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TRENDS AND PECULIARITIES OF PROFESSIONAL AND PHYSICAL TRAINING OF GERMAN ARMED FORCES OFFICERS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to investigate and highlight trends and characteristics of the physical and professional training of officers in the German armed forces. Methods of analysis, generalization, comparison and systematization were used to achieve the aim. The Bundeswehr's officer training system is presented through the example of Army officer training. The training of Bundeswehr officers is characterized by certain trends and peculiarities. In particular, it continues in stages. The number of cadets at Bundeswehr universities is determined by the needs of the armed forces. The existing system of physical training for officers provides the necessary practical skills for professional activities. The purpose of physical (sports) training is the education of an integral personality, and the main objectives are the development of physical qualities, the formation of movement skills and improvement of athletic results. The sport concept of physical training, recognized as a leading idea in the German Armed Forces, assumes that in the process of practicing sports one develops the habit of systematic exercise, proper physical development of servicemen, and relief of nervous and mental tension. In the organizational aspect, physical training is divided into service and non-service sports. It is established that separate time is given for the formation of military-applied skills (overcoming obstacles, throwing grenades, hand-to-hand combat and marching training). The Bundeswehr's system of continuous physical training involves the marching training of servicemen. It is seen as a means of increasing mobility and endurance, as a way of strengthening discipline and educating servicemen in the spirit of militaristic traditions. An important part of the Bundeswehr's system of continuous physical training is the testing and evaluation of personal physical preparedness. The "Soldier Competition" is a mandatory mass test of the physical preparedness of Bundeswehr personnel. At the same time, we have to note the existence of critical comments on the current system of physical training in the Bundeswehr.

Keywords: *physical training system, officers, military personnel, the Bundeswehr, military education, German armed forces, continuous physical training.*

АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета статті полягає в тому, щоб дослідити та виокремити тенденції та особливості фізичної та професійної підготовки офіцерів збройних сил Німеччини. Для досягнення мети використано методи аналізу, узагальнення, порівняння та систематизації. Систему підготовки офіцерських кадрів Бундесверу представлено на прикладі навчання офіцерів сухопутних військ. Підготовці офіцерів Бундесверу притаманні певні тенденції та особливості. Зокрема вона триває поетапно.



Кількість курсантів в університетах Бундесверу визначається потребами збройних сил. Існуюча система фізичної підготовки офіцерських кадрів забезпечує отримання ними необхідних практичних навичок для професійної діяльності. Метою фізичної (спортивної) підготовки є виховання цілісної особистості, а основними завданнями – розвиток фізичних якостей, формування рухових навичок і підвищення спортивних результатів. Спортивна концепція фізичної підготовки, яка визнана в німецьких збройних силах провідною ідеєю, передбачає, що у процесі занять спортом відбувається виховання звички до систематичних вправ, належний фізичний розвиток військовослужбовців, зняття нервово-психічної напруги. В організаційному аспекті фізична підготовка поділяється на службовий і позаслужбовий спорт. З'ясовано, що для формування військово-прикладних навичок (подолання перешок, метання гранат, рукопашний бій і маршова підготовка) відводиться окремий час. Система неперервної фізичної підготовки Бундесверу передбачає маршову підготовку військовослужбовців. Вона розглядається як засіб підвищення рухливості і витривалості, як метод зміцнення дисципліни і виховання військовослужбовців у дусі мілітаристських традицій. Важливе значення у системі неперервної фізичної підготовки офіцерів Бундесверу належить перевірці й оцінці особистої фізичної готовності. Обов'язковим масовим видом перевірки фізичної підготовки особового складу Бундесверу є «Солдатські змагання». Разом з тим доводиться констатувати існування критичних зауважень щодо існуючої системи фізичної підготовки військовослужбовців Бундесверу.

***Ключові слова:** система фізичної підготовки, офіцерські кадри, військовослужбовці Бундесверу, військова освіта, збройні сили Німеччини, неперервна фізична підготовка.*

INTRODUCTION

The complicated military-political situation observed on the state border of Ukraine requires revision of the content of professional training of all categories of military personnel of the State Border Guard of Ukraine and, in particular, officers, because conditions of intensive operational and service activity require them to be able to endure various physical and psychological loads, to adequately act in conditions characterized by excessive physical overloads, etc. Under these conditions, the quality and intensity of physical training of officers is of particular importance.

