



**Czech
Armed
Forces**



**42nd
Mechanised
Battalion**



**Military
Medical
Agency**



**Operation
Psychology
Department**

Czech Army Psychological Training for Foreign Operations

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Our inspiration



IAMPS 2019 motto:

- “The strength of an army is not in its weapons, its strength is in its people”

Sun Tzu, The Art of War:

- “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.
- If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat.
- If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”





Our starting points

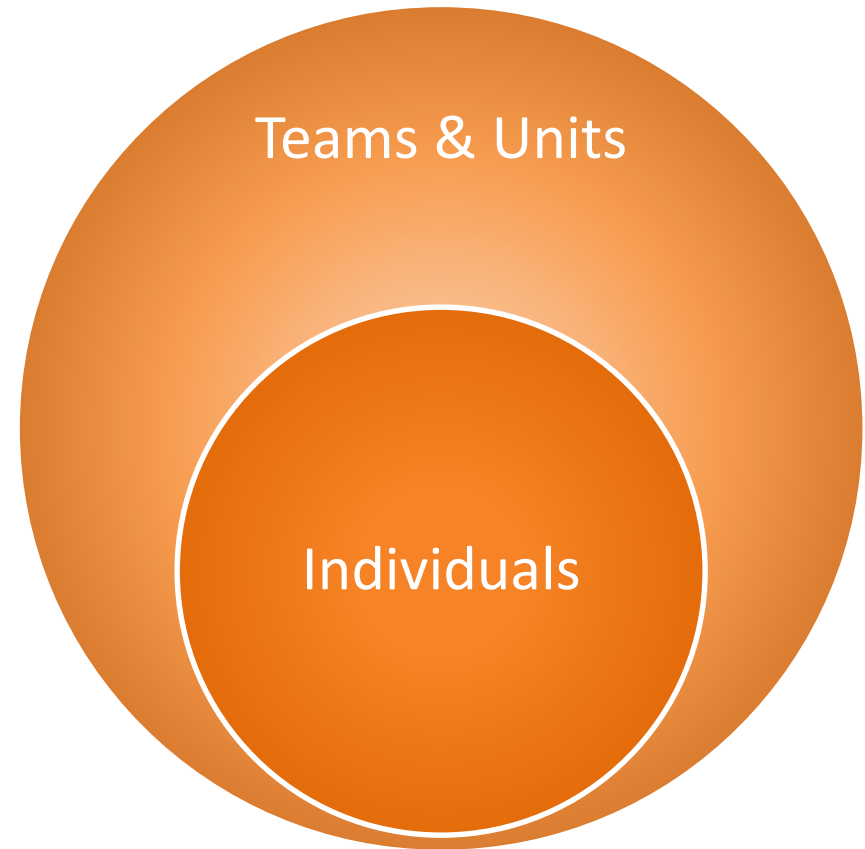
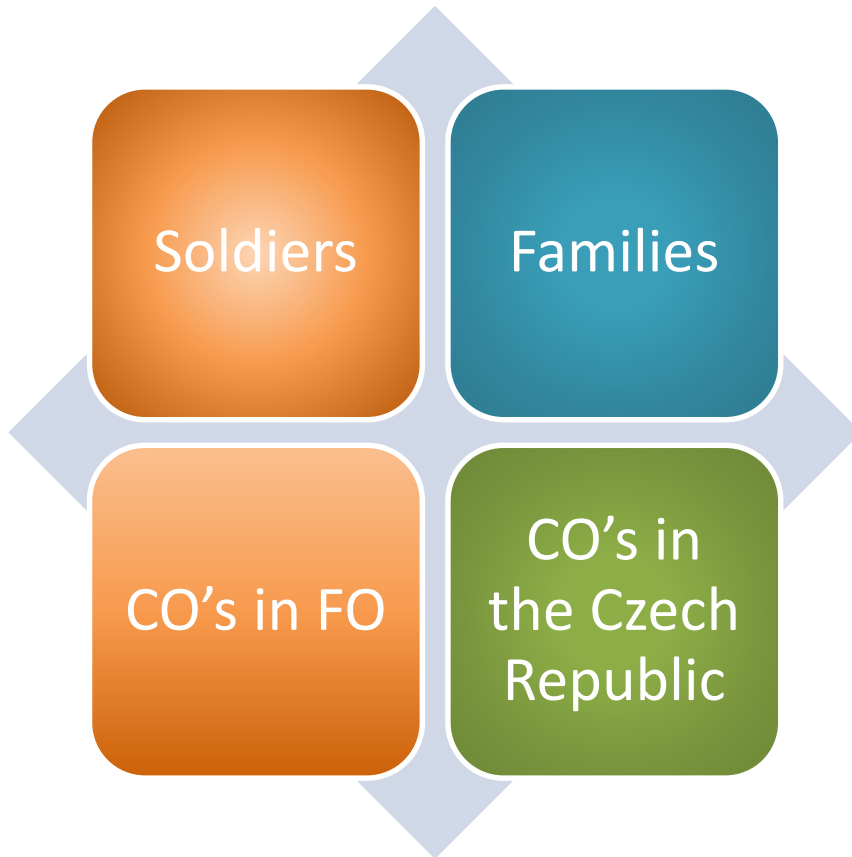


