

A systematic approach to mental health during deployment

Capt, Niclas Wisèn Lic Psychologist
Karolinska Institutet, Swedish Armed Forces

Background

- A need for a structured way to assess Mental Health status, and Combat-fitness during deployment.
- A toolset that is easy enough to use, effective enough to be worth the effort, and appreciated as a useful tool among the “leaders”.

What we wanted

- A Structural assessment tool aimed at health and performance by targeting current status of the “group” (individual), active stressors, assessable resources and active leadership.
- A method for continuous collection of employee status to facilitate resources in order to meet organizational demand.
- A tool to document history, since the balance between demands and resources are bound to vary over time it keeps track of changes over time. Opening up for retrospective analysis.

Challenges and possibilities

- Making it simple enough to be used and relevant enough to be of value.
- Mandatory vs. at will.
- Compliance
- User friendly -- making it easy to administer (no more than 5 min a week)
- Not an add-on! Covers leadership responsibilities that should be addressed anyway
- Possibility for HR to enhance their role in actively supporting and reporting HR related issues.

Construct and pilots.

- Based on COSC (Combat Operational Stress Control) &

- a DRM (Dose-Response Model) (Mullen et al., 2010)

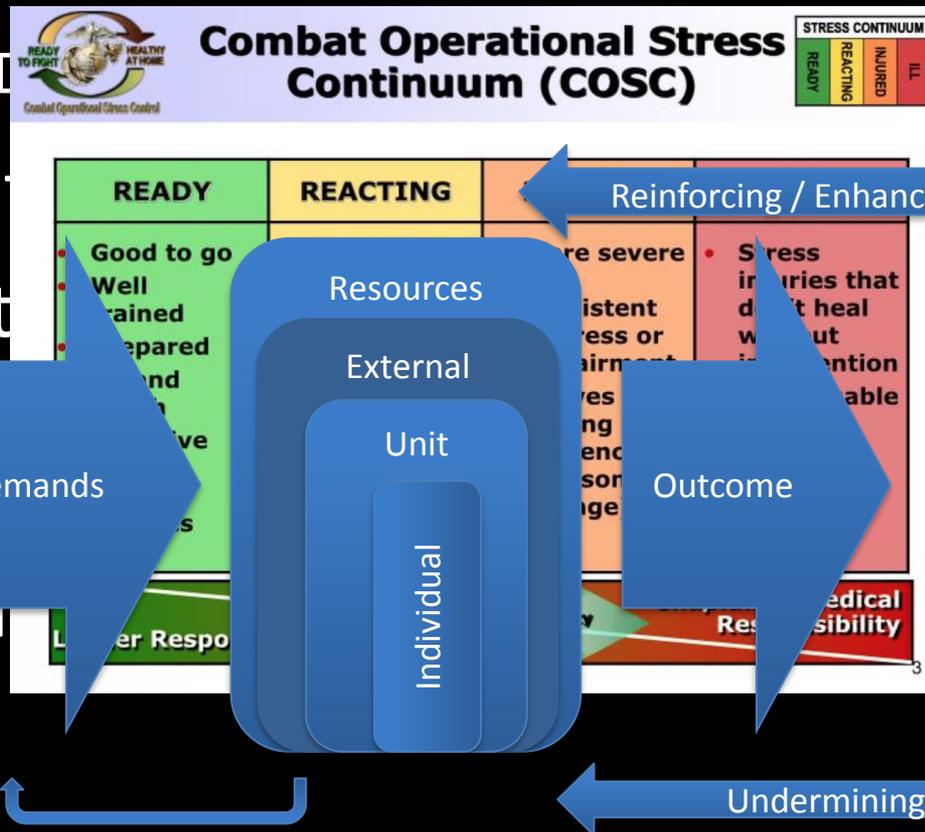
- We created

- We started

Atalan

MH-logg

- Mali Mission (not intended)



Operation
+
MEO2 (2010,

first use as

The tool

- A weekly rating of the “unit” in a scale from 1-10
- A short term prognosis based on current status and