In order to find effective ways to solve the problems of training of officers of the State Border Guard Service, in particular physical training, the study of organizational, pedagogical and didactic foundations of physical training of military officers and border guard specialists in NATO member countries, in particular Germany is important.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this article is to investigate and highlight trends and characteristics of the physical and professional training of officers in the German armed forces.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

The methods of analysis, generalization, comparison and systematization have been used to achieve the aim of the study. As a source base there have been used the information from the official websites of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeswehr), in the regulations governing physical training and sports in the Bundeswehr (Beitrag Ausbildung), in Rüdiger's (2005) publications, publications of



scientists, whose publications reveal some aspects of professional and physical training (Dönitz, 2007; Fernandesh, 2012; Hans-Werner, 2005; Matthias, 2007; Meliukh & Larchenko, 2015; Dmitruk, 2014; Shchegolev, 2007; Riabchuk, 2011).

RESULTS

To solve the scientific problem of improving the system of continuous physical training of officers at different levels of military education, the experience of physical training organization in the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeswehr – Federal Defense) is of interest. The Bundeswehr consists of the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. The armed forces of the Federal Republic of Germany are actively involved in various peacekeeping operations outside the country (Bundeswehr).

As for the recruitment of the Bundeswehr, Germany ended the compulsory military conscription on July 1, 2011. This means that the Bundeswehr has completely switched to manning its armed forces on a professional basis. The Bundeswehr employs contract servicemen (their service term varies from 2 to 12 years) and regular servicemen, whose number reaches 250,000 (Bundeswehr).

In order to examine the specifics of the Bundeswehr's physical training system for officers, it is useful to present the training of officers using the training of Army officers as an example. Officers receive training at the Army Officer School, the service schools, and at one of the Bundeswehr universities, as well as military internships and direct service in the troops in various staff and command positions. According to the requirements applicable in Germany, any citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany between the age of 17 and 25, who has completed secondary school, vocational training or high school, has no criminal record or financial debts and is fit for service, can be a candidate for active-duty or contract officer for at least 15 years (M. Nikitin, 1998).

Those wishing to become officers must undergo a medical examination and a professional and psychological screening within two days at the Officer Candidate Selection Center in Köln, which is operated by the Human Resources Directorate of the German Ministry of Defense. Those future officers who successfully pass the test are assigned to military training institutions of the Army and the Bundeswehr (A. Dmitruk, 2014).

The training of officers for the German Army is gradual. The first stage involves initial military training in the troops for three months (about 16% of the time budget is given to physical training). The second stage is basic training in the enlisted man's program and six months of training to obtain a driver's license. The third stage involves three months of preparation for the military rank of fannen-junker (the equivalent of non-commissioned officer) in the schools of the branches of the armed forces. The fourth stage is military training as a section commander for three months. Further training of officer candidates for combat troops (motorized infantry, tank, mountain infantry, airborne) and combat support and logistics troops is somewhat different. Specifically, combat officer candidates take an officer course at the Officer School in Hanover (4.5 months), followed by an internship with the troops or service branch schools (4.5 months), and serve as platoon leaders (three months). Their training also includes higher education at the Bundeswehr universities in Hamburg and Munich, where training lasts three years (11 percent of the time budget is devoted to physical training) (A. Dmitruk, 2014).

The number of cadets at Bundeswehr universities is determined by the needs of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Germany. The educational process takes into account the changes taking place in science, technology, weapons, etc. During the training period, students receive theoretical and specialized knowledge and skills necessary for



service in the troops. The studies end with the presentation of diplomas or the awarding of a degree.

Officers at Bundeswehr universities are trained in small groups; it allows the teaching staff to devote sufficient attention to each student.

The system of training of combat officers (under contract from three to 11 years) has its specific features. The main difference is that they may not study at Bundeswehr universities. Depending on the length of their contract, officer candidates receive varying amounts of training, and they receive only the knowledge they will need to lead their subordinates in a platoon or equivalent unit. The rank of lieutenant is awarded three years after officer candidates begin their training.