- Complex training for Foreign Operations (FO) of the Czech Army Forces (CAF) is a priority task of the Operation Psychology Dept.
- Successful action of a soldier in FO is conditioned by thorough training in the following areas:
 - Professional;
 - Physical;
 - **Mental.**
- Fundamental principle of the training is purposeful creation and recurrence of challenging situations and tasks.





Target groups





Our goals



Support resilience, endurance, and self-knowledge of the soldiers.

Foster soldiers' ability to withstand stressful and life threatening situations.

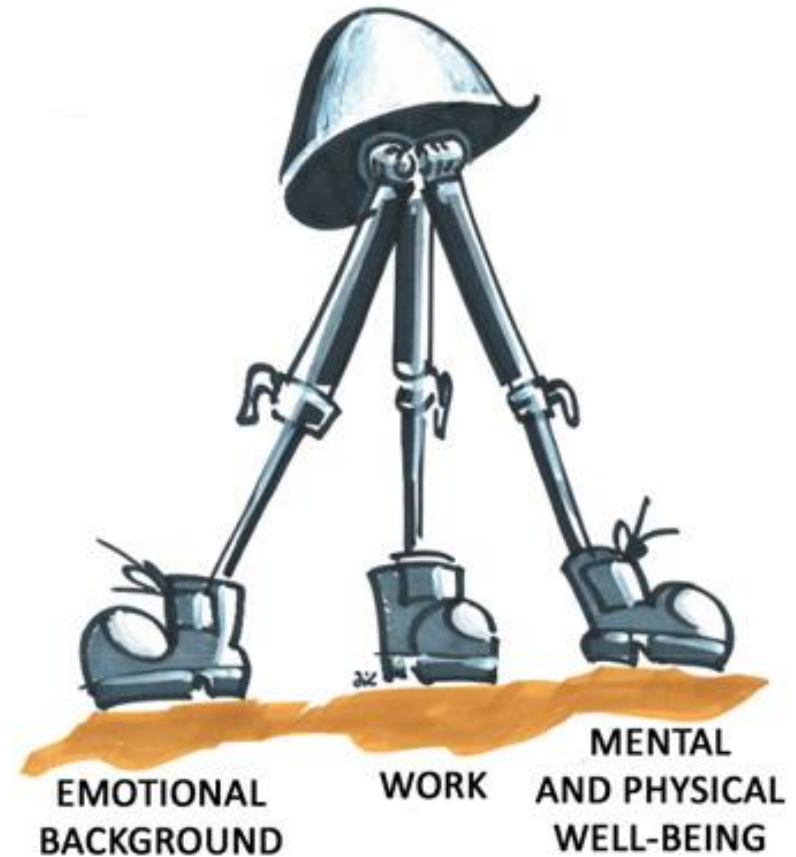
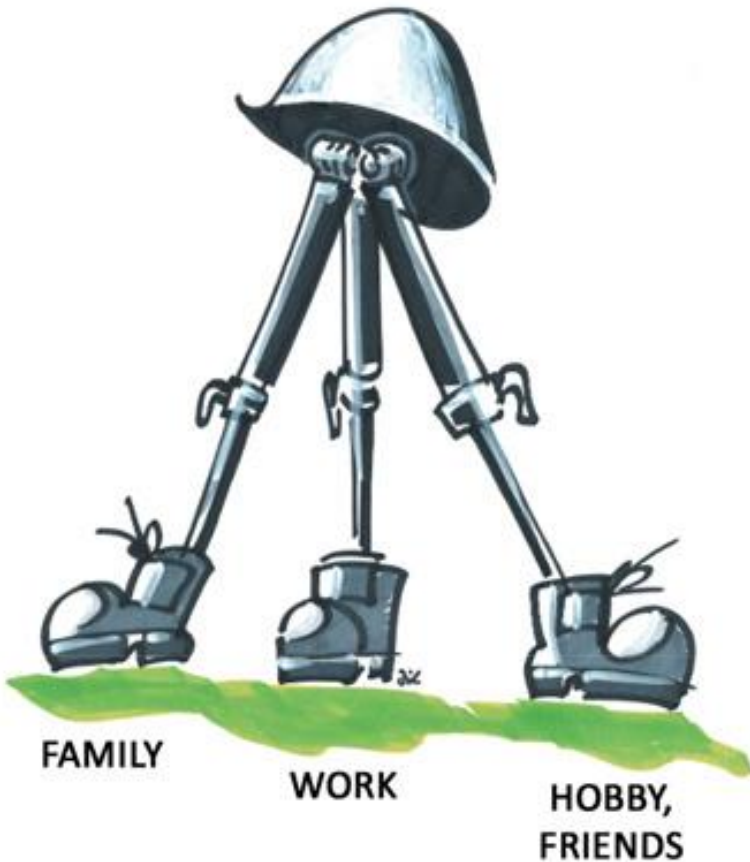
Develop communication and teamwork skills on individual and group level.