Main:	Min:	Max:	
6	-	-	
Short term prognosis:		Long term prognosis:	
-		-	
Workload:	Psychosocial:	Conceptual:	Other:
-	-	-	-

Main assessment Max and min Prognosis Impact factors Actions

10	Well functioning ++ Resources significantly higher than demands. Can share resources or spend time on development and/or good group cohesion, all members “green”.
9	Well functioning + Resources higher than demands. Good group cohesion and morale. No or low stress on group members.
8	Well functioning Expected level for normal green zone. Good demand-resource balance,. Expected variations in workload. Temporary imbalances are successfully handled. Still good moral and dynamic in group no frictions.
7	Well functioning Mostly balance between demand-resources, stress peaks does not impact output. Within group variations in perceived stress. Moral is still good but minor frictions and imbalances can occur.
6	Well functioning – A slight imbalance of demand-resource, a need for active management to mitigate negative effect of imbalance and prioritize tasks and workload within group. Group cohesion and morale might not be affected but be at risk. Perceived as stressful by some group members.
5	Some impact on function Performance and output is lowered and needs to be actively addressed, priority is required to address workload imbalance. The group or some individuals are struggling; redistribution of tasks might be necessary. Slight frictions within the group can be present.

on current status and
on current status and

one to meet those

10 **Mental Hälsa**
Bedömning av psykiskt stridsvärde

Grupp _____ Datum _____

Skattning tot _____ lägst resp högst _____

Prognos (på kort resp lång sikt)

Påverkans faktorer
→

Åtgärder
←

1

Sign _____

What we did when we implemented it

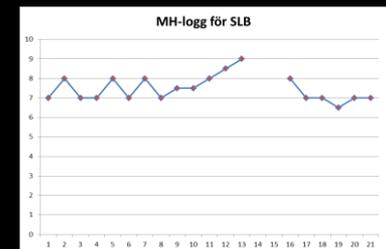
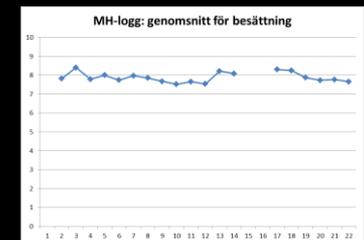
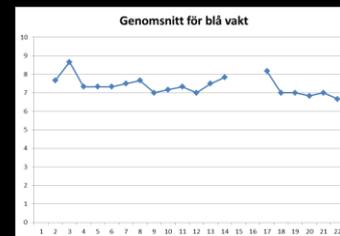
- Inform the organization on all levels (transparency)
- Educate leaders on all levels on how to use the tool
- Adapted it to contextual limitations (low computer access) hence analog system.
- Put it in a SOP
- Then just launch it.

The tool

- Only the unit rating was mandatory. Subsequent fields were given and presented as an option to convey information that the unit deemed relevant.
- 86% used all fields (the rest were off and on)
- Why not make all mandatory?
- Summarized weekly by HR and reported at a staff brief.
- Groups with low rating or limited ability to handle stressors were supported by HR.

Examples and experience

- A shift of focus, low-exposure support units under the most negative stress.
- A complement to the line organization (in harmony not challenging or bypassing)
- Identify trends (slope more important than level)
- Been used to support, conceptual stressors, personnel frictions, mismatches (expectations) etc.
- Leaders judgment:
 - Easy enough to use
 - Opens for discussion in the group
 - Raise awareness of all stressors
 - Prompt active handling of subtle stressors



Take-home message

- Structured tools must be simple enough to be made a habit (relatively low cost low reward behavior)
- Raising awareness
 - Its not the model or tool itself that is most relevant, it's the fact that you create an incentive to ask, how are we doing and if there is negative stressors what can we do about them.
- Be creative and persistent, still after almost 100 years !! There is a lack of understanding of the capital value of personnel compared to material inventory.
- Be sure to give feedback to the organization just collecting data is not enough one must act as well.

Questions?