The total length of a typical Bundeswehr soldier's training process for serving in primary officer positions in the Army is 6.5 years on average. In the future, before each new appointment to a higher post, officers are required to take refresher courses in the schools of the corps. The courses for the Bundeswehr Army command staff are the courses for company commanders (the branch school), battalion commanders (the branch school), senior officers (the Bundeswehr Leadership Academy), and staff officers (the Bundeswehr Leadership Academy), which are mandatory for professional development. About 10–12 % of the best soldiers, based on their graduation from senior officer courses, are eligible to continue on to general staff officer courses. Training lasts two years at the Bundeswehr Leadership Academy (V. Meljuh, M. Larchenko, 2015).

On the whole, the system of professional training of officers in the armed forces of the FRG, which is continuous and multistage, provides quality training of officer personnel (V. Shhegolev, G. Dmitriev, G. Blahin, 2007), and the current system of physical training for officers provides the necessary practical skills for professional activities. The overall leadership of physical training in the German armed forces is provided by the Minister of Defense through the Inspector General of the Bundeswehr, who has a sports sector on his headquarters. In the branches of the armed forces, physical training is managed by combat training departments. In troops, unit and subunit commanders rely on non-staff specialists: sports leaders, their assistants, coaches, and instructors to organize and conduct physical training sessions.

The main guiding document for physical training in the Bundeswehr is General Statute 3/10 "Sports in the Bundeswehr" (ZDv 3/10 – Sport in der Bundeswehr). It is for commanders and specialists and consists of the following sections: "Basic Provisions and Organization of Sports Training of the Bundeswehr", "Fundamentals of Methodology of Sports Training", "Basics of Sports Medicine", "Physical training program during elementary and basic education", "Practical Conduct of Classes", "Basic Sports Training Program", "Additional program of sports training" (V. Rjabchuk, 2011).

According to the requirements of ZDv 3/10 – Sport in der Bundeswehr, mass sports in the Bundeswehr are closely related to national sports. In addition, it should foster physically and mentally prepared soldiers who are ready to perform any task assigned to them, as well as foster in them a desire to continue practicing any kind of sport after discharge from the army. Mass sports have time allotted (at least twice a week) when no other activities can take place (Beitrag Ausbildung).

The purpose of physical (sports) training is the education of an integral personality, and the main objectives are the development of physical qualities, the formation of motor skills and improvement of athletic performance (ZDV 3/10)(Bundeswehr). A high level of physical development is a prerequisite for the successful



mastery of military professional activity. That's why the complex test of physical training includes such military-applied exercises as a march-throw with shooting from a standard-issue weapon.

According to West German experts, the transfer of qualities and skills acquired through sports to military professional activity occurs indirectly and is provided by the entire system of training and education of servicemen. Bundeswehr soldiers must prove their physical endurance every year by receiving the German Sports Badge (DSA) and passing the Physical Fitness Test (PFT).

The Sports Concept of Physical Training, recognized as a leading idea in the German Armed Forces, assumes that in addition to the basic tasks, additional tasks, such as cultivating the habit of systematic exercise, proper physical development of soldiers, relieving nervous and mental tension, are solved in the process of sports activities (Fernandesh, 2012).

The results of summarizing the provisions of the regulations governing physical training in the Bundeswehr allow us to conclude that, from an organizational perspective, physical training is divided into service and non-service sports. Service sport encompasses general and special programs, the training program for highly qualified athletes, as well as mass sports. The general program is divided into a basic program and a supplementary one. The basic program, designed for servicemen under the age of 49, includes such sections as general training gymnastics, gymnastics on sports equipment, track and field athletics, swimming, movement games, volleyball. Additional program includes soccer, handball, boxing, judo and skiing (options made by the branches of the armed forces). There are 2–3 classes of 90 minutes each week to complete the basic and supplemental program. The current General Statute ZDv 3/10 – Sport in der Bundeswehr allows commanders in some cases to reduce no more than one class per week. A special program is designed for sports improvement of the most talented athletes in the national teams of military units and formations. It provides for specialization in such sports as basketball, biathlon, equestrianism, sailing, shooting, modern pentathlon, military all-around, air and sea all-around, and parachuting. There is a class in this program every day (after 3 p.m.). Soldiers who are engaged in a special program are not exempt from general classes, performance standards and requirements, as well as from physical training tests (V. Rjabchuk, 2011).

