
COMBAT READINESS AS A FUNCTION OF MANNING, EQUIPPING AND TRAINING THE FORCES

Stoyan Stamatov

Defense Advanced Research Institute of G. S. Rakovski National Defense College,
Sofia, Bulgaria, spstamatov@gmail.com

Abstract: Building and maintaining adequate military capabilities and high combat readiness for the Armed Forces, as well as mobilization readiness for timely increase to wartime tables with reserve forces continue to be central to achieving defense and security goals. There is a strong interdependence between combat readiness and the system of manning, equipping, and training the Armed Forces. They all depend on the organizational structure, table of organization and equipment, and the level of training of personnel from active units and those from the Reserve in peace time.

Combat Readiness is a certain state of the Armed Forces that determines the degree of training, manning, and equipping the headquarters, staffs, and troops that guarantee their adequate response to crises of a different character. Combat readiness is the real factor that exemplifies Armed Force's preparedness to respond to every critical situation in a timely manner.

The content of levels of combat readiness determines the level of preparedness of the military units to perform their duties at a certain point in time.

There are certain states of combat readiness that have been adopted by NATO. Nevertheless, the lowest state of readiness usually represents the current/day-to-day status of military units and is usually called a "permanent" level of combat readiness. The highest level of readiness is supposed to answer the demands of readiness for immediate execution of battle actions, and it is perceived in most armies to be called "full" combat readiness.

In order to optimize the overall process of activating military units to a higher level of combat or mobilization readiness, it is necessary to look for this in peacetime. It mainly concerns building a system of control and evaluation of the individual components of combat readiness and mobilization, and identifying measures for their improvement.

Military HQs and formations are regularly evaluated to prove their operational capabilities to meet NATO standards in conducting military operations. Therefore the use of CREVAL– Combat Readiness Evaluation programs ensures the necessary operational capabilities and interoperability with allied units in multinational allied operations.

Depending on the level of manning, arming, equipping and training military units are classified into different categories in ascending order. The smaller the category is, the higher the operational readiness of the military units is and vice versa, the higher the category is, the longer the mobilization period takes place, and the longer the time to reach operational readiness is. This further requires effective integration and use of the reserve staffs and the reserve forces' units to enhance the capabilities of regular forces in the wide range of the expected operations described by the NATO policy documents.

Keywords: Combat readiness, mobilization, manning, equipping and training.

INTRODUCTION

NATO's strategic concept reflects a broad perspective of stability and security, based on the political, economic and social factors of the geopolitical environment. Most importantly this concept defines the necessity for a dialogue and cooperation toward crisis resolution. These arguments in turn, do not deny but raise the importance of the defense dimension of security. It remains a constant necessity and contributes to maintaining security and stability in the world. The Alliance realizes the role and the importance of the development of the reserve forces. This may be directly derived from the NATO's strategic concept and especially from NATO's three core tasks: collective defense, crisis management and co-operative security. Given the assumed requirement for different NATO forces to have different levels of readiness, it has become particularly important for the reserve forces to engage in individual or collective exercises to acquire the necessary quality of training for supporting the Alliance to achieve the intended operational goals.

There is a strong interdependence between combat readiness the system of manning and mobilization of the Armed Forces. They all depend on:

- Organizational structure of the Armed Forces;
- Table of Organization and Equipment of the units within the Armed Forces;
- Distribution of branches in different services;

- Degree of training and qualification of the active personnel and the reservists in peace time;
- Duration of military service for different categories of military personnel and;
- Duration of military service in the Reserves.

Combat Readiness is a certain state of the Armed Forces that determines the degree of training, manning, and equipping the headquarters, staffs, and troops that guarantee their adequate response to crises of a different character. Combat readiness is the real factor that exemplifies Armed Force's preparedness to respond to every critical situation in a timely manner, i.e.:

- In a state of emergency, i.e. in peace time crisis escalation when there is a need for the active forces to execute military tasks with their permanent manning described in the peacetime Table of Organization and Equipment (TOE) without mobilization of troops and resources;
- By declaring mobilization, when the Armed Forces are transferred from peacetime to wartime status. Then there will be a need to train, man, and equip the forces to wartime TOE, and acquire necessary operational capabilities to perform battle tasks.

