

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

FIELD TRAINING OF STUDENTS AT THE FACULTY OF MILITARY HEALTH SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF DEFENCE

Milan Ruzicka¹✉, Michal Potac¹, Jaroslav Zdara¹, Zbynek Suchanek¹, Petr Smola¹, Jana Vankova²

¹ Department of Military Medical Service Organization and Management, Faculty of Military Health Sciences Hradec Kralove, University of Defence, Czech Republic

² Language Centre, University of Defence, Czech Republic

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Summary

A new subject which is focused on the training of students in the conditions of combat operations of tactical units was accredited at the University of Defence (UD) in 2015. The subject was entitled Field training and it is aimed to teach students basic military skills during performing tactical operations at the squad-platoon level. The subject is intended for students of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years at all faculties of the UD, including the Faculty of Military Health Sciences, University of Defence in Hradec Kralove (FMHS UD). Training and drilling medical support, its organization and realization is a part of instructions and training of the FMHS UD students.

Key words: Faculty of Military Health Sciences; field training; study programs; University of Defence; teaching and training; squad and platoon tactics

INTRODUCTION

The basic premise of adjustments in the teaching and training content of the FMHS UD students in military-technical subjects was the modified view of the position and mission of the UD in the system of military education. Practice demanded higher quality knowledge and skills of the UD graduates particularly during performing combat tasks in the conditions of combat operations.

The Department of Military Medical Service Organization and Management (K-302) at the FMHS UD in Hradec Kralove was given a task to implement the above mentioned demands through preparing content and scheduling lessons and training. In 2015, the training in the 1st year of undergraduate studies was performed and afterwards it was analysed [1]. The teaching and training of the subject Field training were held in full extent in 2016 not only in the 1st year but also in the 2nd year of undergraduate studies at the FMHS UD. Newly, the subject also became a part of summer training in the 1st and the 2nd years of the Paramedic branch co-accredited with the University of Pardubice.

Content and time schedule of the subject Field training

The subject is divided into two parts. The part called "Field training I" is focused on acquiring fundamental military skills by students at the squad level and is intended for the 1st year students. The part called "Field training II" concentrates on acquiring, developing and improving military skills by students at the platoon level and is intended for the 2nd and the 3rd years' students of the FMHS UD.

✉ University of Defence, Faculty of Military Health Sciences, Department of Military Medical Service Organization and Management, Třebešská 1575, 500 01 Hradec Králové, Czech Republic

milan.ruzicka@unob.cz

+420 973 253 184

Field training I is covered with 107 lessons and includes a theoretical part (it comprises approximately 25% of the subject) and a practical part (which comprises approximately 75% of the subject). The subject combines individual and buddy team operations on the battlefield, squad tactics, engineering, communication and topography training, logistics, medical support and squad commander's activities during tactical planning and in the course of the battle procedure. The practical part is carried out in two four-day blocks of continuous military training in the Military Training Area Březina (MTA) with the following topics:

- Leading of the squad manoeuvre, the squad synergies, communication and combat signals
- Squad formations, combat drills and basic squad operations [Fig. 1]
- Movement of the squad in an unstable environment, orientation in the terrain
- Squad actions to overcome tactical obstacles and to take upon contact with the enemy
- Squad operations in a contaminated area
- Preparation and leading the squad attack after moving from the depth [Fig. 2]
- Squad attack from a direct contact
- Occupation and building a defensive position by the squad
- Combat tasks performed by the squad in defence focused on medical support [Fig. 3, 4]
- Survey, reconnaissance, occupation, building and securing the area of deployment out of combat
- Controlled exercise [1, 2]



Figure 1. Drilling a dismounted formation – chessboard



Figure 2. Drilling operations after dismounting from the vehicle



Figure 3. Drilling providing first aid in combat



Figure 4. Drilling clearing under the fire

In the 2nd year, Field training II is also covered with 107 lessons and includes a theoretical part (it comprises approximately 25% of the subject) and a practical part (which comprises approximately 75% of the subject). The subject as well as Field training I combines the above mentioned activities; some topics are extended and deepened. The practical part deals with development and building of knowledge and skills acquired in the 1st year. Development of students' skills to prepare selected practical topics of the training on their own was emphasized as well as leading it as an assigned commander of the particular activity ("a student teaches a student" method).

The practical part is, similarly as in the 1st year, divided into two four-day blocks of continuous military training in the MTA Březina and the following topics are practised:

- Basic tactical drills up to the platoon level
- Leading the training by a commander
- Platoon attack [Fig. 5]
- Platoon defence
- Other tactical platoon operations
- Principles of operation in dangerous and contaminated areas
- Movement in the conditions of a foreign operation [Fig. 6]
- Location of the platoon out of combat
- Medical support at the squad-platoon level [Fig. 7, 8]
- Controlled exercise [2, 3]



Figure 5. Drilling unit operations during the attack



Figure 6. The vehicles convoy under the fire



Figure 7. Drilling recovery of the vehicle crew



Figure 8. Drilling MEDEVAC

In both years after mastering tactical operations on the battlefield, the attention is paid to the medical support at the squad and platoon level with the focus on the position and role of soldiers with the second specialization of Combat Life Saver (CLS), on specifics of recovering crew from combat vehicles (AFV-2, PANDUR 8x8, IVECO and DINGO) and on principles of Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) and its three phases.

The other part of the subject Field training II will be held in the 3rd year in 2017 in a scheduled extent of 94 lessons. The subject will be a follow up to the already existing and functioning training model, which has been carrying out at the FMHS UD since 2008 but with a different name. The theoretical part of the subject will be focused on the tactics at the battalion level and together with the subject Organization and tactics of medical service will explain to students the position and mission of the battalion chief of medical service during planning and leading combat by the battalion. The practical part will deal with practical training with medical equipment (POP-2, LR-130 Zdrav), admission and casualty triage or mass casualty admission.

