them for counselling and care-giving activities. That leaves only one psychologist for counselling and care-giving, psychological preparation and training who can join PK-units abroad in case of emergency. At least one additional psychologist is needed.

- Peace Keeping Units abroad

Currently there is one reserve psychologist with the Austrian PK Battalion serving with K-FOR in the KOSOVO.

When a PK-unit is raised, the number of psychologist (one or two) to be included is decided on.

The Academies of the Austrian Armed Forces

In each of the three Academies, National Defence- Academy (higher officer's training), the Theresian Military Academy (officer's training) and the NCO-Academy the faculty should include one Psychologist.

Brigade Staff

As a beginning of applying psychology on troop level a psychologist (active or reserve officer) should be included in the Operations-Branch of the staff of the Brigades.



Austrian Military Psychology service