Minimize negative effects of FO on soldiers' mental health, wellbeing and their private relationships.

Prevention of the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

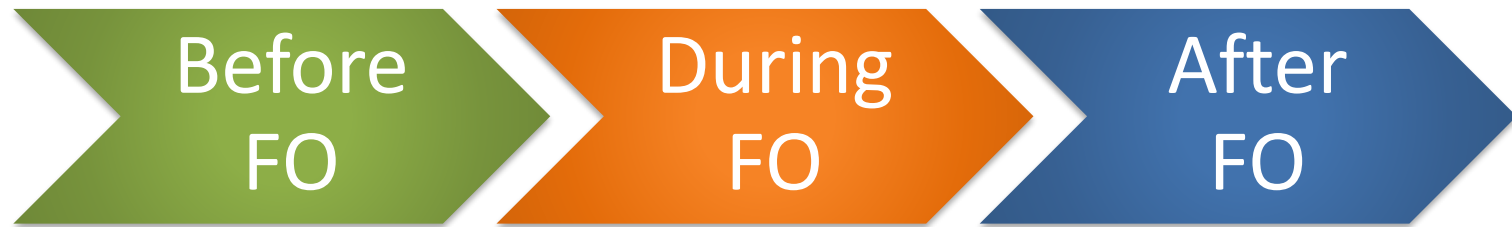


Our paradigm: Tripod of a life satisfaction





Phases of the psychological training (and support)



Psychologists accompany soldiers throughout the process in all phases.