Analysis of teaching and training the 1st and the 2nd years' students in 2016

Upon completion of the training, the anonymous survey questionnaire was carried out. Students of the 1st and the 2nd years of Master's degree studies of General Medicine, Military Stomatology and Military Pharmacy of the FMHS UD, students of the 1st and the 2nd years of Bachelor's degree Paramedic study programme co-accredited with the University of Pardubice and students of the 1st and the 2nd years of the Military Branch of the Department of Military Physical Education at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Charles University in Prague participated in the survey. The students were asked the following four questions:

1. Did the training meet your expectations? Give a reason.
2. What was the most important for you in the training? What intrigued you, what was a benefit?
3. What would you still need to explain or need to get more practice in?
4. What changes would you propose for next time? What did you miss? (Write comments on teachers' work, the content, methods, organization of work, material conditions, etc.)

Survey results in the 1st year

Motto

"I glanced through a soldier's life (just through a little slit but at least a bit)."

a male student of the 1st year

32 respondents participated in the survey, response rate was 94%.

Question number 1:

• 26 respondents (81%) stated the training met their expectations, 1 respondent (3%) was satisfied partially, 5 respondents (15%) stated the training did not meet their expectations. The respondents, who stated that the training met their expectations, particularly pointed out variety of the training, its optimal intensity and usability of acquired skills in their future military practice. The respondents whose expectations were not met can be divided into two groups. 3 respondents out of the group were not satisfied with little physical load or the lack of medical training, 2 respondents based their responses on their negative experience from the previous basic training which means their expectations were not met as their expectations were negative and in fact, they were surprised positively. Generally, it is possible to say the same as last year [1], the training was a pleasant surprise for the respondents as a downright negative reaction was not reported.

Question number 2:

• It was no surprise that 22 respondents (69%) stated practical training of TCCC and recovery from combat vehicles as the most significant, 18 respondents (56%) positively assessed practical training with combat vehicles, 10 respondents (31%) appreciated the opportunity to command the squad and tactical operations training.

Question number 3:

- 11 respondents (34%) would appreciate to practice tactical operations on the battlefield with tactical aspect more, 9 respondents (28%) would prefer more emphasis on training every single TCCC phase, the same number of respondents would need to practice the squad leadership and making combat orders and reports more. Some of the students pointed out the option to extend the training for more than 8 days.

Question number 4:

- 22 respondents (69%) appreciated work of lecturers and training instructors as excellent. Instructors' professionalism, patience and enthusiasm were positively assessed. 9 respondents (28%) demanded better material and arms equipment. Particularly malfunctioning weapons and incomplete ballistic protection were accepted in a negative way. Some of the students would appreciate more physical and particularly mental load.

Survey results in the 2nd year

Motto

"Training leading an activity as an assigned commander was beneficial. I really liked it. You could better conceive the operation as a whole and could be better aware of mistakes."

a female student of the 2nd year

37 respondents participated in the survey, response rate was 97%.

Question number 1:

- 30 respondents (83%) stated the training met their expectations, 3 respondents (8%) were satisfied partially, 3 respondents (8%) stated the training did not meet their expectations. 16 respondents (44%) claimed the training was partially the 1st year revision which was assessed rather positively, nevertheless they expected more new topics. On the other hand, 6 respondents (17%) appreciated right the new topics. Some of the students praised the opportunity to prepare some of the taught topics theoretically and then practised it as an assigned commander.

Question number 2:

- 17 respondents (47%) stated the training with combat vehicles as the most interesting, both training tactical operations and casualty recovery. 11 respondents (31%) emphasized that a significant benefit for them was the training with instructors, who were a good example for the students with their experience and attitude. 7 respondents (19%) stated the opportunity to try to conduct the training and fulfil the squad commander's tasks on their own was the most significant for them.

Question number 3:

- 9 respondents (25%) would need to practice TCCC more. Surprisingly, 7 respondents (19%) would appreciate more shooting practice and leadership of live firing from small arms. Some of the students would prefer more tactical operations, more commands technique training or operations during movement on vehicles. Other respondents stated they have been taught all necessary knowledge and they do not need to practice it more.

Question number 4:

- 15 respondents (42%) appreciated work of lecturers and training instructors as excellent. 5 respondents (14%) suggest including also live firing from small arms. Some of the students proposed to separate the training from the students of the Department of Military Physical Education as they are not sufficiently motivated for the training. Quality of food received definitely the worst assessment.

CONCLUSION

For its content and conception, teaching and training in the subject Field training belongs to new challenges how to prepare not only the FMHS UD students for their future military practice in the best way. For K-302 members, the students' opinions given in the anonymous survey questionnaires are a valuable source of information how to improve the quality of teaching and training not only in the above mentioned subject.

Practice recommendations

- to explain to students content of the subject Field training as it is still confused with the subject Organization and tactics of medical service, which is scheduled in the 3rd year of undergraduate studies at the FMHS UD; medical training is the ground of the subject;
- to ensure training of the 2nd year students in first aid and CLS techniques in cooperation with the Department of Emergency Medicine and General Medicine at the FMHS UD so that all three TCCC phases could be fully practised in the continuous military training in the MTA Březina;
- to schedule more activities focused on live firing from small arms in the subject Applied military technology in cooperation with K-201 of the Faculty of Military Technology;
- to optimize given topics in the 2nd year training in order to ensure more students' self-activity and their engagement in the training;
- to continue cooperation with the training instructors, members of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade and the 7th Mechanized Brigade on the position of the squad commander in order to ensure maximum interconnection between theory and current practical knowledge and skills;

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