

EXPERIENCES OF COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR (CSM) COURSE IN THE AIR FORCE

THE NEED OF ORGANISING COURSES

Joining the NATO on the 12 of March 1999 meant a decisive change for Hungarian Army. The inherited constitutional structure and military skills couldn't be fitted to the structural system of the NATO. A strategic revision, which was needed to the reorganising of the Hungarian Army — and within it the Air Force — was fulfilled in 1999. As the result of the strategic assessment, among others, Command Sergeant Major (CSM) assignment appeared on establishment tables in the Air Force, too. The authorisation of these assignments was explained by the fact, that the authority, the right, the responsibility and tasks of commissioned and non-commissioned officers were different in the forces of the NATO and in Hungarian Army. The role of non-commissioned officers „is aimed at efficient professional operating, handling, maintenance and repairing of military objects and leading of small subunits”. (1)

In 2000, CSM assignments were accomplished, as the top of the career of non-commissioned officers, to be of assistance to subunit leaders in executing their tasks. The aim was to be able to help leaders and increase the preparedness of the subunit to execute different tasks in peacetime, threat or in wartime. However, unit leaders didn't know these assignments, its content and the order of their work. Only those leaders could know about it who had studied abroad before and had met officers in this assignments – but there were only a few commanders of this sort. However, in the Air Force a need arose for establishing CSM courses that the newly appointed non-commissioned officers could acquire the professional tasks of the new assignment after positioning in assignment. There hadn't been a possibility for it before because of the immediate changes.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE COURSE LAUNCHING

From 1997 the Air Force Refresher Department had been executing a NATO-orientate preparation for the Air Force commissioned and non-commissioned officers. The General Staff of the Air Force asked this Department to prepare CSM-s, because it had had some experiences in NATO preparation. In the Air Force Refresher Department there were 2 teacher-officers who had met abroad non-commissioned officers in this assignment in different courses and they had

some ideas about these non-commissioned officers' activity. That's why the leaders of the Department got in touch with „CUBIC” team in Budapest, where there was an American non-commissioned officer who had been working in this assignment for years. He had a lot of experiences and he wrote down them in „Honvéd Altiszti Folyóirat” periodical. The Department contacted other Air Force commissioned and non-commissioned officers who had studied abroad and had seen the command CSM-s to work. The department received some documents in Hungarian and in English about this assignment (3-7) that they treated in „autodidactically” and tried to insert in the atmosphere of the Hungarian Air Force. During working out the program of subjects and topics there was a problem: „there were nothing to base on”, because most of the non-commissioned officers coming to schooling didn't know the operational procedures, the requirements of NATO interoperability and compatibility which were fixed in NATO STANAG-s. That's why the wide scale of subjects appeared. The compositor team attached to it the task system of CSM. The set-up of instructor team came with some difficulties, because also staff members had been averse to this new assignment and „not everybody saw the future in it”. The time for working out was limited and reducing of the period of the course – because of limited available funds and reducing of the time that the non-commissioned officers had spent away from their family- was necessary.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE OF THE FIRST COURSE

6 weeks and 204 classes were available for the training. In initial period the different authority, responsibility and tasks of commissioned and non-commissioned officers came to the front of the training.

During the course students could get to know: military leadership style, process of becoming leader, leadership counselling, communication and meta-communication, different methods of leadership, NATO leadership, team-work, the task-system of the training, preparation in NATO, training program for subunit leaders, NATO conventional signals, crisis management procedures, acts, rules, HAGUE-GENEVA Conventions which are operative for personals of Hungarian Army, NATO regulations of environmental and fire protection, leader's responsibilities and tasks, order of command, preparation and fulfil duties, NATO UTM and MGRS systems, rules of using military maps, signal communication in English, tasks of technical and NBC support and the role of CSM's in these tasks, rules of assignment take-over, NATO logistics, reception of delegations and guests, within knowing manuals they could know the tasks, role and position of CSM, structure and apply of supporting teams.

During the course students acquired the tasks of CSM with the assistance of battalion support program, reception of the newly arrivals, family-, drug-, alcohol-.physical state-, mental – and keeping of career programs, evaluation of non-commissioned officers, providing of allowances and applying NATO documents.