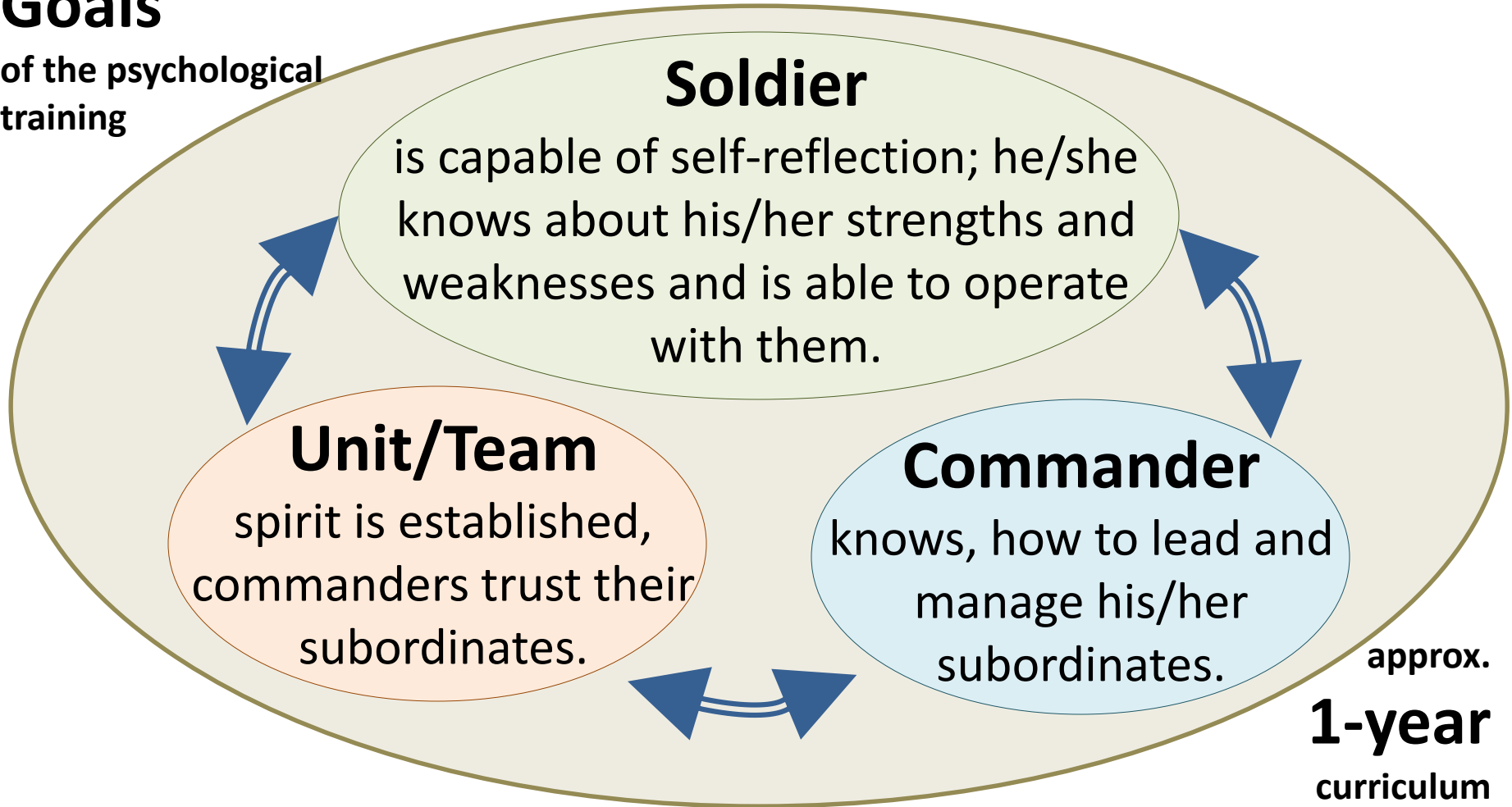


Phase 1: Before Foreign Operation



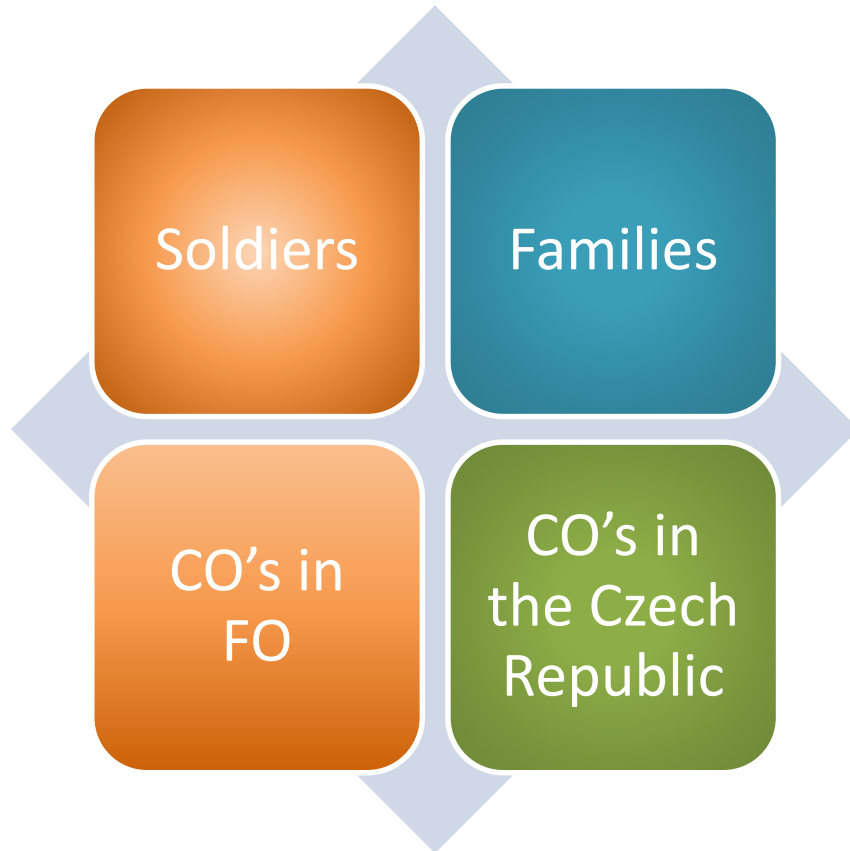
Goals

of the psychological training





Phase 1: Before Foreign Operation



- Psychologists serve predominantly as lecturers and consultants responsible for psychological curriculum.
- Commanders are responsible for planning, realization, and quality of the whole training (incl. psychological training).
- 1 to 2 psychologists per platoon (which consists of 20 to 30 soldiers)





Main themes of the psychological training





Elements of the psychological training



Facilitated interactive group discussions.

Practical training of psychological techniques.

Team-building and communication activities.

Observation during technical and tactical training.

Psychodiagnostics.

Individual, group, and peer to peer feedback.





Psychological training for commanders and military staff



Education in the area of leadership and managerial skills.

Self-experiencing training of the commanders.

Development of social skills.

Strengthening of interpersonal relationships among High Command, military staff and units (platoons) as well as improvement of ability to provide outspoken mutual feedback (commander-soldier, soldier-soldier).





Psychological training for families and mates



- Meeting for families and mates
 - “Long term family separation”
- Optional individual consultations provided by psychologist for family members and mates.
- Leaflet:
 - Recommendations and advice concerning long term family separation
 - Useful contacts (including psychologists’ phone numbers and e-mails)

