

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE AND THE SLOVAK ARMED FORCES

Jaroslav NEKORANEC*
Eva RÉVAYOVÁ**

*Department of Management, Armed Forces Academy of General M. R. Štefánik Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia

**Department of Social Studies and Languages,
Armed Forces Academy of General M. R. Štefánik Liptovský Mikuláš,
Slovakia

Human resource management is an important area of strategic management of the organization which focuses on everything that concerns people. The main role of human resource management is to contribute to organizational performance and its continuous improvement. In order to fulfill the aims and objectives of the organization, it is necessary that organization top management has a clear-cut view of human resource management strategies that would work in practice. One of the most important and most challenging aspects of human resource management can be applied also in organizations characterized by specific features such as the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.

Key words: *human resource management, personnel strategy, career of professional soldier.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to M. Armstrong, human resource management is defined as a logical and strategic approach to managing the most valuable of what organizations have - people who work in the organization and who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of organizational goals. Human resource management can be regarded as „a set of interrelated policies emanating from a certain ideology and philosophy”. [1]

We can boldly state that the previous definition should be applied by the top management of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (AF of OS). The mission of the Armed Forces is to defend and protect the territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic as well as to provide assistance to population in case of various natural disasters.

Since its creation in 1993 and throughout its relatively short history the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic have passed through multiple transformations that have affected particular organizational and rank structure as well as the number of its personnel. An important and significant step in terms of human resource management was the complete professionalization. It was the factor that necessitated a new approach in the implementation of HR policy and strategy. In terms of the Armed Forces' role, the personnel tasks are expressed in various doctrines such as the Strategy of Defense, or the Personnel management Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.

An important document in the field of human resource management is the “Act. 346/2005 Coll. on the state service of professional soldiers of the

Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and amendments to certain laws” that came into force on September 1st, 2005. Different parts of this Act have been developed in accordance with the different stages of management regulations of the Armed Forces.

Since the beginning of the transition process several documents describing the direction the Armed Forces should proceed and the targets that should be achieved in each year have been issued. These documents are interlinked and in practice we describe them with the term model. Since the beginning of the Armed Forces reorganization the following three models were created.

The 2010 Model was first promulgated in 2001 under the name of The Long-term Plan of the Structure and Development of the Armed Forces. The aim of the Armed Forces development was the transformation of the Army of the Slovak Republic to a relatively small, but high quality force, adequately equipped and well-trained.

The 2015 Model, fully titled “Long-term Development Plan of the Ministry of Defense with perspective to 2015”, valid in the Armed Forces even today, determined to assure the operation, and development of the Armed Forces. There are also crucial factors limiting the defense resource that consist of human, material, and financial resource. The size of available resource proportionally influences quality and quantity of tasks and measures ensuring the defense of the Slovak Republic.

The 2020 Model, the latest one, is due to be implemented in the Armed Forces as of the 1st January 2013. Responsible executives of the Armed Forces planned to retain structure of funds distribution, assigned to the Ministry of Defense, as follows: 80 % to operations and 20 % to investment and modernization.

Each of these models demands recruiting new professional soldiers and overall improvement of the Armed Forces.

At the end of the introduction, it must be noted that the structure of models of the Armed Forces, as declared, is particularly affected by the political and economic factors. Therefore, many plans have not been implemented yet, for instance in the area of technology modernization. Some progress has been achieved in the field of social security which was amended by Act no. 328/2002 on the social security of policemen and soldiers. Current problems of the Armed Forces are expressed in The White Paper on Defense of the Slovak Republic. It focuses on the strategic defense review and future trends in the area of the human resource management. As the actual state shows, in the field of human resource management of the Armed Forces it is necessary to adopt a new personnel strategy that will result in the adoption of a new act on military service. Due to several regulations of the proposed law on military service of professional soldiers the military profession is declared as lifelong vocation. In addition to the new structure of the Armed Forces, it will be necessary to stabilize staff through motivational tools attracting the younger generation to the Armed Forces.

2. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, ITS THEORETICAL BASICS AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The objective of HR management in the Armed Forces is highly qualified and learned professional force soldiers who should be considered the most valuable asset of the armed forces. That is why, it is necessary to make the changes maintaining such military staff in stabilized personnel environment.

The strategy of developing future capabilities of the Armed Forces should result from a combination of reasonable military requirements to ensure the performance of the entire spectrum

of task forces and a realistic view the country's possibilities within the next 10 to 12 years (White Paper).

In the case of HR strategy development in the Armed Forces, it is necessary to clarify some basic theoretical assumptions.