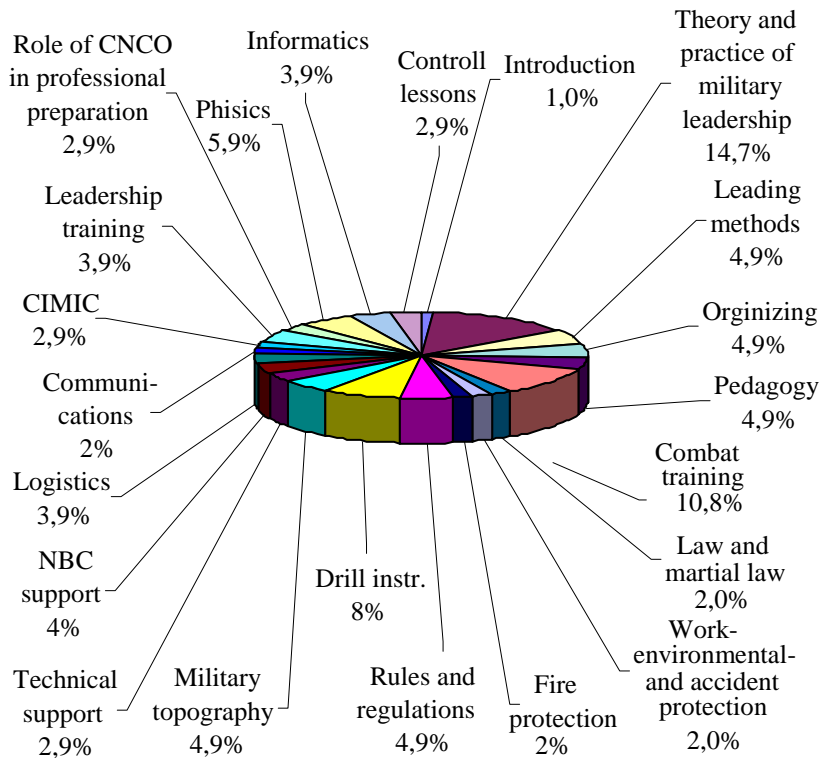


Fig. 1. Division of CSM's course subjects in 2000

During the course students became to be able to: make working plans, conduct discussions, meetings, solve military-professional problems with some assistance, keep the training-register and educational documents, give orders to conduct military formations, prepare for fulfil duties, using of conventional signals and maps, prepare for some survival procedures, some minimal information science activity. Their endurance and shooting skills were increased.

FORMS, CONTENTS AND EXPERIENCES OF EXAMINING

Testing level of knowledge in the course had happened by 10-12 minutes oral and written exams, tests, fulfilling documents and working with maps in the

beginning of every lesson. These all things were contributed to passing the exam. During lessons and exams it came to the light that „students” didn’t get used to the desks and tests. The Commander of the 89th Mixed Air Transportation Regiment – on behalf of the General Staff of the Air Force- was the chairman of the examiners. There were a lot of subjects so it was needed to initiate the instructors of the different subjects into the board of examiners. The commander made an effort to get to know how could the students apply their knowledge in the real life. The students had to work with documents or maps in the theoretical examination, respectively during practical exams in drill field they had to solve practical tasks. The students got a charter after successful examination. First experiences showed that there had been some non-commissioned officers with just a few experiences who could understand with difficulty the substance of their assignment and it was showed by there results, too. In these cases it would be more practical to do a NATO integration course before this course because some non-commissioned officers could hardly leave the „executive” style and work in „leader-controller” style.

BASIC EXPERIENCES OF THE FIRST COURSE

The Air Force Refresher Department started course for Air Force CSM-s first in the Hungarian Army. It was an effective assistance that 3 persons from the 'CUBIC' work-team – they were non-commissioned officers in the USA, one of them was a CSM – gave a 6-hour lecture on CSM system in the USA, how they solve their tasks. Before the performance the students had sent 21 questions to the work-team (about the training, preparation for fulfil the assignment, organising the reinforcements, qualification requirements, relationship among the CSM's of regiments, battalions and companies, relationship between commanders and CSM-s, how they help commanders in their work, how often hold they a meeting, about motivation, relationship between men and women in the army etc.) The work-team answered these questions. The bright spot of the course was that 2 women had been taking part in the course.

