



ANALYSIS

HIGH READINESS CONSCRIPTION CASE STUDIES FROM TODAY AND THE COLD WAR

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBRN	chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear
EG	increased combat readiness (<i>Erhöhte Gefechtsbereitschaft</i>)
FDJ	Free German Youth
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GST	Society for Sport and Technology
KG	Combat readiness faced with a threat of conflict (<i>Gefechtsbereitschaft bei Kriegsgefahr</i>)
KTE	coefficient of technical operational readiness (<i>Koeffizient der technischen Einsatzbereitschaft</i>)
NBC	nuclear, biological, and chemical
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NVA	National People's Army
SG	permanent combat readiness (<i>Ständige Gefechtsbereitschaft</i>)
VG	full combat readiness (<i>Volle Gefechtsbereitschaft</i>)
VGO	full combat readiness on site (<i>Volle Gefechtsbereitschaft im Objekt</i>)

INTRODUCTION

Conscription, which was often regarded as something of an anachronism in the post-Cold War period, has re-emerged as a viable means to man the relatively large force structures required by the current security environment at relatively low cost.¹ Following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, several European states re-introduced conscription while others took steps to increase its operational effectiveness.

There is, however, no single model for conscription, and these states have had to each consider issues such as how best to build an effective structure from standing forces and reserve-based elements; how to balance the interests of the individual versus the needs of the state; and whether conscription should be selective or universal.

This analysis primarily concerns functional and military strategic issues rather than societal or socio-political questions. A particular focus is how high readiness can be generated through conscription.² The analysis presents case studies of states that use conscription (Finland, Israel, Norway) or have in the past used conscription (Sweden, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and West Germany) to man their armed forces and draws findings relevant to the present security environment.

¹ Conscription is here defined as the compulsory peacetime enrolment of individuals in a country's armed forces on either a universal or selective basis. As conscription is often perceived as negative and linked with the notion of a mass army, some countries prefer to use the term "compulsory military service" (CMS).

² The U.S. Department of Defense's [Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms](#) defines readiness as "the ability of military forces to fight and meet the demands of assigned missions." In [UK joint doctrine](#), readiness is defined as "the period measured from an initiation order to the moment when the headquarters or unit is ready to perform its task from its peacetime location (permanent or forward deployed) or ready for deployment."

1. FINLAND³

While the main purpose of conscription in Finland is to provide sufficient manpower for the reserves, conscripts are also used to maintain readiness. The size of the wartime structure is 280 000, of whom 96% are reservists and the remaining 4% professionals (8 000) and retired professionals (4 700). Conscription is also very important for creating a pool of youngsters from which the defence forces can recruit officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs): all active-duty and reserve officers and NCOs have completed conscription.

While the main purpose of conscription in Finland is to provide sufficient manpower for the reserves, conscripts are also used to maintain readiness

Finnish conscripts serve as privates, section leaders, and platoon commanders. Some are selected for refresher training and separate courses to eventually become deputy company commanders or company commanders in the reserve with the rank of 2nd Lieutenant, Lieutenant, or Captain.

Conscripts usually undergo military service at the age of 19 or 20, but this can be postponed, for example, for studies until the year the conscript turns 29. The proportion of the male cohort to undergo military service has declined over a long period, not least due to the societal situation of physical and mental problems among young men. Finland estimates that in the future, a maximum of two-thirds of the male cohort will serve. To reverse this trend, the Finnish Defence Forces have adjusted regulations to enable more young men to serve in the military, including those who are not in peak physical condition but who have good technical skills and are, therefore, useful in the cyber domain.

³ This chapter is based on interviews conducted in July 2021 with then Brigadier General Rami Saari, at the time Deputy Chief of Staff Army Operations, and Colonel Jukka Nurmi, at the time Inspector of Voluntary National Defence, who also provided advice to the parliamentary committee established in 2020 to investigate how to develop conscription further.

1.1. HIGH-READINESS UNITS

Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and intrusion into eastern Ukraine triggered a discussion in Finland about readiness in the army (the Finnish navy and air force had historically been at higher readiness because of the higher percentage of professionals in these smaller services). The Finnish army had, until this point, primarily been a training organisation, generating reserves to perform the central role of ensuring readiness in peacetime.

In 2017, to improve overall readiness, the army introduced new high-readiness units with a blend of trained conscripts and professionals. Approximately 10% of army conscripts serve in high-readiness units. As yet, however, these units have no clear position in the wartime structure: citizens who served in high-readiness units during their conscription period will serve as reservists in other units in wartime. The Finnish Defence Forces recognise the logic of keeping the high-readiness units together in wartime (not least because they have received the best training and equipment), but this is an issue yet to be resolved. Meanwhile, the benefit of creating such units is most obvious at the end of June and in early July, and in late December and early January when most conscripts from the previous contingent have finished their service. The high-readiness units

Better training and equipment have been found to contribute to a more developed team spirit, while their high reputation ensures that they can attract enough volunteers

The main difference between high-readiness units and traditional units is the time devoted to training

then fill readiness gaps in different contingents. The composition of each high-readiness unit is unique and depends on the brigade or regiment setting them up. They typically include 10-15 professional officers and NCOs and are companies or larger company-sized battlegroups that normally include elements from all branches, including air defence, artillery or mortars, and signals. The main difference between high-readiness units and traditional units is the time devoted to training. Conscripts in traditional units usually serve for six months, but conscripts in high-readiness units serve for one year and can be used for readiness tasks in the second half

of this period. The training they receive after the first six months varies between units and reflects local requirements for winter training, urban warfare, or jaeger warfare. Their training programme also includes crisis management in international operations, and they are often later recruited for such operations. The Finnish Defence Forces aim to deploy each high-readiness unit on an international exercise, if possible while they are at high readiness.

Because of their relatively small size, high-readiness units are somewhat easier to equip than the rest of the force structure and are thus better equipped than many other units, including with night vision equipment and body armour. Their better training and equipment have been found to contribute to a more developed team spirit, while their high reputation ensures that they can attract enough volunteers.

1.2. CONSCRIPT TRAINING

Figure 1 illustrates the training cycle for both high-readiness and traditional units.

Conscripts are called up to the Finnish army, air force, navy, and border guard in January and in July. Of the army conscripts, approximately 60% serve for one year, 30% for six months, and 10% for nine months. All conscripts undergo a six-week basic training phase where they learn basic military skills and a six-week branch training phase (usually in the same location where they will later undergo their unit training).

During these first two phases, the conscript can apply for a position in a specific branch (e.g., infantry or artillery) to be considered when final allocations are made. After the first two phases, the most suitable candidates to become NCOs are identified. These conscripts undergo a six-week combat leadership course after which a further selection is made for a 14-16-week reserve officer course.

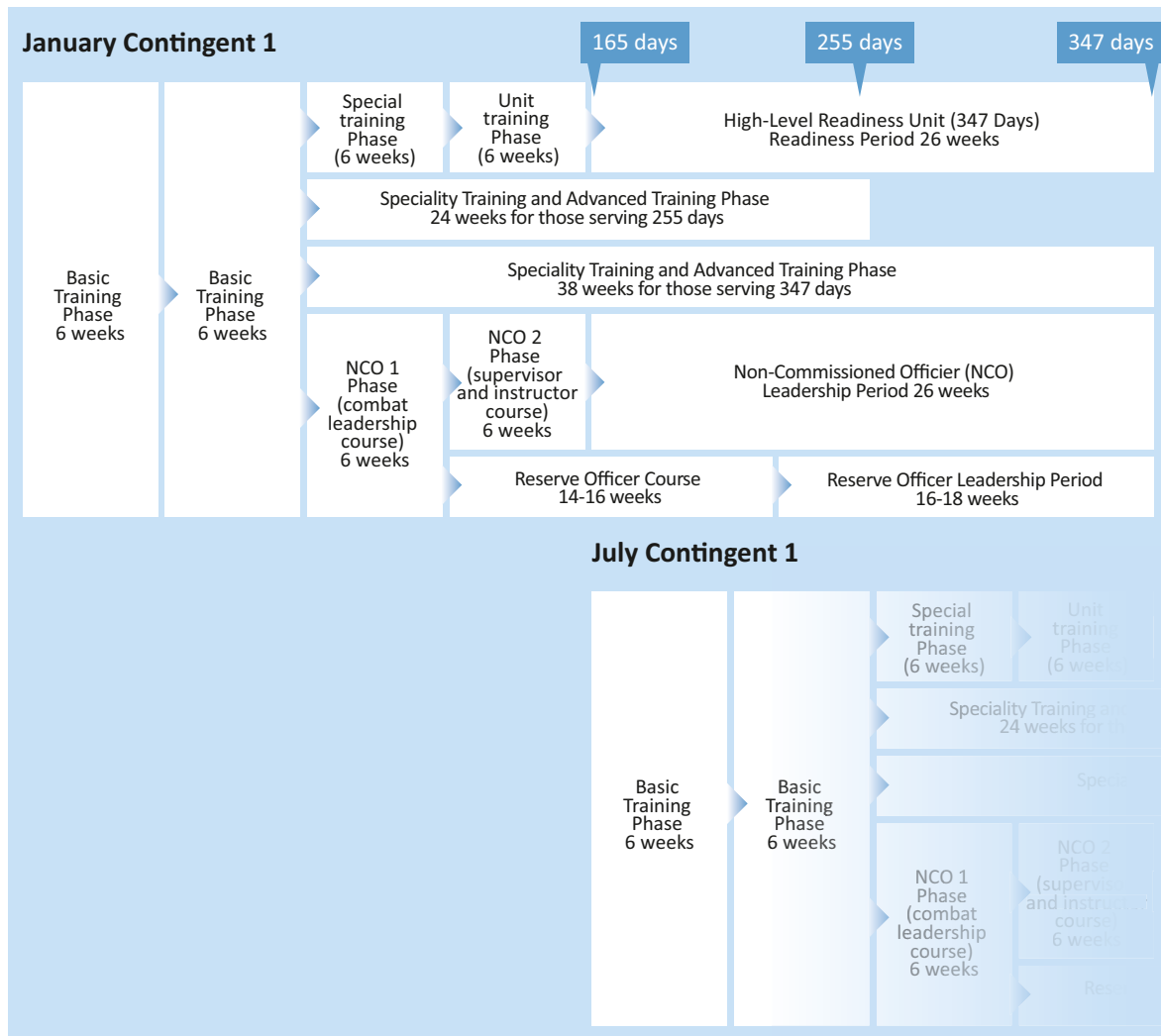


Figure 1. Training of high readiness and other conscript units. Source: Finnish Defence Forces.