The word 'strategy' is derived from the Greek word *strategos* (general) and originally it referred to the broader context of the art and science of how to manage military operations and how to command the troops. Throughout the 20th century the term 'strategy' has been transferred from the military environment into the business world and has become its integral part. In management theory and practice the strategy is mainly understood as the series of long-term decisions and strategic goals the organization should attain and the intended methods to achieve these objectives. Strategic management is an approach that is applied when setting and changing the strategic objectives and determining how to achieve them. It can be seen as a process that consists of formulating visions, philosophy, missions, objectives, organization, analyzing external and internal environment of the organization, choosing a suitable strategy to achieve strategic objectives, designing organizational changes, administrative measures and control system to implement the strategy.

Strategic management is characterized by the following features:

- In general, the future is uncertain. Distant future will be much more difficult to predict. Consequently, it is necessary to prepare for different scenarios and that might disrupt any developments, unexpected changes and developmental reversals.

- In this context, it is necessary to pay constant attention to the development of adaptive capabilities of the organization.

- Achieving long term targets is a more risk prone attempt than the process of achieving close, tactical and operational objectives.

- The effects of strategic decisions are

of long-term nature and directly contribute to the organization's ability to remain outdoors.

- Achieving the strategic goals requires greater coordination efforts and continuous monitoring of the situation.

- Strategic decisions are related to risks.

The Development Strategy of Armed Forces depends on the strategy of human resource. Therefore, let us take a closer look to its general definition. "The strategy of HR management is making decisions on the intentions and plans of the organization concerning the human resource - the nature of their employment, strategy, policies and practices of acquisition, staff training and development, performance management, remuneration and labor relations." [5]

"HR strategy is one of the sub-strategies of the organization, expresses the organization intentions for the future, long-term and comprehensive aim of the company (linked with the other goals of the organization) to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals." (4)

Content of those definitions is also valid in terms of the Armed Forces, taking into account their specific activity. This means that the main objective of the Armed Forces is to ensure tenability of the country.

The question of demands for strategic human resource management is important. Strategic human resource management has the following characteristics:

- Strong, visionary organization leadership - (linked to the Armed Forces personnel planning activity and including awareness of current state, goals to be achieved and how to achieve them);

- Well formulated mission and attributes (Armed Forces are commissioned for the country's defense and the values being recognized are: patriotism, discipline, high education level of staff, etc.);

- Clearly expressed strategy of organization - (maintenance of combat readiness of armed forces, well-trained personnel preceded by proper initial selection and continuous motivation);

- Coherent team of organization top

management - (plays a crucial role in the strategic decision within SR AF);

- Active approach of human resource managers to solve problems of the organization - (the active involvement and responsibility of the individual levels of armed forces management for the personnel area);

- Awareness of the importance of the human factor as one of the key factors of success (an army that consists of uneducated and ill-trained soldiers is inoperable).

A comprehensive HR strategy is formed to enforce changes in the organization as a whole in order to redirect thinking and attributes of the organization and change its culture, to establish the principles and practices of knowledgeable management and develop an organizational culture that is beneficial to high performance, commitment, and trust.

Specific HR strategies are focused on different areas of HR management and designed to determine or change established practices and methods to implement the personnel actions. In the Armed Forces practice they are mainly represented by:

- the strategy of military personnel planning;
- the strategy of military personnel selection and replenishment;
- the strategy for training and development of professional soldiers,
- the remuneration policy of professional soldiers;
- the strategy of official (occupational) relationships, etc.

Well-formulated, stable, understandable and fair personnel policies are essential for the strategic success of organizations.

“Personnel policy is the best and most general tool for carrying out personnel strategy. It can take different forms. It may be an internal document of the organization or just uttered and then more or less rigorously daily upheld and enforced in practice. Anyhow, personnel policy contains certain principles, rules,

emphases and preferences related to the management and development of HR. They serve to create favorable conditions for the application and development of HR (manpower) and a uniform framework for managers to optimize staffing, employee issues and solutions for shaping the employment relations in the organization.” [3]

The overall organization of personnel policy usually integrates many sub HR policies - employment policy, remuneration, personnel training, education and human resource development, increasing human potential, promotion and career development, employment security policy, health policy, social policy, equal opportunities or more.

The starting point for the creation of personnel policies of the organization may consist of the following principles:

- The principle of the importance of human resource - professional servicemen are, according to the current high demands required placed upon the Armed Forces and its technological advancement, considered a significant source.

- The principle of seriousness – this is to be enacted by professional soldiers who need to meet high requirements, both in case of their capabilities and service deployment, as well as professional growth and loyalty and devotion to Armed Forces.

- The principle of accommodating - Armed Forces respect both group and individual needs, requirements and interests of professional soldiers that are consistent with the attributes, customs, norms, interests and intentions of the Armed Forces.

- The principle of justice - the Armed Forces must exercise appropriately all rules of law, and provide all personnel with the same opportunity.

- The principle of openness - when dealing and communicating with professional soldiers all management tiers must apply open, clear, and responsible access. This principle cannot be applied to confidential information.