Combat readiness has a complex character. There is a strong bond between its most important components which in its turn establishes a certain system (Василев, 1990). The core components of the combat readiness are:

1. Manning and equipping the forces;
2. Developing and meeting the demands of wartime TOEs that correspond to missions and tasks of the forces. Establishing a balanced ratio between services and branches according to national goals;
3. Planning and organization of events in maintaining permanent readiness, and in cases when there is a necessity of raising the state of readiness;
4. Acquisition and maintenance of weapons and equipment during the time of the permanent state of combat readiness;
5. Seeing to comprehensive logistics, material and medical support of the units, as well as their balanced echeloning, maintenance, distribution and storage;
6. Training the headquarters, staffs, troops and enhancement of their field experience;
7. Nurturing and maintaining the morale and discipline of the personnel.

A unifying and connecting element of the above-mentioned components of combat readiness is the established system for bringing troops/forces into different states of readiness. This system includes a number of activities, either to maintain permanently established readiness or to increase readiness concomitantly to the emerging threats.

The content of levels and states of combat readiness determines the level of preparedness of the military units to perform their duties at a certain point in time. There are certain states of combat readiness that have been adopted by NATO. Nevertheless, the lowest state of readiness usually represents the current/day-to-day status of military units and is usually called a "permanent" level of combat readiness. The highest level of readiness is supposed to answer the demands of readiness for immediate execution of battle actions, and it is perceived in most armies to be called "full" combat readiness. There are some intermediate stages of readiness between "permanent" and "full" states of combat readiness. With the implementation of these intermediate stages the planners aim at improving awareness of what comes next, once certain stage of readiness is declared. The contents of distinct stages of readiness can be briefly described in the following way (Рогозина, 2004):

"Permanent" state of readiness – defines the day-to-day activities of the military units, which are manned and equipped with main pieces of equipment (MPE), auxiliary means of equipment, and are provided with all means of ammunition and sustenance according to the peacetime TOE. Thus the units are capable within the specified time periods to transition to higher levels of readiness.

At this level of readiness, the military units are stationed at their permanent bases. They conduct training, and exercises according to their peacetime training plans.

"Increased" – this is a state of readiness in which military units have reached a state of alert and capability that allows them to be put in a higher degree of readiness (either "military threat" or "full" state of readiness). In this certain degree the units abstain from performing battle tasks. A certain list of permitted actions may be executed in this state of readiness:

- termination of command post exercises (CPXs), duty trips, and leaves;
- if necessary, call up for all commissioned officers to report to the base;
- termination of field exercises and call up for all units to get back to their permanent bases;
- main pieces of equipment are equipped with combat load of ammunition;
- all arms and equipment are put to full readiness;
- the state of the post security is raised to the corresponding level;

- checkup of all alert systems, to include alarms and any other means of communication;
- preparation of documentation for archiving;
- commissioned personnel is armed and equipped;
- additional activities may be included in plans that commanders deem necessary.

"Military Threat" - the state of the military units from the single set of forces, in which they are ready to do battle duties. The military personnel is armed and equipped according to wartime TOE. Arms and equipment are fully ready for combat use. Wartime formations that are manned and equipped with mobilization resources deploy reception points and begin their activities concerning mobilization cells. All arms, equipment and resources are being prepared for combat exploitation.

"Full readiness" – is a state, in which the military units are able to proceed immediately with the execution of combat tasks. The wartime formations carry out mobilization and are stocked with resources from the reserve to their wartime TOE.

There is a need to be aware of the difference between combat readiness and combat capability. Combat readiness is a certain state of troops, while combat capability (Димитров, 2017) is an ability to apply deadly force. Thus combat capability epitomizes the degree of ability of the military units to successfully carry out military action, fully or partially to perform combat tasks in accordance with their functional purpose.