Conscripts who are not selected for NCO or reserve officer training start specialty training to become skilled in a specific role, for example as a signalman or infantryman. This is followed by unit training, during which operational units are formed and trained. Privates who are to serve for the longer conscription periods – either 255 or 347 days (e.g., tank drivers) – undergo extended specialty training and conduct their unit training phase with the conscripts of the next contingent, as do the NCOs and reserve officers.

the key question of increasing the number of high-readiness units by going beyond voluntary conscripts could disrupt the entire system. For example, many youngsters want to serve for only six months and start their university studies.

Conscription in the Finnish navy and the air force fulfils the same purpose as in the army: providing sufficient manpower for reserve units. However, the use of conscripts is somewhat broader in both services. In the

navy, conscripts serve on ships and contribute to readiness more at the individual level than as complete units. Most air force conscripts are trained at airbases in force protection companies that are manned with reserves. Air force conscripts are also trained to sustain aircraft to meet wartime needs, whereas a small number focus on peacetime tasks while serving.

The key question of increasing the number of high-readiness units by going beyond voluntary conscripts could disrupt the entire system

Overall, Finnish conscripts and reservists are considered to be highly motivated. However,

1.3. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The conscription of women is one of the main questions for the parliamentary committee established in March 2020 to investigate options for further developing conscription. Finnish politicians believe that women should be able to contribute more to total defence,

The need for female conscripts has grown as more (male) youth are exempted from service

including by increasing their numbers in the military. There is solid political and military support for the current arrangement in which women can serve as conscripts on a voluntary basis, but insufficient support for a compulsory national civil service for all men and women. However, the need for female conscripts has grown as more (male) youth are exempted from service. Since the 1990s, a total of 11 000 women have completed voluntary military service, and a new record was set in 2022 for the number of women applying. Finland's goal is to double the number of female conscripts to 2 000 in each cohort. Female reservists then serve in the same units as their male counterparts and are called up for the same refresher exercises.

Decision makers are seriously considering increasing the amount of refresher training to improve the capabilities of the reserves

While there have been no recent discussions about extending conscription, political and military decision makers are seriously considering increasing the amount of refresher training to improve the capabilities of the reserves. Refresher training is expensive, but there may be alternatives, including voluntary individual training in the form of distance learning.

In terms of a wider societal role, parliamentarians have sometimes indicated that the military should take more responsibility for improving young men's ability to become successful citizens and to avoid criminality.

2. ISRAEL⁴

Male and female Israeli citizens are legally required to undertake military service, usually for 24 months for females and 32 months for males.⁵ The primary role of compulsory military service is to provide personnel to standing units that are staffed with a combination of trained conscripts, career officers and NCOs, and reservists. There are three personnel categories in the Israeli Defence Forces:

- conscripts (the bulk of the standing army, air force, and navy);
- career personnel (mostly NCOs and officers who serve from one to three years, a medium term of up to five years, or longer for career officers);
- reservists.

There are very few contract soldiers. All active service NCOs and officers have finished conscription. There are three or four intakes of conscripts each year. Most are called up in August-October after graduating from high school. Some are also called up in the winter and spring, depending in part on the requirements of specific units.

The training of conscripts depends to a degree on their unit type. In the infantry, conscripts are brought into a standing brigade (many ask to join the paratroopers or other elite units). They receive a few months of basic training in their brigades before moving onto track training aimed at giving them specific skills (e.g., reconnaissance, anti-tank). The total amount of time spent on basic and track training is 6-10 months.

Some conscripts are then trained for 3-5 months to become squad leaders, who can

⁴ This chapter is based on a July 2021 interview with Brigadier General (retired) Dr Meir Elran.

⁵ Two groups have traditionally enjoyed exemptions from conscription: Haredi Jews and Israeli Arabs. Together, these groups constitute over 30% of the Israeli population and are set to rise to 60% by 2050. Emanuel Fabian, "[Knesset delays 2-month reduction in mandatory military service for men](#)," *The Times of Israel*, 10 March 2022; Ruth Levush, "[Israel: Military Draft Law and Enforcement](#)," The Law Library of Congress, 2; Avi Jager, "[The myth of compulsory military service in Israel](#)," *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 October 2018.

train new recruits or serve in operational units. Others are selected for a conscript officer's course which consists of 30 months of non-paid conscript service and a further 18 months as paid officers. The majority reach the positions of platoon or deputy company commander, while the most promising are offered a three-year contract to become company commanders (medium term). Conscripts not selected for leadership training are usually deployed with their unit on operations (e.g., in the border areas) for a number of months or participate in unit training for conventional warfare. Unit rotation means that most soldiers participate in both activities.

As training times become ever longer, the military is trying to lengthen the entire conscription period, which can pay off for youngsters who receive attractive training that is useful in civilian society

Courses for more technological units (such as intelligence, cyber, and signals) may start on a voluntary basis even before youngsters are formally conscripted, allowing the time served in operational units to be extended. As training times become ever longer, the military is trying to lengthen the entire conscription period, which can pay off for youngsters who receive attractive training that is useful in civilian society.

With few exceptions, male and female conscripts are separated in operational units. They receive the same training, but women serve on a 50/50 basis only in standing units on the less volatile frontiers between Israel and Egypt. No women serve in the infantry or in armoured units but serve in SIGINT, communications, medicine, conscript training, and as simulator operators. There are several female combat pilots in the air force.

Army, navy, and air force reservists are only used when absolutely needed and when time is available since they come with a high price tag for society

Where possible, platoons and companies of conscripts are transferred to the reserves as complete units: from an active brigade to a

reserve brigade. Despite the advantages to the armed forces, however, this pattern is diminishing as the percentage of people who serve in the reserves is falling and the reserve component is reducing overall. Army, navy, and air force reservists are only used when absolutely needed and when time is available since they come with a high price tag for society.

3. NORWAY⁶

At the end of the Cold War, the Norwegian army called up conscripts four times a year to provide newly trained personnel to the mobilisable reserve force. Until 1990, the entire male population was called up for conscript training. While the active component of the peacetime army had a degree of readiness, the main capabilities resided in the reserves.

Today, the obligation to serve is also extended to female citizens. However, only 13% of the annual cohort is called up – in essence, conscription is voluntary, and the quality of conscripts is much higher, with far fewer disciplinary issues.

3.1. CONSCRIPT SERVICE

The Norwegian Armed Forces include:

- all-volunteer units with contract soldiers and professional officers and NCOs (e.g., the Telemark Battalion);
- units with a cadre of professional officers and NCOs, manned with conscripts;
- units with a cadre of professional officers and NCOs, manned with a mix of conscripts and enlisted personnel and;
- units consisting of a cadre of professional officers and NCOs and manned with reservists.

⁶ This chapter is based on interviews conducted with then Command Sergeant Major of the Norwegian Army Rune Wenneberg and with a representative of the Norwegian Ministry of Defence.

For example, the engineer battalion of the Brigade Nord has one company manned with enlisted personnel while other companies are manned mostly with conscripts. The armoured battalion of the Brigade Nord is a mixed formation where the crews of the vehicles are volunteers and the infantry are conscripts. The 2020 long-term defence plan foresees the establishment of a Joint CBRN Company, an Engineer Battalion, and a Military Police Battalion, all of which will be manned with a cadre of professional officers and NCOs and with reservists. These units will have a somewhat lower readiness than other units.

The complexity of conflict and the requirements placed upon the armed forces led to a debate about the further development of the conscript training system. A 2017 study on how to develop the army and home guard observed that technological developments on the battlefield had driven the need for a longer conscription period, which, in turn, would have a positive impact on training standards and on ensuring a military presence in the strategically important areas close to Norway's border with Russia. Beforehand, most conscripts had served for 12 months with an option to serve for longer. Today, citizens eligible for compulsory military service serve for a total of 19 months, consisting of both conscript service and refresher training.⁷ This extended service is also seen as necessary to secure more operational output from the investment in education and training of conscripts, i.e., as a measure to improve cost efficiency.

This extended service is also seen as necessary to secure more operational output from the investment in education and training

In 2020, the new system was also applied in the air force and navy, while an additional decision by the parliament enabled the armed forces to determine which positions would require longer service periods. For example, since 2023, conscripts in the army's manoeuvre battalions have served for 15 months: six months to train to battalion level, followed by a 9-month-period at high readiness (compared to 6 + 6 previously). When a new battalion

⁷ Norwegian Armed Forces, "[Verneplikt](#) [Conscription]."

is added to Brigade Nord (as was decided in 2020) two of the three battalions manned with conscripts will be fully trained as the units will follow three different but overlapping training cycles.⁸

In addition to the options to serve for 12 and 15 months, some conscripts serve for 18 months but cannot then be called up for refresher training lasting longer than one month.⁹

3.2. CALL-UP AND TRAINING

Until recently, most conscripts were called up in the summer, meaning that collective performance and readiness were low in the autumn (when the conscripts were just beginning their military training) and high immediately before the conscripts completed their service. This system fitted well with school and university calendars and was, therefore, convenient for the conscripts. The new 15-month training cycles, however, may

From the perspective of the armed forces, one call-up per year is easier to organise but does not offer credible readiness

be less attractive from the perspective of the individual, because of both the longer service and the potential mismatch with academic studies. From the perspective of the armed forces, one call-up per year is easier to organise but does not offer credible readiness.

The system currently being introduced, partly based on a classified 2016-17 study conducted by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment which simulated different types of intake, will include:

- centralised basic military training to provide operational units with conscripts who have already been trained beyond the basic level;

⁸ "[Manøverbataljonene får 15 måneders førstegangstjeneste: – En vesentlig endring av operativ evne](#) [Manoeuvre battalions get 15 month conscription - A significant change of operational capabilities]," *Forsvarets Forum*, 1 August 2023.

⁹ "Manøverbataljonene får 15 måneders førstegangstjeneste."

- four call-ups spread evenly over the year to improve collective performance and readiness in line with the needs of today's security environment;
- and conscript service of 15 months for those who serve in more demanding units.

Regardless of whether an individual will serve 12, 15, or 18 months, he or she will first undergo basic military training in dedicated recruit training schools for approximately two months. Subsequent training will take place in a school and/or operational unit depending on what service and branch the individual will serve in. Conscripts serving 12 months will typically pass a one-month specialist course. For citizens serving longer, the length of the course will be approximately two months. After this specialist course, training and service will continue in operational units.

In the past, too, some army units called up conscripts more than once per year. For example, His Majesty The King's Guard in Oslo, an infantry battalion with peacetime operational tasks, has relied on four call-ups per year to maintain a stable level of readiness. One company is fully trained and operational; one company is in training; and a third company provides basic military training to recruits.; headquarters and support company has one operational platoon and another platoon under training. Similarly, the Border Guard battalion that guards the Norway–Russia border has been supported by two call-ups per year, allowing it to maintain operational capability throughout the year at greater cost-efficiency.

The Norwegian Defence Research Establishment study also suggested that both experienced and freshmen soldiers could serve together side by side all the way down to squad level. Thus, the soldiers and vehicle crew of an infantry squad would not rotate at the same time, allowing for continuity and the transfer of experience between individual squad members.

