

THE MAKING OF AN OFFICER – PREPARING FOR THE FIRST 60 SECONDS OF BATTLE**A TISZT SZÜLETÉSE – FELKÉSZÍTÉS A HARC ELSŐ 60 MÁSODPERCÉRE**

Lessons learned in operations highlighted the need to change the way how officers of the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) are trained and educated for their first post. Breaking away from previous practice is the prerequisite for every cadet regardless of their respective arms, which poses challenges in developing the required skills to become a small unit leader.

A műveletek tapasztalatai egyértelművé tették, hogy a Magyar Honvédség tisztjeinek kiképzése és képzése terén változás szükséges. Nélkülözhetetlen a korábbi gyakorlat felülvizsgálata ahhoz, hogy minden tisztjelölt – fegyvenemtől függetlenül – a kinevezése után képes legyen kisalegységek vezetésére.

INTRODUCTION

Lessons learned in operations such as Afghanistan and Iraq highlighted the need to change the way how officers of the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) are trained and educated for their first post. Breaking away from previous practice is the prerequisite for every cadet regardless of their respective arms, which poses challenges in developing the required skills to become a small unit leader.

The structural changes of the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University (ZMNDU) resulted in the re-birth of the traditions of the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Defence Academy. As the Staff Officer 2 Training (SO2 Training) of the newly established Ludovica Battalion (LB) the author of this article had the privilege to set the foundation of its training system.

The LB was officially established as part of the Order of Battle of the HDF directly subordinated to the HDF Chief of Defence (HDF CHOD) by receiving certain organizational elements of the ZMNDU on 1 February, 2011. Its basic functions are as follow:

1. Co-operation in the field of international education;
2. Maintaining defence capabilities;
3. Training and preparation of forces;
4. Activities related to protection against floods and excess waters;
5. Activities related to emergency situations (except protection against floods and excess waters);
6. Vocational training outside the schooling system;
7. Mandatory preparatory courses.¹

This article will focus on the preparation for conducting tasks 3, 6 and 7.

SITUATION

On the same day the author had to report to the Commanding Officer (CO) as SO2 Training, the process of establishing LB entered its final phase.

¹ A honvédelmi miniszter 26/2010. (XII. 29.) HM határozata a Magyar Honvédség Ludovika Zászlóalj alapító okiratának kiadásáról, HM, 2010., p.2.

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Considering the relatively short time – only 90 days cut into two parts by the Holly Season – and limitations in terms of available human and material resources, the realisation of the above mentioned tasks seemed to be almost impossible. The Officer Cadet Division of the ZMNDU on which the LB was established consisted of around 450 cadets, and 15 officers/non-commissioned officers (NCOs). In its formation and applied procedures it was more like a huge company, than a battalion-sized military organisation. None of the members of the staff, except the CO, had been previously deployed in demanding operational theatres such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Only those officers and NCOs have been selected to serve in the LB who have had prior experiences in such operations.

The LB was designed to be a normal battalion sized infantry (rifle) unit with a proper staff, 4 + 1 cadet companies, and a small service support platoon making up a total of 600 officer candidates and 110 officers, NCOs and other enlisted personnel. The + 1 company is accommodated in a different barracks in another town due to the cadets Air Force orientation.

According to the HDF CHOD's directive², after the inauguration ceremony LB had to be operational by the end of August 2011.

OTHER CHANGES

Parallel to this process three previously independent universities were directed to integrate their faculties and facilities into the National University of Public Service (NUPS), one of them being the late ZMNDU. In the framework of the NUPS the curriculum of the officer candidates changed from a 2 (general military science) + 2 years (arms specialised) educational scheme to a 3 + 1 years structure.

A profound change of this magnitude requires a longer time to take momentum than the establishment a new military unit such as the LB. The first batch of officer candidates educated in the new scheme will start in the 2013/14 semester.

Making the officer ready for the challenges of the future thus became a combined effort of the NUPS and the LB. NUPS is responsible for the high-end military education whereas LB provides training in battle drills for small unit tactics (SUT) and on leadership skills.

INTENT

The improvement of leadership capabilities using the experiences of combat veterans is the tradition of the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Defence Academy to be followed.

In order to achieve this, and building upon the previous command and staff experiences of his personnel, the CO intended to organise the cadet's training into three phases as follows:

- in-processing and building the basics of soldiering;
- SUT training and leadership courses;
- involvement of officer candidates under the supervision of experienced officers and NCOs in their last year into the real life support of the battalion.

Throughout the whole process the CO intended to increase the possibility for senior officer candidates to be involved gradually in the training of the junior officer candidates

² A Honvédelmi Minisztérium Honvéd Vezérkar főnök 371/2010. HM HVKF parancsa a Magyar Honvédség Ludovika Zászlóalj létrehozásával kapcsolatos részletes feladatok végrehajtásáról, HM, 2010., p. 1.

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Training model according to the commander's intent

Grade	Training cycle (semester)	
	autumn	spring
1 st	Boot camp**	Introduction to SUT
2 nd	Section drills and leadership qualification	Section leader duty
3 rd	Platoon drills and leadership qualification	Platoon commander duty
4 th	Introduction of the planning and supporting methods of SUT training	Preparation for first post

** Executed by the NCO Academy

EXECUTION

The above mentioned profound organisational changes and the commander's intent made clear, that the process to properly address the challenges needs a start from scratch.

First, a detailed list of the specific tasks was necessary to be compiled. It was vital to set up the conditions for the different stages and the timeline for accomplishing them. One was already stated in the HDF CHOD's directive, the other was part of the accreditation process of the NUPS. Considering these and the available time the following stages were identified:

— Stage one

By the end of August 2011 initial operational capability of LB must be able to support the officer candidates' training process, while a test training cycle is conducted and evaluated for further arrangements.

— Stage two

By the end of August 2012 LB is able to execute the first training cycle and reaches full operational capability at section level training.

— Stage three

By the end of August 2013 LB is able to execute the second training cycle and reaches full operational capability at platoon level training.

— Stage four

As of 1 September 2013 LB is able to execute the commander's intent without any restrictions.

During all stages non-officer candidates service personnel is to conduct every necessary training and qualification courses according the Army Training Doctrine. Furthermore, certain percentage of the said personnel is required to actively participate in the on-going HDF missions abroad.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Approaching the end of stage three, there is a good opportunity to stop for a moment and look back to wrap-up the progress so far and to learn the necessary lessons in order to provide the best available training for the junior military leaders of the future. Here are some lessons to learn:

- Lack of personnel has resulted that the originally planned structure of the LB has changed twice.
- The global economic depression caused that necessary training equipment and materials are only partially available.

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- Some of the doctrines, guides and manuals of the HDF are either in the process of overhaul or exist only as drafts.

Despite of the above mentioned difficulties, the attitude of commanders and members of co-operating military organizations, and the personnel of the LB allows cadets to get the best available training.

SUMMARY

It has been a steep learning curve for everybody involved in the process of re-establishing the traditions of the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Defence Academy. What has impressed the author is the desire of officer candidates to learn and their thirst to absorb new knowledge.

However, we should not forget that this short period of time serves only to provide the fundamentals to support the new model of officer training.

Kulcsszavak: honvéd tisztjelölt, Ludovika Akadémia, hagyomány, kisalegység harcászata, vezetés

Keywords: officer cadet, Ludovica Academy, tradition, small unit tactics, leadership

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