- The principle of fairness - in the relations and contacts between professional soldiers and their superiors must be polite, tactful negotiation is mandatory and should be based on the principles of constructive cooperation, understanding of the issues and open style.

The prerequisites for the preparation and formulation of HR Strategy in the Armed Forces respecting current external conditions (in a broader scope) that affect the overall management of human resource are:

- Development of new technologies and changes in warfare technology (it affects the nature and content of work and requirements for training and qualifications of professional soldiers);

- Economic conditions (business cycle affecting the employment);

- Government policy and legislation related to the Armed Forces;

- Education and qualifications structure of population (these are particular potential applicants for service in the Armed Forces);

- Social and cultural influences, (e.g. female employment in the Armed Forces);

- Demographic effects (population, demographic composition of the workforce, level of education, age, gender, migration, etc.);

- The current situation in the labor market (wage levels and employee benefits);

- Value orientation (professional orientation, social needs, etc.)

External conditions of HR management are constantly changing. Many of these impacts are evolving slowly (composition of the workforce); others show rather rapid changes (new laws). Some of the external conditions affect the organization internally in different ways such as:

- The nature of the organization's activities - Armed Forces;

- Size of the organization - the number of the Armed Forces personnel and the organizational structure;

- Economic situation - funds earmarked for defense, technical and technological equipment;

- Social, professional and qualification structure of the Armed Forces,

- Organizational culture – it results from the specific activities of the Armed Forces, etc.

The status of personnel management in the Armed Forces and the implementation of HR strategies and policies depends on the stance of senior management of Ministry of Defense, the management position in the hierarchy of the Armed Forces, the kind of policy in the field of personnel (in the broadest sense the people management policy) the organization applies. The HR management and the resulting staffing strategy and policy are also influenced by the individual managers - commanders of the Armed Forces units and equipment as well as professional level HR professionals in various structural levels of the Armed Forces.

3. HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION WITHIN THE SLOVAK ARMED FORCES

How many professional soldiers are to be taken in and what attributes will be of the greatest importance should be planned in advance. Therefore, in terms of the Armed Forces, necessary planning is conducted to ensure efficient selection of professional soldiers. It must be based on a fixed personnel strategy and the goals of the organization and it should comply with the mission and vision of the organization.

The processing of personnel strategy and personnel planning in the Armed Forces are performed by two branches:

1. The Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter the Ministry of Defense);

2. The General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter GS SR OS).

The Ministry of Defense is internally

divided into a number of basic branches among which the personnel policies and personnel planning forefront component is called Section of Defense Policy, International Relations and Legislation. The above section deals with the activities related to the activities of the HR policy, remuneration policy, social and housing policy, education including foreign language education and top sport, as well as sending the Armed Forces personnel forth to the operations and missions outside the territory of the Slovak Republic.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces is internally divided into many departments among which the Department of Operations Support has the important position in personnel policies and planning. This Department itself is divided into three sections. Out of these, the prominent position in personnel management takes the Section of personnel management. The Section of Personnel Management is divided into four subsections that are: staff planning, integration programs, staff improvement, and staff support. Of those subsections the implementation of activities in the field of HR strategy and personnel planning in the Armed Forces involves mainly the Staff Planning Subsection that in particular provides the following services:

- Develops policies and concepts of human resource according to the conditions of the Armed Forces and ensures their implementation in relation to professional servicemen and employees carrying out works in the public interest;
- Handles internal normative acts, standards and regulations for the implementation of personnel and social policy and human resource management in relation to professional soldiers, to employees carrying out work in the public interest in the Armed Forces;
- Makes out the services table of units and facilities in the Armed Forces;
- Supervises personnel management

activities in all its areas;

- Processes documents for systematic arrangement of ranks based upon the approved internal organizational classification of departments, units, offices and equipment of Armed Forces;
- Processes the proposal for system arrangement of posts for professional servicemen in the scope of the Armed Forces and the head of the Ministry Staff, processes system arrangement proposal to temporarily set aside professional servicemen and ensures adherence to limits of ranks according to the above system arrangements;
- Manages the overall limits on the number of professional soldiers by kind of the armed forces, military specialties and ranks, sets limits for personnel replenishment;
- Evaluates the state of preparedness of personnel as a part of operational readiness of units;
- Plans and manages replenishment and deployment of the Armed Forces and so on.

The process of designing recruitment strategies and personnel planning culminates in the elaboration of the staffing plan that identifies the need for a given number of professional soldiers to be recruited and selected for the Armed Forces. Therefore, the personnel planning is followed by continuous recruitment and replenishment, the requirements of which are generated by personnel planning applied in practice.

The recruiting strategy of SR AF is based upon the search of future professional servicemen among high school, college and university students. The situation on the national labor market as well as the number of high schools and universities allows replenishing numbers of professional servicemen with the required education.