3.3. HIGHER PERFORMANCE AND READINESS AT LOWER COST

The Norwegian Armed Forces highly appreciates the quality of volunteers, but scarce resources make the use of conscripts and reservists inevitable to fully man units. Around 10% of conscripts continue with some sort of active duty after completion of their compulsory military service. Some continue with an officer education or an apprenticeship, but most are recruited as enlisted soldiers or specialists.¹⁰

The Norwegian Armed Forces highly appreciates the quality of volunteers, but scarce resources make the use of conscripts and reservists inevitable to fully man units

One lesson identified from the pilot project for the new system was that longer conscript training improves the individual conscript's understanding of the armed forces, enabling him or her to take more responsibility – the entire unit performs better if conscript training is extended. The 2016-17 study about the future of the Army and the Home Guard proposed higher economic compensation for conscripts serving longer than 12 months.

The most important factor in motivating conscripts is meaningful training

However, research suggests that the most important factor in motivating conscripts is meaningful training. This is also illustrated by the competition among conscripts to get a position in operational units.

4. SWEDEN (THE COLD WAR)

In the Cold War, the primary peacetime task of the Swedish Armed Forces was to train units for the wartime organisation. Once the conscripts of a specific unit had been trained,

¹⁰ Petter Kristian Køber, Nina Hellum, Torbjørn Hanson, [Førstegangstjenesten som rekrutteringsbrønn for videre karriere i Forsvaret](#) [Compulsory military service as a recruitment pool for further service in the Norwegian Armed Forces] (Oslo: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2019), 4.

they were released to the reserves from where they could be mobilised as a unit if necessary. Newly trained personnel thus replaced personnel who had been trained several years earlier and could, in turn, be transferred to units manned with older reservists, often with less modern equipment.¹¹ One weakness of the Swedish defence concept was the relatively low readiness of the army. While the navy and the air force were held at high readiness, the reserve army required more time to mobilise.¹²

Conscription was differentiated, depending on whether the individual was called up for service in the army, navy, or air force and whether he would become a soldier or sailor, a specialist or an NCO. Legally, it could include:

- conscript training;
- participation in one or several readiness exercises for up to 180 days;
- and, if decided by the government, service to increase national readiness to defend the nation.¹³

4.1. THE ARMY

Several approaches were used in parallel in the army, where the length of service was 7.5, 10, 12, or 15 months depending on position. Until the 1990s, the dominant approach was to call up all conscripts at the same time. Those with longer service who served as NCOs or in more demanding specialist functions stayed after others in their cohort had left. This system was reversed in the 1990s and conscripts who had been selected for longer service were called up earlier than the main intake. Thus, NCOs and specialists had already received significant parts of their training by the time their fellows were called up, ensuring better

collective training as NCOs got more practice in commanding their soldiers.¹⁴

The Cold War-era army was not a high-readiness force with standing units, but high readiness could be found in units manned with conscripts in their final three months of training. Sweden was divided into seven defence regions, each with one infantry company at high readiness.

The Cold War-era army was not a high-readiness force with standing units, but high readiness could be found in units manned with conscripts in their final three months of training

Different defence regions called up conscripts at different times in three main groups, ensuring that one high-readiness battalion was available for nine months each year, even though it would not have undergone battalion-level collective training.¹⁵ The three-month gap was covered by standing units manned with reservists called up for refresher training. Reserve battalions were also called up for refresher exercises alongside conscripts who were finishing their training, meaning that on occasions entire brigade-level field exercises could take place.¹⁶

Keeping units with trained conscripts available around the year also provided training opportunities for officers who attended different schools and courses.

4.2. THE NAVY

In the navy's unit production model, a complete crew could be trained for 10 to 17 months after which the conscripts were released as reservists. They were called up for a refresher exercise after three years and then remained in the reserve as a complete crew for another three years (six years in the reserve in total).

¹¹ Interview with Commander (retired) Lars-Erik Uhlegård, May 2021.

¹² Mikael Holmström, *Den dolda alliansen - Sveriges hemliga Nato-förbindelser* [The concealed alliance – Sweden's secret relations with NATO] (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2011).

¹³ Värnplikslag [Law on Conscription] (1941:967), Sections 27 and 28.

¹⁴ Interview with Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Sven Mattsson, April 2021.

¹⁵ Parliament of Sweden, *Kungl. Maj:ts proposition till riksdagen angående vissa organisations- och anslagsfrågor rörande försvaret* [His Majesty's The King Proposition to the Parliament concerning certain defence related organisational and budgetary matters].

¹⁶ Parliament of Sweden, *Kungl. Maj:ts proposition*.

Thereafter, the individuals of this crew would man positions in auxiliary vessels until they reached a certain age.¹⁷

While entire units were trained, relatively few were kept at high readiness compared to the size of the overall reserve and even then required extensive and sometimes time-consuming mobilisation efforts. The Swedish navy of the Cold War was thus not a useful example of how to combine conscription with high readiness.

4.3. THE AIR FORCE

To ensure high readiness, certain elements of the mostly reserve-based force structure of the air force were always activated and manned with a combination of professional officers and NCOs, and trained conscripts. The conscript training system of the Swedish air force thus comprised six intakes per year to ensure the continuous availability of conscripts who had received basic and specialist training and could be used on operational duties. Most air force conscripts served in positions related to air surveillance, command and control, and ground handling of aircraft.

The length of service was between 12 and 15 months and conscripts from different intakes often served together. Basic soldier training took three weeks, after which conscripts received specialist training that was partly centralised in air force training centres and partly in units. What in the army was considered unit training was in the air force replaced by active service to ensure combat readiness. Trained conscripts were often employed on duty for 2-3 days followed by a couple of days off.

5. THE SOVIET UNION

The Soviet military doctrine was heavily influenced by its World War II experience, when a lack of preparedness resulted in a three-year campaign against invading German forces on Soviet soil with devastating territorial, human, and economic losses.

¹⁷ Interview with Commander (retired) Lars-Erik Uhlegård, May 2021.

Soviet writings and exercises stressed the need to respond to a surprise attack and to conduct a successful emergency defence of the homeland. In the 1980s, Soviet readiness and mobilisation systems emphasised speed and efficiency to maximise the initial availability of forces and ensure that any ground war was not fought on Soviet territory.¹⁸

The Soviet military doctrine was heavily influenced by its World War II experience

During the Cold War, the Soviet army was assessed to be the largest modern army in the world. It had a very high proportion of its manpower in small but heavily armoured and mobile line divisions. While only about half of these divisions were at combat strength, the others could be filled up with reservists in a relatively short period of time.¹⁹ The divisions were at three different levels of peacetime manning:

- **Category I** (combat strength) divisions were intended to form the first echelon of Soviet ground forces in the initial operations of a war. They included motorised rifle and tank divisions in Germany, Poland, and Hungary and other forces in the border areas of the USSR. They might have received some minor augmentation in anticipation of war but were intended to be ready for immediate commitment to combat without this.
- **Category II** (reduced strength) divisions were intended for the early reinforcement of the Category I divisions and were maintained at about two-thirds of the strength of the Category I divisions, with some subordinate units in cadre status. They could be filled with reservists and made ready to move to the theatre of operations within weeks.
- **Category III** (cadre strength) divisions were intended to provide a base for reserve training and mobilisation and were maintained at about 20% of the strength of Category I divisions, with most of their

¹⁸ Director of Central Intelligence, "[The Readiness of Soviet Ground Forces](#)," November 1982, 7-8.

¹⁹ Director of Central Intelligence, "[Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces, 1964-1970](#)," 25.

officer complement but few troops. All divisions in this category could have been filled with reservists within weeks but would not have been effective against powerful enemy forces until they had undergone a considerable period of training. They could have been used earlier for mopping-up operations, line-of-communications or internal security duties, or reconstruction work.²⁰

5.1. TRAINING

Soviet forces contained very few professional NCOs, but proportionally more junior officers who were largely responsible for training. In the 1960s, recruits were assigned directly to units and were trained almost entirely within them. While this system eliminated the need for large separate training establishments, it also led to a drop in combat efficiency each winter as new recruits replaced trained men. The increasing technical complexity of Soviet theatre forces accentuated the problems associated with the annual turnover of large numbers of conscripts.²¹

Under the Soviet Union's original 1938 service law, one call-up was instituted each year to conscript individuals for a three-year term of service (four years for the navy). Until 1967, about one-third of enlisted soldiers were discharged and replaced by new conscripts each year.²² Strategic missile forces were generally kept at a very high state of readiness. Conscripts in these forces were mainly used for relatively simple tasks and positions, such as drivers, guards, and assistant operators of the transporter erector launchers. In the early 1960s, conscripts were called up four times per year; however, this was later reduced to twice as the requirement for conscripts to undergo the same training four times per year was found to be demotivating.²³

In 1967, the need for more labour in the economy and an effort to modernise the Soviet military led to a new service law that shortened the active term to two years and increased the frequency of call-ups to two per year, meaning that approximately one-quarter of enlisted soldiers were discharged and replaced by fresh conscripts every six months.²⁴ Officers and the enlisted who had combat experience from World War II were gradually retired. Regulations were rewritten; new equipment was introduced; and the two-year squad, platoon, company, and battalion level training cycle was reduced to a single year.²⁵

Soviet army conscripts were trained to be squad leaders, mechanics, and signallers in dedicated regiments for six months, after which they continued to serve for another 1.5 years.²⁶ Initial military training – the “course of the young soldier” – lasted an average of four weeks, much shorter than in western armed forces, and provided a basic knowledge of military life and rifle skills.²⁷ The subsequent training programme was divided into winter and summer periods, each six-month cycle beginning when conscripts were rotated into units to replace those completing their active-duty tours. For about the first month after troop rotation, new conscripts received basic training in provisional training units formed within each division, resulting in a semi-annual degradation in unit proficiency, cohesion, and readiness.²⁸

This was followed by unit training when the new conscripts were integrated into their units. Heavy emphasis was placed on individual, squad-level, and platoon-level training, while field exercises designed to perfect individual and collective skills and to train commanders and their staffs in simulated combat were considered essential to forging unit integrity and proficiency. The extent of the training programme depended on peacetime manning levels:

²⁰ Director of Central Intelligence, “Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces, 1964-1970,” 12-13.

²¹ Director of Central Intelligence, “Capabilities of Soviet General Purpose Forces, 1964-1970,” 15.

²² Andrew L Spivak and William Alex Pridemore, *Conscription and Reform in the Russian Army* (Washington, DC: The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, 2004).

²³ Interview with retired Colonel Arvo Sirel, 14 April 2021. Colonel Sirel (1944-2023) served as a regimental commander in the Soviet Strategic Missile Forces.

²⁴ Spivak and Pridemore, *Conscription and Reform in the Russian Army*.