The requirements of the assignment and separation of tasks – in the education-provided logical knowledge for the students. Considering the experiences during the course and the suggestions of the 'CUBIC' work-team, it became necessary to redraft the thematic and work out the creed of Air Force non-commissioned officers for the further courses. The next years work was affected by the fact that the CSM of the General Staff of the Air Force had studied in the first group.

Creed of the Air Force CSM-s: (8)

*I am the Command non-commissioned Officer of the Hungarian Air Force, **leader** of people and **counsellor** of my direct superior. I am proud of being NCO in the*

*Air Force and I make every effort to reflect it in my appearance, behaviour and work. I will never abuse my authority. Among the Air Force NCO-s **I am the best NCO** of the unit. I am professional in thinking and working, and I do my best to popularise the Air Force. I make an effort to gain the trust of my superiors and subordinates. I set a good example in conducting, counselling, teaching, assistance, appearance and behaviour. I always fulfil my responsibilities excellently because **I am a professional NCO**. I always train on my own, perfect my theoretical and practical knowledge. I am stimulating, initiative and many-sided in carrying out tasks. I know my subordinates perfectly and employ their knowledge and skills maximally. I can understand the subordinates' problems and I take care of them. I always enquire about the unit's activity and use the possibility provided by the information. I give well-founded and right advises to my superiors for fulfilling their tasks. I obtain their appreciation with my work. I maximally support and fulfil the orders of the superiors **in accordance with the regulations**. I have got many years theoretical knowledge and practical experiences and well-founded value judgement. In lack of orders I always initiative. I don't distinguish people according to their age, colour, religion or national origin. I haven't got prejudices. I demand so much as much as I could do. I am honest, fair and brave. **I meet the requirements**. I never forget my leading role because **I know that I am the CSM of the Air Force**.*

The words of this creed contain everything, which is the essence of this assignment. The second group was averse to it a little bit because it hadn't been typical before. It was strange for them that the knowledge, awareness, confidence and vocation- and the fact that they are the best in the unit – are accompanied by spoken and demonstrated pride.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COURSE, EXPERIENCES OF THE SECOND COURSE

In 2001 the Air Force Refresher Department in Szolnok, Air Officers' Institute, had started the second CSM course. The available funds provided 6 weeks-208 lessons again. There were some changes in thematic and the subjects. We planned 4 lessons for CSM assignment requirements created by the General Staff of Air Force. We increased the number of leadership, pedagogy to 66, we separated the tasks of CSM, and we planned 2-2 lessons for management and protection of secrets, disaster relief, survival training, personnel management, finance and 6 lessons for visiting the Museum Military History. In every lessons in the second 10-15 minutes a student gave a lecture - after the teacher prepared him – on the new topic. So he could practice the tasks of a teacher, the using of educational aids and rhetoric. The students could practice in practical lessons as

instructors. We provided possibility for performances of the “CUBIC” work-team again. In the last third part of the course a CSM of the Air Force and 2 other CSM-s from other units – they had been taking part in the first course – gave lectures. They told how CSM-s worked in real life in the last one year, what their instructions were for the newly finished CSM-s.

