Implementing a new basic military training system in Sweden – findings from the first year

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New trends in Sweden’s Defence Policy 2016-2020

• Increased defence budget
• A renewed regional focus, emphasizing national defence
• Investments in recruiting and the sustainment of soldiers
• A renewed civil defence
• Increased operational warfighting capability
• A new system for the basic military training
• Reactivation of enrolment and conscription – gender neutral
Background

• The introduction of an AVF (2010) in Sweden has resulted in many vacancies and problems in recruiting and retaining personnel
• A new basic military training was introduced in the spring of 2016 – 9 or 11 months for ordinary recruit positions (4-7 months for the home guard)
• Return to a military training system that were very similar to the former conscription system
Study of the new basic military training system

- Aim of the study was to evaluate the officers attitudes towards the new system
- Officers – the key component for success for the new system
- 7 units were part of the study (covering all branches)
- Interviews before start of the first batch with the new system, and after five months of training
- 68 interviews completed
- A questionnaire was distributed to our sample at the end of the training period
**General comments at startup**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Challenges</strong></th>
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<td>Good availability of commanders/instructors (good numbers, but not specialized)</td>
<td>Few recruits turned up</td>
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<td>Skilled and experienced company commanders</td>
<td>Cancelled training programs due to lack of soldiers</td>
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<td>The new concept is appreciated</td>
<td>Lack of specialists</td>
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<td>The new system is prioritized at the different units</td>
<td>Lack of equipment</td>
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Fears and expectations

• Recruitment problems (~50 % vacancies)
• How many will sign for a contract?
• The lack of equipment
• Positive attitudes among officers
• Better trained soldiers
• Endurance of the system? First year highly prioritized, how’s the next years?
Results questionnaire

- Serious concerns about the lack of equipment
- Positive assessments of colleagues in the platoon
- Time for preparation was short for NCO’s
- 1/3 of the NCO’s felt that there had been recruits approved, that should not have been approved...
- Lack of officers with relevant competence
Conclusions

• The new system for the basic military training of soldiers was seen as positive by the commanders/instructors
• The all-volunteer recruitment hasn’t provided the Armed Forces with enough personnel
• The system has shortages in equipment and some expert skills, which will take time to resolve
• Although a new basic military training, there were few people attracted to the SAF
Reactivation of conscription

• The Swedish government has decided to re-activate conscription from January 1 2018
• Enrolment from October 2017
• Recruitment to the Armed Forces will be both voluntary and through conscription
• Basic military training with compulsory service for both groups
• Individual motivation and interest is considered as much as possible
• Will include both women and men – gender neutral
Reactivation of conscription

- The quality of the new conscripts is very high
- 75 % men 25 % women conscripted
- The need for more conscripts