²⁵ Interview with a retired officer who served in the Soviet Army 1967-1989, 13 April 2021.

²⁶ Interview with a retired officer who served in the Soviet Army 1967-1989, 13 April 2021.

²⁷ Headquarters of the Army, “[FM 100-2-3 The Soviet Army Troops, Organization and Equipment](#),” 1991, 27.

²⁸ Director of Central Intelligence, “The Readiness of Soviet Ground Forces,” 13.

- combat strength divisions carried out a full programme, including battalion-level live firing;
- reduced strength divisions completed training up to company level;
- and cadre strength units were trained up to platoon level.²⁹

Soviet training was repetitive with the aim of developing instinctive reflexes to cope with any situation. All soldiers, sailors, and airmen underwent individual training each year of their military service, regardless of rank. The Soviet ground forces conducted small-unit training in typical combat situations focusing

Soviet training was repetitive with the aim of developing instinctive reflexes to cope with any situation

upon the squad, platoon, and company level but sometimes involving an entire battalion. Large-unit training in regiments and divisions involved live firing and night training supported by artillery and close air and attack helicopters.

The winter and summer periods were divided into several stages, each stressing a specific theme or objective. The cycle stayed basically unchanged for several consecutive years. To ensure that they covered all material in sufficient detail, instructors sometimes conducted different levels of training simultaneously. Young soldiers in their first year of service would receive more elementary instruction, while senior servicemen were trained in their occupational skills. Instructors also conducted unit training at various levels at the same time. Both winter and summer periods contained all levels of training activity, including division manoeuvres, where possible.³⁰

Exercises included evaluations by the next higher headquarters based on established training objectives.³¹ US analysis of the semi-annual training cycle of the divisions of the

²⁹ Director of Central Intelligence, "The Readiness of Soviet Ground Forces," 13-14; Interview with a retired officer who served in the Soviet Army 1967-1989, 13 April 2021.

³⁰ Headquarters of the Army, "FM 100-2-3," 28.

³¹ Interview with retired Colonel Arvo Sirel, 14 April 2021.

Group of Soviet Forces Germany, among the best-trained divisions, established three milestones that were used as a yardstick for assessing proficiency:

- Minimum: the lowest level, which occurred at troop rotation. According to US assessments, the Soviets would have preferred not to commit divisions at this level but would do so in a situation in which they did not have control of time and events.
- Minimum standard for commitment to offensive operations: this occurred about three months into the training cycle when battalion-level training was well underway. At this point, US assessments suggested that divisions had achieved sufficient cohesion and proficiency for commitment to offensive combat in a mid- to high-intensity combat environment.
- Maximum: at the end of each training cycle, when all required training has been completed.³²

5.2. READINESS

According to a 1981 memo by the US Director of Central Intelligence, a clear distinction was also made between "ready" and "not ready" portions of the Soviet ground forces. "Ready" units were the most highly manned and the best equipped and trained. They were at least minimally prepared for combat operations with little or no mobilisation. "Not ready" units required extensive mobilisation and would not be available for immediate combat operations. While the necessary reservists could be mobilised quickly, the Soviet reserve system did not immediately convert such units into cohesive fighting units – they would need to train first to perform proficiently in high-intensity combat.³³

The most ready Soviet divisions were manned at or near full strength, were fully equipped, and had completed a full annual training

³² Director of Central Intelligence, "The Readiness of Soviet Ground Forces," 17.

³³ Headquarters of the Army, "FM 100-2-3," 1.

programme. They could complete normal alert actions and disperse out of the garrison in 36 to 60 hours. Other divisions were maintained in a peacetime-ready posture at somewhat lower manning and training levels. These could complete mobilisation and dispersal in two to four days but would not be as fully prepared for combat because of their lower peacetime training status.³⁴

Well over half of the Soviet divisions, as well as much of the non-divisional support structure, were considered not ready for combat in peacetime. This skeletal force required substantial preparation to overcome deficiencies in manning, equipment, and training, particularly if the units were to be committed to offensive operations in the combat environment expected in Europe. The time required for these units to complete mobilisation and move to dispersal areas would vary from 3.5 to 9 days. US intelligence believed, however, that they would require 19 to 33 days of training to be trained to the minimum standard necessary for offensive combat.³⁵

6. THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (THE COLD WAR)

From its founding in January 1956 until 1961, the National People's Army (NVA) relied on "voluntary service."³⁶ General conscription in the German Democratic Republic (GDR),

introduced in 1962, applied to all male citizens of the country between the ages of 18 and 50.³⁷ For officers, it ended when they reached the age of 60.³⁸ In an emergency, all male citizens between 18 and 60 years of age were subject to military service. NVA conscripts served 18 months, after which they could be called up at different time intervals for a total of 21 months, amounting to 39 months of service overall.

Service for the defence of the German Democratic Republic was seen as the "honourable duty" of citizens

Service for the defence of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was seen as the "honourable duty" of citizens. This meant, among other things, that women were also allowed to do military service during mobilisation or in an emergency. While there was no conscription for women, they could volunteer for military service.

The introduction of compulsory military service brought a number of advantages over voluntary service, especially in training and education, but also new problems:

- The majority of the conscripts who were called up had completed secondary or vocational education.
- These prerequisites made it possible to condense the training content.
- Because military service was limited to 18 months, in contrast to three years for voluntary service in the Soviet Army, the

³⁴ Headquarters of the Army, "FM 100-2-3," 1.

³⁵ Headquarters of the Army, "FM 100-2-3," 2.

³⁶ For provisions on the service careers of soldiers, NCOs, and officers of the National People's Army of the German Democratic Republic, see: *Anordnungs- und Mitteilungsblatt des Ministeriums für Nationale Verteidigung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* [Order and information sheet of the Ministry of National Defence of the German Democratic Republic], T. A., No 3, 14 July 1956.

³⁷ Defence Act (*Gesetz zur Verteidigung der DDR*) of 20 September 1961. The act specified the tasks of society as a whole in peacetime and in a defence situation, particularly the protection of the population and the economic assurance of national defence. The legislative activity and military legal norms based on it were laid out in the General Conscription Act (*Gesetz über die allgemeine Wehrpflicht*) of 24 January 1962. These acts were supplemented by other legal rules and regulations and formed the legal basis for supplying the armed forces of the GDR with personnel. They were continuously developed and further specified by the 1982 Act on Military Service in the GDR (*Gesetz über den Wehrdienst der DDR*).

³⁸ Conscription in the GDR meant that citizens subject to conscription were required to do military service for a certain period in peacetime and as necessary during mobilisation and in a defence situation. See Heinz Lindner, *Fragen und Antworten zum Wehrdienst* [Questions and answers about military service] (East Berlin, 1984), 33.

entire system had to be based on new programmes to ensure an appropriate balance between the material and combat training.³⁹

- The system of replenishment with conscripts had to be redesigned down to the sub-unit level.
- Sections, gun crews, vehicle crews, and squads were always replenished with one-third of new conscripts, while two-thirds were already doing their second or third half-year of service.⁴⁰

At the end of the 1960s, one company of the motorised rifle battalions was always replenished with one half-year of service. This principle was maintained until the end of the GDR.

Requirements were based on an exaggerated propaganda image of the enemy that required a disproportionately high level of readiness from soldiers at all levels

6.1. OPERATIONAL READINESS AND LEVELS OF READINESS

The system of levels of combat readiness and their implementation were among the most controversial regulations in the NVA at the end of the 1980s. These requirements were based

³⁹ When the NVA introduced compulsory military service with 18 months of training in 1962, soldiers in the Soviet Army had a training period of three years. In the land forces, until 1967, conscripts served for 36 months; starting in 1968, they served 24 months. This length of military service continued until Soviet troops withdrew from the GDR. Combat training (*Gefechtsausbildung*) was part of the process of military training and included the planned preparation of soldiers, sub-units, units, formations, and commands for the performance of combat tasks. The aim of this training was to enable these organisational elements to conduct any type of combat activities under any conditions, day or night, independently or in cooperation with the next higher organisational level, to create combat collectives and to ensure constant combat readiness. The combat training of the various services, service branches, special forces, and other structures varied to some extent.

⁴⁰ In contrast to motor rifle platoons, which were divided into sections, armoured, reconnaissance, and other services and service branches were divided into vehicle crews (*Besatzungen*). In the artillery, there were gun crews (*Geschützbedienungen*). These were always the smallest sub-units, with an NCO as the military commander and instructor at the head.

on an exaggerated propaganda image of the enemy that required a disproportionately high level of readiness from soldiers at all levels.

Operational readiness was defined as the overall condition of a sub-unit, unit, or formation (e.g., in terms of military equipment) for carrying out military tasks immediately.⁴¹ The operational readiness of military equipment was understood as deriving from its technical condition and maintenance status. One indicator was the coefficient of technical operational readiness (*Koeffizient der technischen Einsatzbereitschaft*, KTE) – the ratio of equipment ready for use and the amount of equipment according to the target or actual stock. Until 1989, a minimum of 85% KTE was required under garrison conditions. The main task of the technical services was to ensure such a high KTE at all times. The operational readiness of personnel depended, among other things, on their numerical strength and level of training. It determined the success with which units and sub-units were able to solve the tasks they were given.

Special forces with higher operational readiness, or readiness levels, as understood today, did not exist in the armed forces, special troops or services of the land forces.⁴² Overall, the NVA showed a high level

⁴¹ Sub-unit (*Einheit*) – the lowest structural element in the armed forces. The various sub-units of the armed forces were sections (gun crews, vehicle crews, squads; *Gruppen: Bedienungen, Besatzungen, Trupps*), platoons (*Züge*), companies (batteries; *Kompanien, Batterien*) and battalions (*Bataillone, Abteilungen*). *Truppenteil* – a unit of several sub-units from one or more service branches. Such units were regiments (*Regimenter*), squadrons (*Geschwader*) and independent battalions (*Bataillone, Abteilungen*). *Verband* – a formation of several *Truppenteile* and *Einheiten* of one or more service branches of the armed forces, which could have a constant or variable stock of forces and resources. Formations (*Verbände*) were divided into tactical (e.g., division, brigade), operational-tactical (e.g., corps), and operational formations (e.g., army). In the navy, a further distinction was made between lower and higher tactical formations, and in the land forces, general tactical formations existed as an additional subdivision. The general tactical formations were motor rifle and tank divisions; the tactical sub-units of all branches of the armed forces were divisions and brigades of the different service branches and special troops.

⁴² The exception was the Service Systems (*Diensthabende Systems*) or Combat Service (*Gefechtsdienst*). These contained, among other things, a required number of sub-units of the rocket troops and air force / air defence troops, which were permanently maintained at a higher level of combat readiness and were the first to be available to ward off a surprise attack.

of readiness, which was ensured by alarm levels. In this respect, the training and exercise programmes, including the description of individual training and training at the unit level, as well as the time required for this training, basically applied equally to all sections of the land forces.