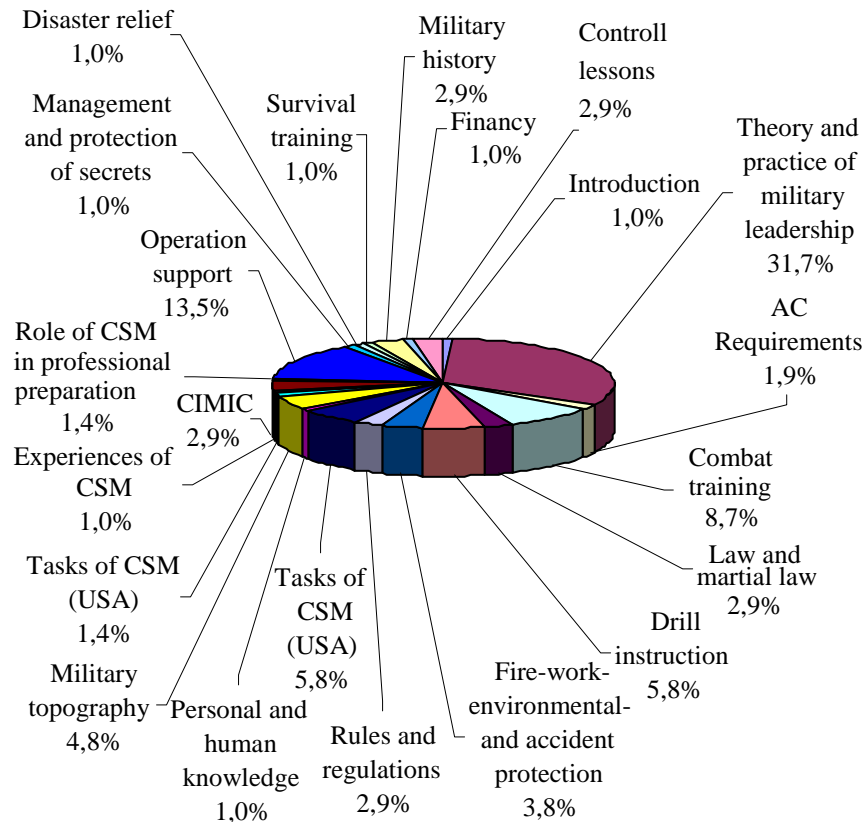


Fig. 2. Subjects of CSM course from 2001

INDIVIDUAL REASONS, MOTIVATION, PR ACTIVITY

The students of the first course carried out an order when came to the course, they didn't know what its essence was, so their behaviour corresponded to the behaviour of “necessary bad”. However during the course it was successful to arouse their interest and make them understand the need of accomplishing the course. The students' aptitude had positively changed from the second week. The extensive interest with which the students received the performance of the

“CUBIC” work team showed the progress of being active. The 80% of the second group were voluntary – their interest and activity was higher from the first week. Some photos had been taken about both groups – these pictures can be seen at present in the corridor of the Aviation Technical Institute Air Force Operations Support Department (the formal Air Force Refresher Department). The ‘Szolnoki Néplap’, the ‘Magyar Honvéd’ and the ‘Honvéd Altiszti Folyóirat’, ‘Szolnok Rádió’, ‘Rádió 2000’ and ‘Szolnok TV’ reported about the courses. Its result was that some CSM-s from the subunits of the Hungarian Army Staff were interested in the course. It was typical that students organised some programs after the classes, so students’ connection became stronger.

EXISTENT PROBLEMS AND SOLVING ALTERNATIVES

In some subunits it means a problem for the CSM-s — in the future too — to fulfil assignment duties because a part of commissioned and non-commissioned officers — because lack of information — regard advises for superiors or an interest in health, physical state or family, as a needless bothering. Commanders should be aware that the CSM-s could free them from a lot of work if the commander trusted them. The CSM can make the preparation of decision easier with providing real information and well-founded advises for the commanders. NCO-s should be aware that there is a CSM assignment and CSM-s’ tasks are to have all the information about the other NCO-s of the subunit. With the information they can effectively help soldiers or represent them.

The change at subunit/unit level, which was so intense as the result of the continuous reorganising, made the CSM-s’ work more difficult. Because of the outflow of people, the process of knowing staff thoroughly is slower than before. It is difficult to find young CSM-s because the base for motivation is missed: the name, the rights, the influence, the responsibilities and tasks are not fixed in the regulation of the military service. Special non-commissioned officers don’t want to accept the assignment because they lose the health-, classify- and hazard bonuses and meal allowances. The CSM-s haven’t got leader bonus and extra leave. A lot of inexperienced young enrolled for the first course. Some of them hadn’t been able to meet the requirements and they didn’t accept the assignment in the future. It should be more practical to appoint the most fitted, the most experienced persons CSM-s. Most of the CSM-s don’t get into those boards where decisions are taken in relation with the CSM-s. It is needed to change to be effective. It should be practical if the CSM took part in the personal interviews of the unit in those cases when a NCO is concerned.

To this, regulation of military service should be changed: the CSM should be the superior of the unit's NCO-s and other soldiers without rank. The names of CSM — at the levels of brigade, regiment, battalion, company and platoon —, the tasks, responsibilities should be fixed. There is no contact between NCO schools and the CSM-s — but there is a good example for the opposite case: the contact with the Air Force Refresher Department is excellent. It hasn't been clarified yet what duties a CSM has to fulfil — it needs central orders.