The recruitment and selection of new professional soldiers are ensured by the Personnel Office that is subordinated to the General Staff of the Armed Forces and is located on the premises of the Academy of the Armed Forces

of Gen. M. R. Stefanik in Liptovsky Mikulas. In order that those activities may be ensured it has eight subordinate Personnel Recruitment Groups being known in the past as Recruiting Centers. They are located in regional cities and their current deployment is as follows: Bratislava, Trenčín, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Žilina, Trnava, Prešov and Košice. The Personnel Recruitment Groups work according to the plan and carry out their main task in contacting qualified citizens so that the required number and the necessarily skilled personnel is acquired.

All potential soldiers selected to join the Armed Forces undergo, after passing the selection procedure, vocational training, the length of which depends on the future profession. In compliance with strict selection criteria recruiters should sign a three-year contract for operations in the Armed Forces. After the expiry of the three years the less adequate soldiers are released from the Armed Forces and their places are taken up by newly recruited ones. Those that met requirements shall be submitted the proposal to conclude a new contract.

In order that the Armed Forces procure enough applicants for service of professional soldier and thus maintain the desired stabilized composition of the professional servicemen staff it is necessary to implement ongoing personnel marketing.

Career development of professional servicemen depends on each military specialization that provides in each rank several models of business careers.

4. PROBLEMS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE SLOVAK ARMED FORCES

The system of personnel management in the Armed Forces has undergone since its inception several changes that

have both positively and, more often than not, negatively impacted upon the implementation of HR strategies and policies. Adoption of several laws affecting civil service of professional soldiers (Act 346/2005 Coll.), as well as the Social Security Act of policemen and soldiers (Act 328/2002 Coll.) has played an important role.

Original law on civil service of professional soldiers (Act 346/2005 Coll.) was modified and successive unsystematic changes were made to the detriment of the system. The proposed amendments have not been fully accepted and largely withdrawn on the grounds of great voluminousness. The implementation of HR strategies and policies, as well as the entire system of HR management in the Slovak Armed Forces is determined by financial limits which significantly affects the ability of replenishment of the structures of the armed forces, as well as the actual personnel numbers of the Armed Forces. As a result, the "paid numbers", or the filled positions, must be monitored and compared with the required numbers set in the tables included in the planning documents of the Armed Forces.

In addition to these aspects, there other negative phenomena affecting HR management appeared. The Armed Forces continuously lose positions on the labor market which means a loss of competitiveness of the military occupation compared to civilian labor market.

This fact is influenced by several factors, such as:

- Constant organizational change;
- Unstable legislation, making the whole system unstable;
- Fluctuating costs of the defense means, etc.

Another negative aspect may be the disillusionment of the new recruits upon their arrival into the military unit, when because of financial options and constraints, they cannot fulfill those tasks they were recruited for.

In terms of the SR AF, the positions that normally on the civilian labor market are several times more reimbursed than in the military cannot be occupied. Wage increases in the armed forces ceased to copy wage increases in plainclothes life and the benefits provided by the armed forces are by far exceeded in the civilian sector by many employers.

Uncertainty in the social security of professional servicemen also negatively impacts those interested in the military service and still encourages release upon servicemen's request. Aging staff creates conditions for increasing the number of soldiers dismissed due to obligatory reasons.

For these and other reasons changes in the area of personnel strategy, as well as in the whole HR management of the Armed Forces are mandatory and they should focus on making amendments focused on:

- Development and Stabilization of the personnel environment by changing the military profession of qualified key personnel to life time employment and by stabilizing the social security of troopers;

- Selection of alternative forms of personnel replenishment (active reserves, short-term contract or voluntary military service) [2];

- Introduction of the institution of temporary civil service which guarantees an adequate turnover at squad and platoon level;

- The introduction of permanent civil service for professional servicemen, guaranteeing long-term retention of higher military commanders at the operational and strategic level;

- Remuneration system - strengthening the motivating factors to increase the attractiveness of contracts, as well as maintaining a selected group of military experts in active service throughout the duration of their career;

- Education - Armed Forces Academy of General M. R. Štefánik must develop a quality entry of military education and military training of future military professionals and then to ensure their

systemic training during their military career including the improvement of their language skills.

All of the above can be developed and ensured provided that the allocation of adequate financial resource meets the demands set out in the strategic documents of the Armed Forces.

5. CONCLUSION

The development of HR management within the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic requires an elaborated and high quality HR strategy. This can be achieved determined by adoption of new laws related to civil service and professional soldiers, and the amendment of the Act on Social Security. The objective of human potential development in the defense sector is to stabilize top, skilled professional servicemen, to maintain adequate social conditions, to improve the system of basic training and career education and to enhance the effectiveness of the Armed Forces as well as professional erudition of civilian employees in the security, defense and military affairs.

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