The requirements for achieving operational readiness for deployment to planned positions, in order to be ready and capable for combat operations, were planned and implemented through coordinated measures at each command level. They provided for the gradual deployment of troops and were a permanent task for the headquarters and units and included:

- ensuring the supply of personnel and materiel;
- ensuring an efficient daily training process;
- ensuring the constant operational readiness of combat equipment and armament;
- ensuring readiness for the rapid transfer of troops to “concentration spaces” (*Konzentrierungsräume*) or assigned staging areas.

The time factor concerned what the troops were required to do within a specified time limit and the minimum time in which the highest level of combat readiness was to be achieved.⁴³

The level of permanent combat readiness (*Ständige Gefechtsbereitschaft*, SG) of commands, troops, and facilities was, as the name suggests, to be guaranteed at all times. At this level, general service operations were carried out according to plan; there were generally no restrictions. In addition, there were further levels of combat readiness with binding measures based on uniform criteria and standards. Higher levels of readiness than the SG included increased combat readiness, combat readiness faced with a threat of conflict, and full combat readiness.

⁴³ See *Militärlexikon* [Military lexicon] (East Berlin, 1973), 123.

Increased combat readiness (*Erhöhte Gefechtsbereitschaft*, EG) was to be achieved within three hours of the receipt of a signal and involved restrictive and preparatory measures for the rapid transition to full combat readiness (*Volle Gefechtsbereitschaft*, VG). These included:

- restrictions on the use of combat equipment;
- preparatory measures for the rapid commissioning of other equipment and for providing it with ammunition, as well as for the loading of additional troop supplies;
- immediate repair of equipment and weapons that needed it;
- limiting combat training to a distance of up to 10 km from the location of the garrison;
- limiting secondments, vacations, and leaves to the location area and preparing for the retrieval of all forces and resources located outside the area;
- verifying the accessibility of the planned staging areas and the marching streets leading to the areas, as well as the intended communication links;
- specifying or updating combat initiation and plans for transferring to the next higher level of readiness;
- and preparations for the changing of the guard and handover of the site.

Combat readiness faced with a threat of conflict (*Gefechtsbereitschaft bei Kriegsgefahr*, KG) involved, among other things, determining secret decentralisation areas (*Dezentralisierungsräume*) and preparing for a transition to the highest level of full combat readiness. At this level, all forces were to be made fully mobile and placed at the highest level of readiness to carry out combat tasks; with this, the mobilisation of the NVA was completed.⁴⁴ Over time, this level came to correspond to the standards of

⁴⁴ Torsten Diedrich, Hans Ehlert, and Rüdiger Wenzke, *Im Dienste der Partei, Handbuch der bewaffneten Organe der DDR* [In the service of the party, handbook of the armed authorities of the GDR] (Berlin, 1998), 484.

full combat readiness, with the exception that it gave commanders restrictive instructions concerning the degree of ensuring refuelling, ammunition, and logistics.

Full combat readiness (VG). Commands, units, and sub-units were required to achieve this level within 90 minutes after it was triggered. If preceded by level EG, the unit had up to X+30 minutes to leave the site; if not preceded by level EG, it had up to X+50 minutes in summer and X+60 minutes in winter. When bringing units to full combat readiness on site (*Volle Gefechtsbereitschaft im Objekt*, VGO), columns were to be set up within 90 minutes. VGO applied above all to higher command levels. At this level of readiness, measures were taken that enabled combat tasks to be carried out: the formations (*Verbände, Truppenteile*) and sub-units (*Einheiten*) were replenished and supplied in accordance with their organisational plans and equipment certificates; command was guaranteed at all levels; and units were ready to act immediately on orders.

On the orders of the commanders, it was possible to bring garrisons to the level of VG. By creating the necessary prerequisites and taking organisational measures, the commands and units were able to further enhance the establishment of higher levels of combat readiness in the interest of their effectiveness.

The levels of readiness were systematically checked and perfected in military practice.⁴⁵ Periodic measures to increase combat readiness, especially the “monthly combat readiness days” (training of elements of combat readiness), contributed to the fact that, at the order of the commanders, units were able to achieve operational readiness on-site in two to three hours and formations in three to four hours.

6.2. COMPOSITION OF SUB-UNITS

The composition of sub-units depended on whether they were ordinary motor rifle sub-units or tank, artillery, or special sub-units (reconnaissance, engineers, NBC protection troops, etc.). Conscripts for motor rifle

companies were called up by year so that the three companies in every motor rifle battalion were each filled with conscripts in a different half-year of service. The smallest units of tank, artillery, and special troops drew conscripts from all three half-years of service. Thus, the tank, artillery, and special units (reconnaissance, pioneer, chemical services, etc.) had the smallest sub-units (sections, vehicle crews, and gun crews), staffed with conscripts from all three half-years of service.⁴⁶

Starting in the autumn of 1989, the political situation in the GDR began to come to a head. Public debates were held over whether conscription or a professional army was preferable. The reduction of military service from 18 to 12 months, the introduction of civil service in the health service or in charitable organisations, the drafting of conscripts according to a territorial system, the election of soldiers’ spokesmen, and so on marked a changed attitude to military service. These and other options received due consideration by the Modrow government in early 1990 when drafting a new law on conscription and military service.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the NVA adhered to conscription until it was dissolved.

Application-specific training requires a longer period to develop the necessary skills and for the trainees to be able to be used properly and effectively as a unit

The reduction of compulsory military service from 18 to 12 months was a political necessity. However, this did not allow enough time to ensure the units’ operational readiness. Basic military training to acquire basic skills is possible in 12 months, but skills for joint use within a sub-unit and in cooperation with other sub-units, especially technical and specialist skills, will be lacking. In order for conscripts

⁴⁵ Horst E Sylla, and the author’s notes.

⁴⁶ In motor rifle battalions, each company was staffed with conscripts from the same half-year of service. Reconnaissance, engineer, and other sub-units contained conscripts from all three half-years (in a single section, gun crew, or vehicle crew), which allowed the young, still inexperienced soldiers to learn from and be supported by their older colleagues.

⁴⁷ The government of the German Democratic Republic under Hans Modrow as chairman of the Council of Ministers was in office from 13/18 November 1989 until the free parliamentary elections on 18 March 1990.

skills, will be lacking. In order for conscripts to achieve the required level of training for complex and demanding tasks, they must first be trained individually, then as a team (e.g., combat shooting drills in sections and platoons) in a time-consuming, comprehensive and high-quality manner. Such application-specific training requires a longer period to develop the necessary skills and should, if possible, last 15 months in order for the trainees to be able to be used properly and effectively as a unit. The application-specific and aptitude assessment of the conscripts should be checked with the extensive use of modern simulators and trainers in order to be able to decide on the required length of military service.

Previous knowledge from pre-military training, as well as the growing level of education and qualified professional training in the NVA, contributed to the fact that the majority of the conscripts adapted, met the requirements of military service, and were characterised by a high level of commitment, especially in manoeuvres and exercises.⁴⁸ In addition, the pre-military training (Society for Sport and Technology, GST) and the organisation of the Free German Youth (FDJ) contributed to increasing the readiness of the new conscripts.

6.3. TRAINING IN THE NVA

The main military activity in the NVA was the training and further education of regular and professional soldiers at military and civilian universities and technical schools, combat training, and operational training.⁴⁹ The training of soldiers undertaking compulsory military service took place in three stages:

- basic military training;
- individual training, in which the necessary knowledge and skills for the fulfilment of

tasks in official positions in sections, gun crews, vehicle crews, and squads were developed;

- and training to establish the cohesiveness of sub-units and units.

Training culminated with troop exercises, with and without combat shooting, that were at the same time a performance test. Later, combat training was developed, gradually making available service branch-specific trainers and simulators. They enabled a higher level of intensity and improved the overall quality of the training, and they also helped save time and money.

Training was initially planned in the Ministry of National Defence and proceeded through the subordinate levels of leadership, the command of the land forces, the commands of the military districts, and the headquarters of the divisions for the respective training year. For units (regiments and independent battalions or *Abteilungen*), the training year was planned over one month for battalions and two training weeks for companies/batteries. Training also included indoctrination against the enemy, but this was, as most military leaders knew, very exaggerated.

6.3.1. MILITARY TRAINING

Military training was the most important part of training.⁵⁰ The aim was to ensure the ability and readiness of the soldiers, the sub-units, units, and formations of different service branches, special troops, and services to fulfil their constitutional mandate, as well as their

⁴⁸ A very realistic account of military service from a grassroots perspective is offered by Th. Spanier, "In Erinnerung an meine Dienstzeit. 18 Monate als Wehrpflichtiger in der NVA" [In memory of my service. 18 months as a conscript in the NVA], in Manfred Backerra, *NVA. Ein Rückblick in die Zukunft. Zeitzeugen berichten über ein Stück deutscher Militärgeschichte* [NVA. A look back into the future. Contemporary witnesses report on a piece of German military history] (Cologne, 1992), 27.

⁴⁹ Combat training included the planned preparation of soldiers, sub-units, units, formations, and commands for the performance of combat tasks.

⁵⁰ *Truppenausbildung* (military training) was a new umbrella term, introduced in 1988/89, for the entire training of the armed forces of the NVA, which included basic military training, operational training, mobilisation training, and further training at troop or command service level (*Truppendienst, Stabdienst*) through to continuing education. The aim was to guarantee basically the same training (i.e., develop comparable skills among all those doing compulsory military service) in the three single services (*Teilstreitkräften*), the service branches (*Waffengattungen*), and supporting services (*Diensten*).

regulatory tasks and those assigned to them through the political decisions of the GDR government.⁵¹

Military training was part of a goal-oriented, systematic, and uniform military educational process

Military training was part of a goal-oriented, systematic, and uniform military educational process, intended to be implemented at target levels, which were, in turn, reflected in sub-goals, the level of knowledge and capability to be achieved, and the readiness to perform military tasks. These took into account the specific features and tasks of the units, the overall goal of training and education, and the total time available, and were to be specified in the military training programmes. Target levels were to be specified by the commanders of the units and sub-units taking account of the situation, the threat level and the required level of operational readiness, the level of education and readiness of the soldiers, and the current level of training achieved and the usable training base.

Military training included:

- basic military training (15%);
- individual training (10–14%);
- sub-unit training (46–52%);

⁵¹ Service branches (*Waffengattungen*) were the main components of each service (*Teilstreitkraft*) and were divided into formations (*Verbände*), units (*Truppenteile*), and sub-units (*Einheiten*). Due to close cooperation between the various service types, their combat capabilities were used effectively. The service types of the land forces were as follows: motor rifle troops, tank troops, and missile troops, as well as artillery, airborne, and air defence troops. In the air force / air defence: anti-aircraft missile troops, air forces, and radio-technical troops. In the navy (*Volksmarine*): surface forces (combat, coastal protection, and support units). Special forces (*Spezialkräfte*) and services (*Dienste*) existed in all branches of the armed forces. These were sections (*Truppen*), i.e., forces tasked with supporting or supplying combat operations by formations, units, and sub-units. In the land forces, these mainly included engineer and signal units, chemical services, and rear and technical services. In the air force, these were aviation and aircraft technical service units, signal and air command and control units, chemical service units, technical supply units, and medical units. In the *Volksmarine*, they were radio-technical units, signal units, rear services, and the marine hydrographic service.