The basic physical training program for Bundeswehr officers consists of such sections as “Gymnastics”, “Athletics,” “Swimming”, “Gymnastics on Equipment”, “Small Games” and “Volleyball”. Gymnastics involves doing exercises with or without equipment for contraction, stretching and relaxation of major muscle groups and individual muscles, as well as exercises for coordination and training of the cardiovascular system. Exercises are performed with a partner, with a ball (3 kg), with a gymnastic bench and on the wall bars. The “ZDv 3/10 – Sport in der Bundeswehr” does not recommend the use of marching drills and martial arts-style exercises in the classroom (V. Rjabchuk, 2011). The course of the section “Gymnastics on Apparatus” assumes that servicemen will get skills to perform exercises on parallel and equal-height bars and crossbars; learn how to perform throws and flips on the floor; swings and turns on the crossbar and the different-height bars; jumping over the plinth, over the horse from the mini-trampoline, the rests on the crossbar, parallel and different-height bars. Classes in this section are held, as a rule, by circular training with a predominant focus on the development of coordination and agility movements.

In the section “Track and Field Athletics” the main role is given to middle and long distance running, the main means of improving overall endurance. Short distance



running and relay races, long jump and high jump, throwing the ball with a loop (imitation of a track and field hammer), shot put are also provided.

The “Swimming” section assumes that future officers master the basics of swimming technique, the skills of swimming at different distances, mastering the technique of starts, turns and speed. Successful mastery of the requirements of the section “Swimming” requires completion of the standards for the German Red Cross badge and water rescue badge.

A Generalization of the provisions of the Statute ZDv 3/10 – Sport in der Bundeswehr allows us to state that in the section “Small Games” are represented by different types of relay, ball games – soccer, handball and volleyball. ZDv 3/10 – Sport in der Bundeswehr provides for the use of sports games mainly in the final part of classes in order to achieve emotional release and improve collective action. Sports games are considered to be an excellent means of developing concentration and reaction speed, but these sports games are played according to simplified rules, that is, not by sport standards. Also, all branches of the armed forces practice judo, the training of which involves mastering the basic techniques of self-belaying, grappling, scrambling, throwing, choking and painful techniques, as well as learning self-defense techniques; disarming the opponent and attacker with a knife (with a stick) or a pistol; learning the skills of tying and escorting prisoners. Football and handball are very popular in the Bundeswehr, but are usually played with significant deviations from sports standards (Bundeswehr).

If climatic conditions permit, servicemen are taught the basics of skiing techniques. In most cases, special military skis are used, designed for crossing different terrains at moderate speed (V. Rjabchuk, 2011).

The regulatory documents concerning the physical training of future officers of the Bundeswehr prohibit the practice of military-applied exercises during the time allotted for physical training. That's why separate time is set aside for the formation of military-applied skills (overcoming obstacles, throwing grenades, hand-to-hand combat and marching training).

Normative documents of the Bundeswehr recognize military-applied physical training as a fundamental means of forming the psychological stability of servicemen. This aspect is of particular importance in the training of huntsmen, mountain infantry and paratrooper units, designed to perform complex combat tasks in extreme conditions. The training program provides more than 130 hours directly to physical training, as well as additional time to practice overcoming obstacles, hand-to-hand combat and swimming, overcoming water obstacles, training of endurance during marches with weapons and high-speed marches with minimal equipment and without weapons.

The Bundeswehr's system of continuous physical training involves the marching training of servicemen. It is seen as a means of increasing mobility and endurance, as a method of strengthening discipline and educating servicemen in the spirit of militaristic traditions (V. Rjabchuk, 2011).

The Bundeswehr Army Statute NDR 100/1, based on experience of marching on foot in sandy and snowy terrain, states that troops must be able to cover 40–60 km on foot per day (K. Dönitz, 2007). The German Army distinguishes between two types of marching training: accelerated march (the distance is covered in the shortest time, the march is used for sports purposes with a load in a duffel bag of about 9 kg) and march (maintains an average speed of about 6 km/h, used in combat training and performed with weapons and equipment).



In the Bundeswehr, “people’s marches” (multi-day marches) held in Germany or other countries are also popular (Hulin, Rüdiger, 2005). For example, in Holland they last 4 days and cover a distance of 200 km. Similar marches are conducted over two days in Denmark (80 km distance for servicemen) and in Israel (120 km for 3 days). Preparations for such marches are conducted in stages, with many Bundeswehr servicemen taking part; especially Army troops (M. Matthias, 2007).