It is often a problem that the theory and practice of military organising learned in the course are different from applying it in the real life. Its solution is the responsibility of unit commanders on the base of CSMs' advises. In the further courses it should be handled more stressed to teach methods of organising, problem – solving, military politeness, wearing uniform, fostering traditions, rules and regulations and acts. The HM 30/2001-decree (9) fixed the CSM assignments in the Air Force and provided to appoint the most experienced NCO-s CSM-s.

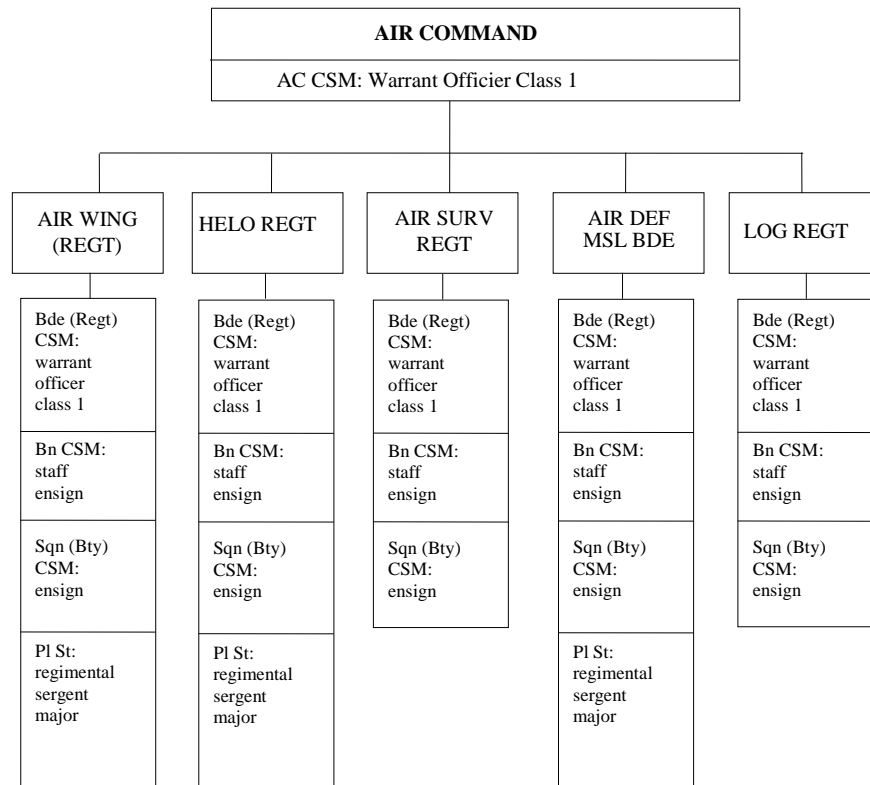


Fig. 3. System of CSM assignments in the Air Force

THE FUTURE OF THE COURSES

The CSM-s in the USA are acquiring the theoretical and practical knowledge of the assignment during a 6-month or one-year courses. For the Air Force CSM-s at least a 4-6-month course could provide the effective fulfil of the assignment. However, before it the anomalies came from inexperience, offences, “neglect” — should be tightened up. The Air Force Operations Support Department is prepared; it worked out the 4-month program of the company-CSM course. The CSM-s of the Air Force Command should be prepared in the USA CSM-schools. The future is based on the NCO-s in the Air Force, too: we can provide — with a high standard education — real CSM-s for the units’, subunits’ NCO-s.

REFERENCES

- [1] CUBIC Applications, Inc.: The Roles and Missions of the Sergeant Major and the Command Sergeant Major – a summary – 03.10.2001.
- [2] Ted L. Weekley: Az amerikai hadsereg vezénylő tiszthelyettese – Honvéd Altiszti Folyóirat –2001/1.
- [3] US Army Sergeants Major Academy: CSM (D) Training Packet. Texas, 1988.
- [4] FM 22-600-20: The Army Non-commissioned Officer Guide. Washington, 1986.
- [5] US Army: US Army Non-commissioned Officer Professional Development Guide. Washington, 1987.
- [6] TC 22-6: The Army Non-commissioned Officer Guide. Washington, 1990.
- [7] Pamphlet 600-32: Leader Development for the Total Army. Washington, 1991.
- [8] written on the base of a Creed of a USA NCO – the author.
- [9] Honvédelmi Miniszter 30/2001. HM rendelete. Budapest, 2001.