Depending on the degree of manning and equipping, the large military units may be classified as:

- "combat capable" - not less than 75% of their subordinate structures are fully trained, manned and equipped according to wartime TOE;
- "combat capable with limitations" – respectively when 50% to 75% of their subordinate structures are fully trained, manned and equipped according to wartime TOE;
- "partially combat capable" – when the above mentioned conditions are fulfilled from 30% to 50%;
- "combat incapable" - less than 30% of subordinate structures meet the demands of the above mentioned requirements.

The detailed planning of all activities pertaining to combat readiness and timely mobilization is very important to meet required standards. The paramount goal of planning is to develop such a mission essential task list that involves all commanders, headquarters (HQs), and units in achieving prescribed requirements of standing operating procedures (SOP). Basic requirements to planning combat readiness and mobilization may be:

- to meet standards underlined in the basis regulatory documents and planning guidelines;
- to be concise to meet required timelines;
- to be realistic in developing the timetables for the implementation of the events;
- to be regularly updated to answer all alterations of organizational, technical, and logistical character.

The degree of manning (in case of mobilization) is paramount to meeting requirements of mission essential task lists. High professionalism, knowledge and abilities to manage arms and equipment, as well as the morale and discipline of personnel play significant role in accomplishing high combat readiness. The interdependencies between the Armed Forces' recruitment system, and combat readiness and mobilization are exemplified in their common reliance on:

- the composition of the Armed Forces and balanced distribution of services and branches in peacetime;
- the degree of military training and qualification of the Reserves in peacetime;
- the duration of active military service of the personnel who were transferred to the Reserves, as well as the duration of their service in the Reserves.

Correspondence between combat readiness and the degree of meeting the demands of the units' TOE is undoubtedly very important. All units have to meet the demands in terms of filling out all empty slots for personnel, arms, equipment that are stated in the TOE in order to answer requirements of the distinct combat readiness category.

Manning and equipping the troops is conducted based on the endorsed TOE, that state military operational speciality (MOS), ranks, guidelines, directions, and norms that show requirements for peacetime as well as wartime manning. In this way when answering the requirements of the TOE we determine the optimal composition of active forces (single set of forces) and the organization of the Reserves that are to be activated in wartime to augment the Armed Forces. Sustainment of the Reserves for a long period of time depends on the economic capabilities of the state and all available prepositioned resources prior to mobilization.

Taking into consideration all of the above mentioned we may conclude that manning of the Armed Forces is a complex process. Therefore, analyzing it from the quantitative point of view does not provide us with a clear vision about the state of combat readiness and mobilization. That is why we additionally need to take into account the

qualitative factors of combat readiness and mobilization, such as the degree of field training, cohesion of units, operational interoperability, and morale and discipline.

It is particularly important for the Reserves to assemble wartime units that answer certain qualitative requirements like: appropriate physical fitness and age characteristics for wartime service, adequate military training, and corresponding military specialties. The sooner the personnel, arms, and equipment from the reserves reach operational readiness, the more sustainable and durable wartime formations units to accomplish their missions will be.

These characteristics define one of the most important requirements for the preparation of the military formations by the Armed Forces, but they must always be maintained in a state that ensures the timely achievement of operational readiness for the accomplishment of the assigned tasks. This in turn requires that the content of combat and mobilization training programs reflects all aspects and issues of combat and mobilization readiness. Classes in each discipline must be complex and shall lead to the improvement of the practical skills and habits of military personnel concerning combat readiness and mobilization issues.

Organization of a steady alert system for the respective HQs and units of the Armed Forces is essential for the timely implementation of activities in the different stages of combat readiness. In order to achieve a reliable alert system, it is necessary to deploy, implement, and technically keep in permanent readiness correspondent CIS. What is also very important for keeping commensurate alert capabilities is to have fully trained duty personnel who are able to do the job at all respective levels of command and control.