Based on the results of the synthesis of publications on the problem of research (M. Nikitin, 1998; A. Dmitruk, 2014; V. Meljuh, M. Larchenko, 2015; V. Rjabchuk, 2011) we can conclude that an important role in the system of continuous physical training of Bundeswehr officers belongs to the verification and assessment of personal physical preparedness. It has been found that among the main diagnostic tools there is a test of physical fitness, “Soldier competitions” and the compilation of certain standards, the successful completion of which provides for the “Badge of Sports and Military Achievements”. The officers of the Bundeswehr are divided into five age groups: the first – up to 25 years; the second – 25–32 years; the third – 32–40 years; the fourth – 40–46 years, the fifth group includes officers over 46 years. In addition to these, there are two other categories of servicemen with physical disabilities, for which there are simplified standards (A. Dmitruk, 2014; V. Rjabchuk, 2011).

The physical fitness test is used at the beginning and end of the basic training period for future officers, as well as during all training programs at least once a year. The test is performed in sportswear for two to three days. The results are evaluated according to a point system.

The Bundeswehr’s “Soldier Competition” is an obligatory mass test of the physical fitness of members of the Bundeswehr. For all servicemen under 40 years of age, participation in the competition is mandatory, and for older age categories it is voluntary. A prerequisite for participation in the “Soldier Competition” is regular attendance at classes and training sessions for the coming 6 weeks (M. Nikitin, 1998; A. Dmitruk, 2014; V. Meljuh, M. Larchenko, 2015; A. Fernandesh, 2012).

Another step in checking and evaluating the physical fitness of Bundeswehr troops is the performance of the “Sports and Military Achievement Badge”, introduced in 1971 to encourage improvement in the results of physical and general military training. They are performed or confirmed every year. In addition to these types of physical fitness checks, there are also standards of “German Sports Badge”, standards of sports and applied swimming, mass skiing competitions. The results of all tests are entered into an individual record card, which, along with other documents, is the basis for determining the level of general readiness of each member of the armed forces (A. Fernandesh, 2012).

At the same time, we have to note the existence of critical comments on the current system of physical training in the Bundeswehr. Despite sufficient theoretical justification and logistical support in practice there is an underestimation on the part of commanders and superiors of middle and higher levels of the importance of physical training for combat capabilities and the moral and psychological state of the personnel. In addition, there is a lack of full-time and insufficient training of freelance specialists – physical training organizers. We also have to note the insufficient motivation of servicemen to improve their physical preparedness. Military experts and analysts point to these problems (D. Kartamyshev, S. Mehed, V. Berlinde, V. Islamov, 2020; V. Shhegolev, G. Dmitriev, G. Blahin, 2007).



CONCLUSIONS

So, after the decision of the Bundestag to freeze conscription from July 2011, the national armed forces are staffed only on a voluntary basis. This imposes additional requirements on military personnel, particularly officers of the Bundeswehr. The system of their training is a complex of gradual stages of training in the officer schools of the armed forces and at one of the universities of the Bundeswehr, as well as military training and direct service in the troops in various staff and command positions. Before each new assignment to a top post, officers are required to take a refresher course in the schools of the branches and meet physical fitness requirements. In the Bundeswehr, physical training is determined by the provisions of the sports concept, which defines the involvement of servicemen in regular sports activities. The physical training consists of special exercises, as well as sports and movement games, swimming, and various sports chosen by servicemen of their choice. The most advanced thing in the German armed forces is the formation of groups of servicemen according to their sports preferences and interests. The Bundeswehr's system of continuous physical training involves the marching training of servicemen. It is seen as a means of increasing mobility and endurance, as a way of strengthening discipline and educating soldiers in the spirit of militaristic traditions. An important part of the Bundeswehr's system of continuous physical training is the testing and evaluation of personal physical preparedness. The "Soldier Competition" is a mandatory mass test of physical fitness of Bundeswehr personnel. At the same time, we have to note the existence of critical comments on the current system of physical training in the Bundeswehr.

Perspectives for further studies are research and synthesis of the experience of physical and professional training of soldiers in the French Armed Forces.

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