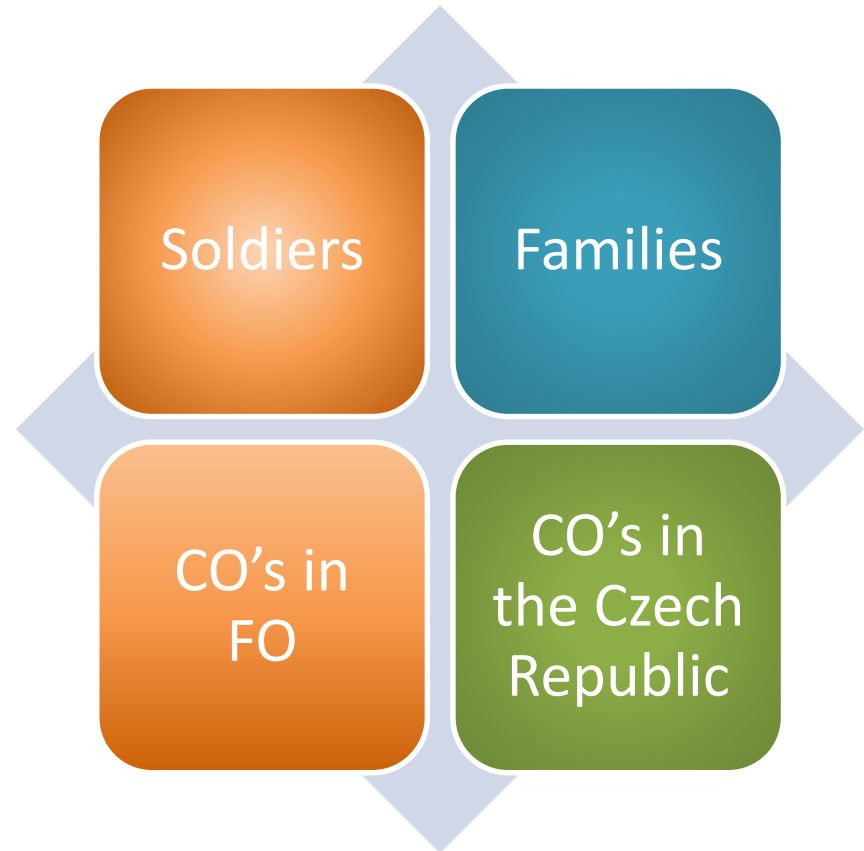




Phase 2: During Foreign Operation



- Goals:
 - Keep mental well-being on required level.
 - In case of a serious or tragic event to assure psychological support.
 - Soldiers
 - Families





Phase 2: During FO - ABROAD



- Duties of a psychologist:

Consultation

Education

Debriefing

Supporting cohesion of the unit

- Intervention team

- Consists of 2 or more psychologists.
- Arrives in case of need (e.g. crisis situation, serious or tragic event).





Phase 2: During FO – in the CZECH REP.



- Family support

Family meetings

Available psychological consultation

Accompany bereaved families

- Home unit support

- Notification of the serious or tragic event.

- SOP

- Psychologist is a member of the Notification Team.



Phase 3: After Foreign Operation



After arrival

- Health examination
- Psychological interview
 - PTSD
 - Mental condition

After 3 months

- Psychological interview
 - PTSD
 - reestablishment of the ordinary personal and working life.
- Conducted at soldiers' workplace.

After 6 months

- Psychological interview
 - PTSD
 - reestablishment of the ordinary personal and working life.
- Conducted at soldiers' workplace.





Discussion: Cons



- Many soldiers and CO's underestimate usefulness and benefits of the psychological training (until they get through it).
- Time consuming and human resource intensive.
- Fluctuation of the effectiveness of the observation during technical and tactical training (especially in difficult light conditions).





Discussion: Pros



- Acquired knowledge and skills are usable in FO's.
- New forms and types of training are more effective.
 - Pleasant (sometimes), interestingly.
 - Learning by doing, personal involvement, and self-experience vs. lecture and PowerPoint.
- Soldiers share personal experiences each other.
 - Kind of informal Lessons Learned.
- Active participation of majority of the soldiers.
 - Soldiers and CO's have option to chose priorities in the psychological training and suggest new topics.





Discussion: Pros (Cont.)



- Improvement of teamwork and cohesion of most units.
 - Positive effect of the interactive training and discussions.
- Improvement of communication between High Command and units.
- Soldier are interested in feedbacks provided by psychologists.
 - Feedbacks often changed to consultations on the private subjects.
- Families and mates better cope with separation if they know who to contact and if they feel supported.
- CO's are trained to be able to communicate serious and tragic events to families.





Lessons Learned



- It is necessary to prevent unnecessary psychological examinations.
- It is necessary to ensure close cooperation between psychologists and commanders when planning the field training.
 - Concerns training schedule and psychological content.
- Facilitated discussions during field training and feedbacks provided “safe place” to discuss openly private issues.
- “The best and the most effective psychological training is a thoughtfully organized and perfectly ensured military training.”





Thanks for your attention!

ANY QUESTIONS?