The dependency of military formations on CIS has tremendously increased in the contemporary military environment. This is why the Communication Information System (CIS), (to include early warning systems and C4I systems) is required to be ahead of the units' readiness. Therefore it is of particular importance that they are capable to conduit necessary critical information in a timely manner and to steadily operate in all contingency's conditions.

Operational capability of the command bodies is exemplified by the time in which the entire command and control cycle takes place. This cycle includes collection of situational data, processing the information and obtaining situational awareness, deriving conclusions, decision making, and tasking subordinate military units of the Armed Forces. It is deemed that if the whole cycle of decision making is shorter than the critical time of readiness, then this command and control body's readiness meets operational requirements and is capable of creating necessary conditions to accomplish the assigned tasks.

The readiness and the capabilities of the HQs, the CIS system, and their ability to operate in a sustainable manner to a large extent facilitate unremitting command and control when in transition to higher readiness or in conducting mobilization. In order to achieve uninterrupted command and control, it is required to organize and develop camouflage and concealment of the command posts (CPs), geographic dispersal, fortification, and if necessary to be able to flexibly hand over C2 among different CPs.

It is of particular importance how one organizes and maintains arms and equipment storage and their operational readiness in order to achieve a desired state of high combat readiness. Storage and maintenance of classes of equipment and resources is also indispensable. That means that one needs to have his arms and equipment ready for immediate application, as well as all necessary stocks of ammunitions, fuels, spare parts, and sustenance, and all necessary paraphernalia.

If a need arises to move and deploy HQs and units in an organized and effective manner to new assembly areas of particular importance, the commanders of all levels should see to providing movement security service; combat service support; preparation of arms and equipment for operational exploitation; and any other activities that contribute to bringing units to operational readiness.

If we try to further analyze the definition of combat readiness, we may derive a conclusion that it expresses a certain quantitative and qualitative virtues of the military formations of the Armed Forces. It is clear that combat readiness is in a direct dependence, on one hand, on the manning and equipping of the Armed Forces, and on the other - on the operational and mobilization training of the personnel. The quantitative part of the combat readiness is usually measured in terms of military units, numbers of personnel, and main pieces of equipment and so on. We connect quantity with the degree of their manning with military personnel, arms and equipment.

The qualitative part of the combat readiness is defined by the organizational structure of formations and depends on the degree of field and mobilization training of the military personnel, and the level of morale and discipline.

In order to optimize the overall process of activating military units to a higher level of combat or mobilization readiness, it is necessary to look for this in peacetime. **It mainly concerns building a system of control and evaluation** of the individual components of combat readiness and mobilization, and identifying measures for their improvement.

The nature of each separate component may be used to establish certain indicators to assist commanders in analyzing and estimating the state of combat readiness (Василев, 1990). In this sense we may use relationships and dependencies among separate indicators to settle assessment criteria (measures of success) for achieving the required level of combat readiness. In terms of purpose we may separate the criteria in two principle groups.

The first group of indicators characterizes the state and capabilities of the headquarters and military units of the Armed Forces in terms of quantitative and qualitative criteria to achieve their assigned tasks. Quantitative indicators are usually associated with the degree of manning and equipping the forces within the specified timeframes:

- manning, arming and equipping, material and logistics support;
- maintenance of armaments and equipment in operational readiness;
- keeping up and preserving in operational condition the designated locations;
- maintenance of the state of HQs, the communications and the CIS.
- The qualitative indicators concern:
 - the training and education of the commanders and field training of military units of the Armed Forces;
 - keeping high standards of morale and discipline;

Combined in a unified system the quantitative and qualitative indicators compose one of the criteria for assessing the state of combat readiness, namely - the ability of the military unit to accomplish assigned tasks.

The second group of indicators characterizes the capabilities of the system to transition HQs and military units into higher levels of combat readiness. It is all done from the point of view of the means, ways, efficiency and timing of each action. Such indicators are:

- time limits for alerting headquarters and military units;
- time to leave the permanent military bases/areas;
- deadlines for deployment to areas (regions) for the mobilization and organization of operational activities on the spot;
- time of preparation of arms and equipment for operational usage;
- time of preparing military units for operational tasks;
- deadlines for mobilization.