- operational training to improve command skills and the execution of orders (c. 50%);
- mobilisation training;
- (for regular soldiers) further training at troop and command service level.⁵²

Basic military training aimed to ensure the soldiers' ability and readiness to fulfil their duties in their respective official positions independently and with other soldiers, as well as to fulfil the constitutional mandate and their legal obligations. At this training stage, general as well as initial special and tactical knowledge, skills, and abilities were to be acquired as necessary for the performance of the duties and rights for the handling of the military technology and equipment in the official position.

Individual training prepared soldiers for sub-unit training. The method used was to train the trainees individually and enable them to fulfil their official duties through the independent acquisition of knowledge. It served to impart and acquire knowledge and skills as well as awareness and behavioural patterns and created the prerequisites for the subsequent sub-unit training.

In sub-unit training, trainees were trained within the framework of the structural sub-unit (section, gun crew, vehicle crew, or squad). It served to teach coordinated and joint action aimed at the performance of tasks to be fulfilled by the sub-unit, as well as at interaction with other sub-units, at which the acquisition and consolidation of military capabilities and the formation of the awareness and behavioural patterns were directed.

Operational training was defined as ensuring the ability and readiness of the headquarters and units to carry out their tasks and regulatory duties in an organised and effective way. During this training, the knowledge and skills acquired in basic military training, as well as in

⁵² The percentages represent the total volumes during each half-year of service. Operational training was introduced in 1989-90. Mobilisation training accounted for approximately one month at the end of the third half-year of service or was carried out in periodic drafts of up to 21 months in total after the conscripts had been dismissed, depending on the requirements.

any training or further education received at educational institutions, were to be perfected, and the sub-unit, unit and headquarters were to be prepared for independent and joint actions at full strength.

Mobilisation training aimed to ensure the ability and readiness of the soldiers and units for the fulfilment of their official duties and tasks relating to mobilisation and the constant guarantee of the necessary stock of appropriately trained personnel reserves. Mobilisation training for planned mobilisation was to be implemented on the basis of the military training programmes. If the planned mobilisation activities changed, soldiers were to receive appropriate mobilisation training for the new activities one to two months before they were transferred to the reserve.

Military training was also categorised into general training (c. 10–15%), special training (c. 20–25%), tactical training (c. 40–50%), and civil education (c. 8–10%).⁵³ General training was to enable soldiers and sub-units meet the individual and collective basic requirements of military activity in their official position and as a sub-unit. Special training was to enable soldiers and sub-units to meet the individual and collective special requirements of military activity in their official position and as a sub-unit. Tactical training was to enable soldiers, headquarters, and formations to act in armed conflict. Civil education (“political education” until the end of 1989) was to ensure the ability of soldiers to exercise political responsibility to fulfil the constitutional mandate of the NVA and their rights and obligations as citizens in uniform.

Other activities included tactical exercises with or without combat shooting (4–5%), final reviews/inspections (3%), preparation of technology for a new period of use (8%), special measures (e.g., construction work, assignments in the civilian sector) (9–18%), courses and training in combat readiness, no-notice exercises, guard duty, holidays, and cultural and sporting events.

The training of conscript NCOs (*Unteroffizieren auf Zeit*) was usually carried out over a period of eight months, which was divided into four

months of basic military training with the unit and a further four months at a teaching/training facility.⁵⁴ If the situation required, soldiers could be trained in compulsory military service for leadership functions in small combat units. For this purpose, they had to be selected after a four-week basic military training and trained in a teaching/training facility for three months.

6.3.2. EXERCISES

Exercises were implemented primarily as tactical exercises to establish and verify the cohesiveness of the sub-units and units or as command post exercises with virtual units to consolidate and verify the cohesiveness of staffs and other headquarters. During exercises, it was possible to practise combat shooting more intensively, both with real weapons and under simulated conditions.

The number of exercises for different formations and the number of participating forces were set out in directives and orders specifying the tasks of the NVA. The basic duration of exercises was up to 10 training days for formations (divisions and brigades) and up to seven training days for smaller units and sub-units (from regiment to company/equivalent). Towards the end of the NVA, only those stocks were to be used in all exercises that were absolutely necessary to achieve the goals in order to be able to train effectively.

⁵⁴ The suitability of conscript NCOs as trainers and educators depended primarily on their intellectual prerequisites, the ability to work as part of a team, firmness of character and resilience, and on a well-structured and tightly scheduled training process. The supervision of the superiors of a sub-unit and their leadership, training, and education responsibilities were especially important in the intensive work with young NCOs. During my time as company commander, well-developed conscript NCOs could be promoted to sergeant (*Unterfeldwebel*) after one-and-a-half years of service or to deputy platoon commander and staff sergeant (*Feldwebel*) for outstanding achievement. In general, most conscript NCOs were able to act extensively on their own only after three years of service: i.e., at the time of their transfer to the reserve as a leader of a reconnaissance unit. For the areas of leadership, training and further education at section and platoon level, appropriate experience is required in order to be able to fully fulfil the tasks of a small combat unit. Service motivation, people management, personality development, mental strength, and loyalty to the constitution are key leadership skills for more than just the trainers of the smallest sub-units. We should be aware of this in the armed forces, as well as in society and political discussions.

⁵³ Author estimates.

7. THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (1956–2012)

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) established its Federal Defence Forces, the Bundeswehr, in 1955, made up of career soldiers, reservists, civil employees, and conscripts. Conscripts were male citizens of German origin who were drafted into the Bundeswehr from 1957 until the conscription law was suspended in 2012. Often referred to as the backbone of the Bundeswehr, the conscripts contributed to its high readiness during the Cold War.

This chapter describes how the conscripts were trained and employed, with a primary focus on the land forces. It addresses the political-military framework, organisational characteristics, draft modes, training concepts, types of readiness, improvement programmes, and experiences to allow a comparative analysis with other nations' conscription systems in conjunction with high readiness.

The Bundeswehr was a conscript army from its beginning

7.1. IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Bundeswehr was a conscript army from its beginning. This was a necessary result of the national ambition to integrate 12 army divisions, 1 300 combat aircraft, and 186 naval vessels with nearly 500 000 soldiers and 180 000 civilian employees into NATO. This envisaged strength could not be achieved by professional soldiers and volunteers alone, and the costs would be an unacceptable burden for the national budget. About 270 000 conscripts were calculated to be needed to fill slots for a service time of 18 months. Based on historical lessons of the German military and the experiences of other armies, alternate manpower models, such as career or militia armies, were studied but rejected due to operational requirements. Only conscription enabled the establishment of large presence forces, maintaining high readiness, and

preparing reservists who could be mobilised into a large wartime organisation.⁵⁵

A conceptual cornerstone was the length of conscription: the intended length of 18 months was shortened upon implementation in 1957 to 12 months as a political compromise. From 1962 until 1972, it was extended to 18 months and, from 1973 until 1991, again reduced to 15 months.⁵⁶ At the end of the Cold War, further reductions of compulsory military service were enacted: from 15 to 12 months in 1991, from 12 to 10 months in 1995, and finally to 9 months in 2002.

7.2. OVERALL CONCEPT

The military organisation consisted of high-readiness formations for Forward Defence (at between 80% and 100% of wartime strength) with territorial or supporting units for rear areas at reduced strength (20–80%) and cadre formations below 20% as non-active and mobilisable units.⁵⁷ The distinction between active, cadre, and non-active units permitted human resources to be managed so as to remain below a ceiling of 500 000. Most units consisted of a mix of conscripts and professional soldiers. The overall ratio of conscripts and professionals was approximately 1:1 during the Cold War and decreased to about 1:4 afterwards. At the unit level in the army,

⁵⁵ Presence forces (*präsenzte Kräfte*) was a West German military term to describe military structures of category A which are manned to conduct operations on short notice. West German readiness category A: present formations on high readiness, to be in place within 48 hrs; category B: reduced present formations within 96 hrs in place; category C non-active units to be in place within 15 days where to defend or to operate.

⁵⁶ The reduction from 18 to 15 months was the result of a civil-military commission after two years of studies in 1973. One key finding was that the conscript could be sufficiently trained in 15 months with regard to defined readiness levels.

⁵⁷ Forward Defence was part of the NATO strategy to defend close to the Inner German Border. The political aim of this concept was to give up as little terrain as possible to the attacking Warsaw Pact Forces. Forward Defence was a key political-strategic term in favour of German interests during the Cold War. Cadre units were category B and C units. Those in category B kept parts of their platoons and sections non-active, to be filled with reservists upon mobilisation. Category C units were not operational / non-active at peace time with only a mobilisation team responsible for wartime preparations such as materiel storage and the reception of reservists during exercises or mobilisation.

the relation was 2:1 to 3:1. Conscripts had to perform executive functions which were defined for draftees or enlisted junior ranks. Many expert functions in engineering and technical units were carried out by conscripts as skilled junior professional soldiers were not available. A conscript in a command function – such as a squad leader – was the exception, tolerated only occasionally, for a short time and under strict supervision.

During service, the conscript was mainly trained in skills for functions such as rifleman, gunner, sapper, crewman, technician, driver, or clerk and to act as a team member of his unit. His superiors were professionals acting as commanding officers, supervisors, instructors, and staff members. The interaction between professionals and conscripts was determined by a leadership philosophy, called *Innere Führung*, consisting of rules for command, discipline, trust, and respect for each other to enable the necessary cohesion. Day-to-day employment consisted of training interrupted by functional duties such as guarding, and standby or alert in high readiness units.

The enlistment of conscripts during active duty was a useful tool to maintain the necessary number of professional soldiers

The identification, mustering, initial assessment, and drafting of conscripts was the responsibility of the civil-military administration with its 71 regional recruiting offices (*Kreiswehrrersatzamt*) in West Germany.⁵⁸ They drafted between 40 000 and 50 000 conscripts each quarter, four times a year, in January, April, July, and October on the basis of different numerical and qualitative human requirements, physical fitness, education and special skills, and the priorities of units.

