Social and cultural aspects of protection of the soldier in the context of force protection

Congress on European Security and Defence, Berlin, 9-10 November 2010
Panel “Protection of the Soldier – an ongoing challenge for politics and industry”

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Putting protection of the soldier in context

- Protecting the soldier is not an end in itself
- It is embedded into a broader context, particularly of sending a coherent political message
- It therefore follows multiple objectives, sometimes in conflict with others
- Theatres like Afghanistan put all forces at risk (no front line) for years (protracted operations)
- Protection of the soldier thus is not a standing strategy:
- It needs evaluation and adaptation both on the operational and on the political-strategy level
Protecting the soldier is part of a comprehensive approach

Achievement of political goals

Acceptable risk

Effectiveness of operations

Casualties

Force protection

e.g. CMCO (EU) NRF concept

Force acceptance

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Challenges

- Force protection requires a holistic definition that encompasses legal, social, psychological and physical protection.
- Total force protection is unachievable and unaffordable.
- The risk of the soldier has to be balanced against mission objectives to employ the appropriate level of force protection.
- Concepts for civil-military interaction at the political-strategic (e.g. CMCO) and at the operational level (e.g. CIMIC) involve protection of the soldier.
- Industry/technology is an enabler but not the solution.
Acknowledging that protection of the soldier is a socio-technical system,
- Enhance cross-national initiatives and practices
- Increase the effects and focusing of existing potentials and instruments, rather than increasing the amount of potentials and instruments (EBO principle)
- Close capability gaps in dealing with foreign cultures
- Enhance institutional memory and information sharing
- Analyse operational contexts comprehensively in order to identify the type of soldier (personality) needed
- Apply tailored comprehensive training schemes
Example: Cultural awareness training

- Basic knowledge of the cultural heritage and history of the mission area
- Basic knowledge of local customs, mentality, and do’s and don’ts
- Basic knowledge and skills needed to communicate with all parties concerned

Soldiering in Unfamiliar Places: The Dutch Approach

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Thank you!