The aggregation of these key indicators defines the criterion - the time required to transitioning the military units of the Armed Forces into operational readiness/combat capabilities. It is clear that the defined above combat readiness assessment criteria can be considered as the ultimate results of actions that can be measured on a case-by-case basis either on all of the indicators or on specifically selected ones. They reflect the true capabilities of the headquarters and military units of the Armed Forces to achieve their assigned tasks or they may measure the real time to bringing them into operational readiness/combat readiness.

The evaluation criteria determine the degree of combat readiness of the Armed Force and its military units. In peacetime, it must ensure that they are transitioned in a timely manner from one to another level of combat readiness and respectively are deployed to fulfill the assigned tasks within the defined timeframe. The evaluation criteria also serve as a basis for defining the main directions of increasing combat readiness of the military units - continuous enhancement of their capabilities and shortening the deadlines for reaching operational readiness.

NATO standardization programs require that all allied military units that deploy to allied multinational operations be primarily evaluated in combat tactics, communication and logistic support. One of these programs – CREVAL – Combat Readiness Evaluation – ensures the units will be fully interoperable while conducting joint allied full spectrum operations.

Military HQs and formations are regularly evaluated to prove their operational capabilities to meet NATO standards in conducting military operations. Therefore the use of CREVAL programs ensures the necessary operational capabilities and interoperability with allied units in multinational allied operations.

It is important that modern armies be built and selected in combat packages on the principle of "single set of forces", i.e. forces are to be selected according to a certain combat package and should possess the same state of readiness, manning, arming, equipment, and training. It is also important for the Armed Forces when preparing for national purposes in a long military conflict to be able to conduct mobilization throughout the entire territory of the country in order to defend it. That is why the combat readiness depends directly on the sustained mobilization readiness of the military units to deploy and grow to war-time TOE in order to augment the Armed Forces for wartime (Тотомиров 1997).

The assessment indicators and the criteria of the mobilization readiness are defined by the requirements for implementation, effectiveness and time that are needed to realize the whole chain of events during mobilization: They are as follows:

- building up and development of reception, integration, and onward movement points for the Reserves;

-
- organization of reception, manning, and equipping wartime units personnel ;
 - organization of reception and technical evaluation of the automotive equipment from the Reserves;
 - observation of mobilization deadlines;
 - transition of wartime arms and equipment to operational readiness;
 - meeting standards of organizational and structural assembly of the military units;
 - meeting standards of manning the reserve according to their MOS, appropriate age, education and training.

Operational readiness of forces may be measured by the capability of forces to do battle tasks with little or no warning. It is of particular importance at tactical, operational, and strategic level. That is why it stays very high among all defense priorities. One cannot build up ones' operational readiness based on the organization and intentions of a potential adversary because they may change very quickly. Rather, one must be prepared to fight in a worst case scenario against forces possessing the most formidable capabilities (Frank 1990).

Depending on the level of manning, arming, equipping and training military units are classified into different categories in ascending order. The smaller the category is, the higher the operational readiness of the military units is and vice versa, the higher the category is, the longer the mobilization period takes place, and the longer the time to reach operational readiness is.

The category readiness ranking of military formations in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria follows standards of the established NATO system (MC 317/1). It includes 11 categories with a standby readiness time from 2 to over 365 days (3). They are subdivided as follows:

Gradually Increased Readiness Forces – they are formed by the military units of the Armed Forces pertaining to categories 1 to 9 .

Long Duration Readiness Forces – they are formed by the military units pertaining to categories 10 and 11.

Gradually Increased Readiness Forces are subdivided into **High Readiness Forces and Lower Readiness Forces**.

High Readiness Forces are military units of the Armed Forces pertaining to categories 1 to 8 and they are operationally ready from 2 to 90 days. Parts of them constitute the Immediate Action Forces. The composition of the Immediate Action Forces that are required for the execution of national tasks shall be determined by the Minister of Defense based on a proposal by the Chief of Defense.