There was an option to directly select conscripts during active duty for a later reserve career as a sergeant or officer, but this depended on the individual's initiative to apply for a

⁵⁸ The draft was carried out between the age of 18 and 25, in principle at 18 years. After active service, conscripts could be called up for reserve duties until the age of 32, NCOs until 45, and officers until the age of 60. Regulations permitted shifting conscription to a later date or justified suspension for medical or social reasons. Call-ups for students who had already studied three semesters were postponed.

time-consuming reserve career. Sergeants and officers in the reserve were usually former professionals and most conscripts kept the same functional level in the reserve. The enlistment of conscripts during active duty, however, was a useful tool to maintain the necessary number of professional soldiers. Around 30% of officers and about 50% of NCOs and experts had enlisted voluntarily during their conscription. Conscripts who qualified as civil surgeons were drafted as medical officers with the initial rank of captain and served in medical functions.

7.3. TRAINING

All conscripts in all services and branches participated in basic military training (*Allgemeine Grundausbildung*) for three months and 600 training hours, either in basic training units or (1981–95) directly in high readiness units. The objective was to ensure that the conscript would be capable of soldiering and could be employed as a guard or sentry. The basic training was followed by function-oriented training and then collective training in team structure.⁵⁹ The army (*Heer*) was the greatest customer of conscription and used three “modes” of conscript call-up, integration, and training.⁶⁰

In Mode A, conscripts were drafted into a basic training company for three months. After this, they were transferred to different home units in which they served until the end of their duty. Every three months, the home units received the number of conscripts needed to fill the gaps left by those completing their service. Mode A was used for specialists, staff personnel, and technicians in the army, the air force, and the navy from 1955–2012. This functional

⁵⁹ Team structure (*Kleine Kampfgesellschaft*) could be section, squad, tank or gun crew, patrol dependable on the arm (infantry, artillery, armour, reconnaissance, logistic, staff section in headquarters, offices, agencies).

⁶⁰ The Army consisted, for example, in 1973 of about 334 000 soldiers, including 183 500 conscripts, with the relation of professional to conscript of 1:1. In a (generic) infantry company with four platoons of three squads each and a command section, the relation was about 40:80 or 30:90, which means 1:2 or 1:3; for army strength figures, see IISS, Military Balance 1973/73, 21. In the Air Force and Navy, which were smaller, the ratio was between 2 or 3 professionals for one conscript due to professional manpower requirements and sophisticated equipment.

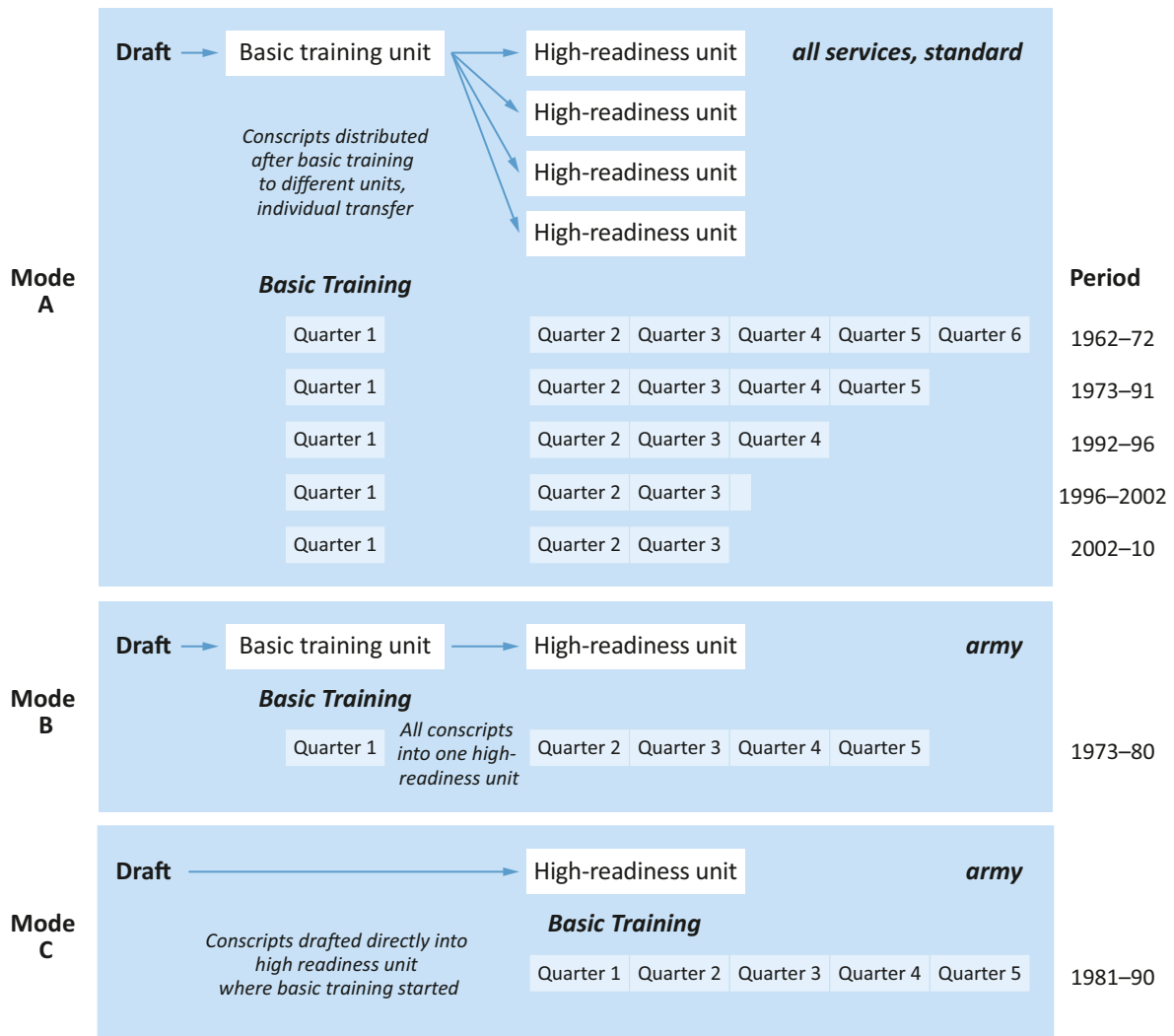


Figure 2. Modes and training in quarters, 1955–2012 (1955–62 identical to 1992–96). Source: The authors.

orientated replacement (old conscript out, new conscript in) meant that training in such units re-started every quarter and had to be repeated four times a year. While combat readiness was less than if all conscripts arrived once per year, this was acceptable for units in which professionals dominated and determined the level of readiness, all soldiers were experts and worked in supporting functions, and the unit had a supporting role (e.g., a headquarters unit, flight or maintenance squadron, a seagoing unit, a radar unit, or materiel depot).

Due to a lack of basic training units during the Cold War, modes B and C were developed and implemented in the army for combat and combat support units with a majority of conscripts.

In Mode B, conscripts destined for the same combat or combat support unit were first called up into a basic training company for 3

months before transfer to their home unit. There, they received their complete training in individual skills and as a combat team member (tank or gun crew, infantry section, sapper team, etc.) on the squad, platoon, and company/battery/squadron level. The training was executed in phases (figure 3). At the end of their duty, most conscripts joined the reserve as part of a skilled and cohesive package. Mode B was mainly used for all combat, engineer-sapper, and artillery units, and for units with the same profile in the air force and navy. The advantages were that training could be built up methodically during the whole time of service, and small unit cohesion could be much better implemented and enhanced in comparison to Mode A. The disadvantage was that the combat readiness level decreased to zero when the conscripts left and had to be rebuilt with new recruits joining after basic training. Mode B was introduced during the 1960s and was used until 1995.

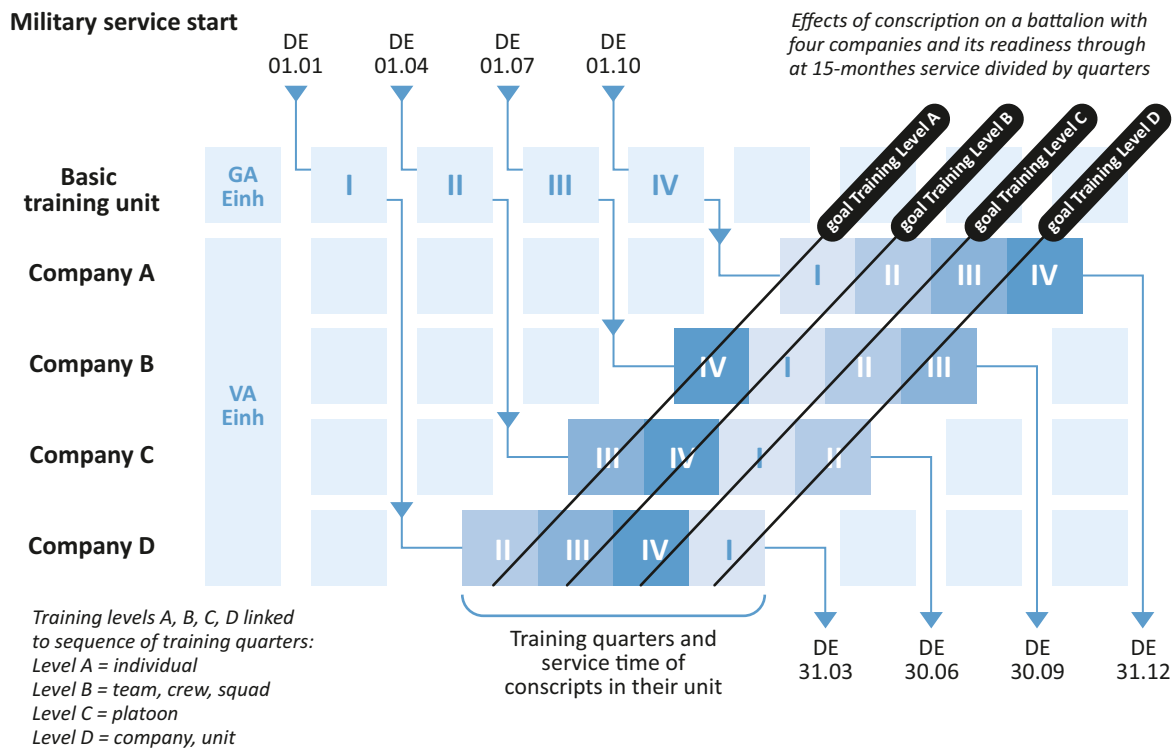


Figure 3. Mode B: company-wise allocation of conscripts in a battalion. Source: The authors.

In Mode C, conscripts were directly called up to their home unit for 15 months until the end of their duty, under the same leadership from the beginning. Training included basic training in the first quarter and then followed the same pattern as Mode B. Superiors acted first as instructors and then as tactical leaders. Mode C, introduced at the end of the 1970s, generated the best level of cohesion. After 1995, the reduction of the armed forces led to the return to mode A for all conscripts.

