Are peacekeeping-missions inevitably stressful?

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Background

• What have we done and why

• What does our experience tell us

• Do we have the right basic assumptions?
Question

- Will perceived stress change across the deployment phases, if so in what direction.

- If there is a build-up of stress during deployment, will it affect cognition or stress hormones?

- Hypothesis: Stress will accumulate during deployment, resulting in increased perceived stress, higher levels of stress hormones, lower cognitive performance. (in contrast to our experience)
Method.

- 40 soldiers (guard and escort) from FS 26, ISAF Afghanistan. Control group of 20 soldiers from the Life Guard Regiment.
- Longitudinal design pre- T1, during- T2, and at homecoming T3. (control only T1 and T3)
- Tests:
  - Perceived Stress Scale PSS14
  - d2, Delta-R, Working- and Episodic memory.
  - Cortisol DHEAs (Dehydroepiandrosteron)
Results

- **PSS14**

![Bar chart showing results for T1, T2, and T3 with comparisons and distances marked.](chart.png)

- Neg $T1 - T2^* d = 0.61$
- $T1 - T2^* d = 0.46$
- $T2 - T3^* d = 0.11$
Results

• Cognitive performance.
  – No significant changes over time for any of the groups.
Results

• Biomarkers

![Bar chart showing cortisol and DHEAS levels with significant differences marked as DG Cortisol T1-T3* and no significant difference marked as DG – CG no sig.](image)
Discussion

- Hypothesis: not supported e.g. no “build up” of stress over time.
- Results is in the opposite direction – lower stress during deployment (also compared to CG)
- Anticipatory stress pre-deployment? no significant difference compared to “normal” levels CG.
- Possibly several stress mitigating factors at play, group cohesion, sense of control (in ones position) etc.
- Balance between hassles and uplifts.
- Take home message: more focus on positive factors (protective/rewarding)
Questions?