Lower Readiness Forces are military units from the Armed Forces of categories 9 and they are supposed to be operationally ready NLT 180 days. The number of High and Low readiness units of the Defense Forces is determined in accordance with the requirements of the planning documents, depending on the escalation of the security environment, the national defense, and resource capabilities. Transitioning of the military units from one degree of readiness to another is done on the basis of established procedures and in accordance with the established plans to increase the readiness of the Armed Forces. The state of manning, arming, and equipping corresponds to the category of readiness.

Long Duration Readiness Forces are military formations of the Armed Forces pertaining to categories 10 and 11 with a long-term operational readiness extending from 189 to 365 days. They are destined for operational usage in the most unfavorable and remote scenario to participate in a large-scale operation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we may reiterate that it is very important for the Bulgarian Armed Forces to contemplate and achieve national forces that possess very high state of readiness in order to ensure national defense and security and to contribute to collective allied defense and security. To this end, Bulgarian military leadership is well aware of the aim of the NATO Readiness Initiative for the Alliance to be able to considerably improve and multiply the pool of Allies' high readiness forces. In this way NATO will be able to fully answer the demands to the fundamentally worsened security environment. That is why NATO has increased the readiness of response forces (Gottemoeller 2018). Moreover, these types of forces have improved their capabilities to apply article 5 when needed and defend threatened Allies. The Alliance has developed a spearhead force pertaining to NATO Response Forces - the Very High Readiness Task Force. This has lead to a demand for NATO to constitute, man, train, and equip forces that are able to rapidly prepare and deploy throughout Europe for very short periods of time and to meet the exigencies of diverse contingencies, to deploy, prepare, fight, and win in future operations.

REFERENCES

- [1] **Василев, К.** Критерии за оценка на бойната и мобилизационната готовност на щабовете и военните формирования от ВС, Военна мисъл, №1, 1990, с.75-82.
- [2] **Димитров, П.** Стратегически и оперативни уроци от съвременните конфликти, София, 2017.

-
- [3] **Тотомиров Ц.** Българската армия в условия на преход, Издателство на МО „Св. Георги Победоносец“, София, 1997, с.65-78.
- [4] **Development Plan** of the Bulgarian Armed Forces up to 2020, p. 11.
- [5] https://www.md.government.bg/bg/doc/strategicheski/20160128_Plan_za_razvitie_VS-2020.pdf
- [6] **Дмитрия Рогозина** (общей редакцией). Глава 5. Война и мир в терминах и определениях. Военно-политически словарь. Издательский дом Порог, 2004.
- [7] **Dennis G. Heary**, NATO Mobilization and Reinforcement: Can We Get There from Here?, AY 89/90 - Carlucci, Frank C., "Annual Report to the Congress," Department of Defense. Washington, DC FY 1990, p. 171.
- [8] **Oldrich Holecsek**, CREVAL 2013: Units must prove their readiness to conduct combat operations, Posted: September 27, 2013.
- [9] Rose Gottemoeller, NATO Deputy Secretary General – speaking notes at the EDA Conference „Key for European Security“, 7 JUNE 2018.
- [10] https://www.eda.europa.eu/.../0706_dsg-milmob_as-delivered
- [11] Military Decision on MC 0441/2 – NATO Framework Policy on Reserves, on 17 Feb 2012, and clears IMSWM-0204-2012
- [12] http://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/dictionary/details_rvsn.htm?id=3465@morfDictionary
- [13] <http://www.army.cz/en/ministry-of-defence/newsroom/news/creval-2013:-units-must-prove-their-readiness-to-conduct-combat-operations-89748/>
- [14] http://voenservice.ru/boevaya_podgotovka/ingenernaya_podgotovka/boevaya-gotovnost-opredelenie-soderjanie-postoyannaya-povyishennaya-polnaya-boevaya-gotovnost-voennaya-opasnost/