In all modes, the training that followed basic training (*Vollausbildung*) was divided into levels (*Ausbildungsstufen*) A to E and executed within home units. Level A was the specific training for tactical employment: rifleman, gunner, sapper, sniper, radioman, engineer, technician, clerk, driver, etc., conducted in parallel within a unit. Level B was tactical and functional training of a crew, section, squad, or team. Leaders, mostly junior sergeants, were trained together with their subordinates who were mostly conscripts plus a few enlisted men. Training was carried out by platoon leaders and supervised by company commanders. Level C focused on training the platoon and was executed by the company commander. At Level D, executed in the final quarter before dismissing the conscripts, the complete company, battery, or squadron was exercised and evaluated

in its tactical role under the direction of the battalion commander and his staff. Level E was the training of a whole battalion or regiment, usually performed at major training areas.⁶¹

In headquarters and support units, more focus was put on functional training, with the tactical skills learned during basic training – self-defence and sentry/patrolling – repeated and drilled. In combat and combat support units, conscripts had to grow together with their next leader into combat crews of between four and ten men. This required often more than 900 hours for training at levels A-C. Regular repetition of Level B and C drills was required during all four quarters of a training year. Inspections and major exercises in the 1970s and 1980s showed the positive effects of the training concept (mode B and C) for operational and high-readiness units.⁶²

⁶¹ BMVg FÜ H III 6, HDv 102/100, Truppenausbildung im Heer [HDV 102/100, training of units in the Army]. Annually, brigades or divisions are obliged to concentrate their subordinate units for tactical and live firing training at one of the major training areas mostly in Germany or in Canada, the UK, and France. During such a training period, Level E operational training for a whole battalion or regiment was executed.

⁶² Clemens Range, *Die geduldete Armee: 50 Jahre Bundeswehr* [The tolerated army: 50 years of Bundeswehr] (Translimes Media, 2005), 109-11.

**Example Mode B
Soldier come from
external basic training**

Training levels A, B, C, D linked to sequence of training quarters:
Level A = individual
Level B = team, crew, squad
Level C = platoon
Level D = company, unit
Level E = battalion, regiment*

Flexibility in training consists in using necessary tactical training hours as assessed by the company commander for Level B and C. He determines what is required and when level is achieved.

During 24hrs field training periods of 2 – 3 weeks outside barracks the training level of combat & tactical skills could be significantly enhanced by concentrating only on this kind of training.

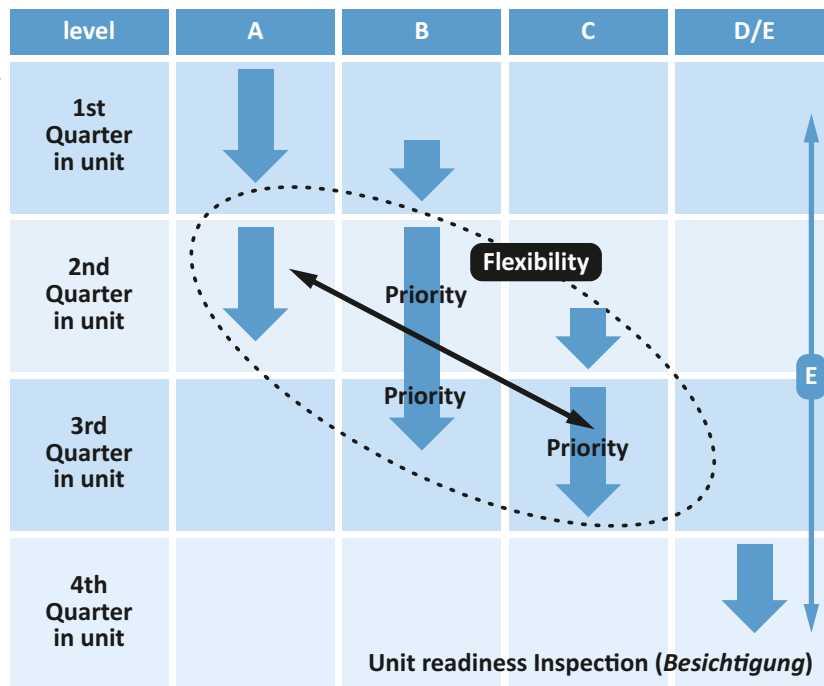


Figure 4. Training levels (A-E) and training quarters in a high-readiness unit. Source: The authors.

Shortages of NCOs and officers, however, often left officers tied up by bureaucracy instead of personally executing training in the field. There was a permanent gap of 20 000 NCO leaders and instructors and similar numbers for officers. Junior officers were short of practical

its dedicated mission. The NATO Alert system prescribed that at the highest level of readiness, all personnel should be present in the unit's location, fully armed, sustainable, and ready to move. In the Bundeswehr, this level of readiness was maintained for a limited time in 1968 in southern Germany during the Czechoslovak crisis. During the whole Cold War, weekly alert companies in garrisons close to the Inner German Border acted as standby units, ready for deployment, as did nuclear security

Shortages of NCOs and officers often left officers tied up by bureaucracy instead of personally executing training in the field

experience in leadership and soldiering and had to learn while leading and training others. This could be partly compensated for by employing volunteer reservists as leaders or instructors, but operational readiness was impacted, and professionals faced greater stress, critically affecting the attractiveness of the Bundeswehr.⁶³

and transport units. Serving in shifts in sites for surveillance or guard duty was also defined as high readiness duty and was compensated with additional free time or extra pay.

7.4. READINESS

The tactical mission of a unit, as laid down in the table of organisation and equipment, was the basis for assessing operational readiness: a unit was combat-ready if it could accomplish

Each battalion commander was required to inspect subordinate units (including supporting functions) at least once a year to assess combat readiness. The main criterion was the ability to execute tactical missions at day and night. Company administration and material readiness were also assessed, as were aspects such as violations of disciplinary rules, complaints, and individual skills and fitness. The results, summarised on a rating scale from limited to good, were documented, and recommendations for improvements were made and debriefed to the complete unit.

⁶³ Bremer, *Truppenausbildung* [Training in units], 174-81; Range, *Die geduldete Armee*, 102- 9.

Annual status reports about the operational readiness of higher echelons also included observations from major exercises and inspections. In 1981, NATO introduced operational readiness tests which were conducted by German staffs in the presence of a NATO observer. Rapid reaction according to the NATO counter surprise system was also tested twice a year during exercise Active Edge and with snap inspections from 1981 onwards; NATO provided summary combat efficiency reports on each Ally.

In the early days, the Bundeswehr was assessed as being at only limited operational readiness, but through conscription, combat readiness grew from low to high. However, the permanent presence of less or more than 450 000 soldiers in combination with an optimised training system permitted rating active units with more 80% of TOE strength as

In the early days, the Bundeswehr was assessed as being at only limited operational readiness, but through conscription, combat readiness grew from low to high

high readiness units. Key to high readiness were officers and NCOs ensuring the appropriate integration of conscripts, their leadership, and professional training.

CONCLUSIONS

The case studies illustrate several key issues to be considered when it comes to options for generating high-readiness forces through conscription.

First, is the purpose of conscription. In some countries – e.g., Israel, Norway, and during the Cold War, the former East and West Germany – which focus on operational readiness, the primary role of conscription is to provide manpower to standing units. Although most conscripts are transferred to the reserves upon completing their service, this is not the main purpose of calling them up in the first place. In others – e.g., Finland, Estonia, and Switzerland (the latter two have not been included in this analysis) and Sweden during the Cold War – which emphasise training for wartime roles

following mobilisation, the primary role of conscription is to provide manpower to fill entire reserve units.

In others – e.g., Denmark (not included in this analysis) – the primary role of conscription is to create a pool of able and willing youngsters from which the armed forces can recruit promising enlisted troops, NCOs, and officers.

The purpose of conscription has an impact on the length of service

The purpose of conscription has an impact on the length of service. In Denmark, compulsory military service can be short since there is limited need for extensive specialist or unit training, not to mention the need to serve in operational units that are on high readiness or even deployed on operations. In countries that focus on training units for the reserve or for standing units, the length of compulsory military service must also allow for specialist and unit training. Of the countries that train conscripts for standing units, Norway focuses on its standing forces with somewhat less attention devoted to the reserves, while Israel aims to balance the needs of standing forces with the needs of the reserves – once conscripts have completed training and operational duties, they are transferred to the reserves as complete units.

Second, in several of the studied countries, the needs of the state are increasingly being prioritised over the interests of the individual. Norway, which has decided to increase the number of annual call-ups to ensure more

The needs of the state are increasingly being prioritised over the interests of the individual

stable readiness throughout the year at the expense of disrupting the studies of conscripts is a good example. More broadly, several European countries have decided to reintroduce and extend conscript service. Latvia (2023), Lithuania (2015), and Sweden (2018) have recently reintroduced conscription due to the changed geopolitical situation and insufficient manning levels in their armed forces. The Netherlands encourages young

citizens to volunteer for conscription (2023).⁶⁴ Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Norway have extended or are extending the duration of their national conscript service for several categories of conscripts, building on a mix of voluntary and compulsory measures in response to the deteriorating security environment and the increased complexity of the armed forces. In Norway, extended service is seen as necessary to get more operational output from the investment in conscripts' education and training and thus to improve cost efficiency.

High-readiness units manned with conscripts to different degrees help ensure national readiness alongside other important elements such as standing units manned with professionals and reserve units

Third, several countries have responded to the changed security environment by giving conscripts an elevated role in increasing readiness. High-readiness units manned with conscripts to different degrees help ensure national readiness alongside other important elements such as standing units manned with professionals and reserve units. Conscripts may either be used to man coherent units or to augment units manned with professionals. Finland decided in 2017 to create high-readiness units manned with conscripts who, on a voluntary basis, serve longer than conscripts trained for the reserve. Norway studied, tested, and is currently introducing a new conscript training system to improve the operational readiness of the armed forces. Sweden is considering a similar way forward.

Historic examples demonstrate how standing units manned with trained conscripts can contribute to high readiness. In West and East Germany, several intakes of conscripts each year ensured that at any point, there were sub-units where unit training had commenced and sub-units that were still busy with basic military training. This allowed units to maintain a relatively stable level of readiness overall

⁶⁴ "[Dienstpflichtbrief voor 17-jarigen valt weer in de bus](#)" [Conscription letter for 17-year-olds is back in the mail], National Government, last accessed 24 September 2023.

(Norway has adopted a similar approach). Both countries also possessed relatively large reserves.

The Swedish army preferred to train entire battalions during the Cold War to improve unit cohesion at the expense of temporary drops of readiness at the unit level, but this was compensated for on the regional or national level by other units operating with different training cycles. Such cycles could build on intakes of conscripts in August, October, or January. Since the conscripts served between 7.5 and 15 months, battalions were mostly able to undergo unit training, and all conscripts experienced winter training. When arranging brigade-level field exercises, reserve battalions could be called up for refresher training to complement the existing conscript battalions and

allow a relatively large field exercise to be held. In addition, a battalion (*Riksbataljonen*) was maintained at higher readiness on the national level and included sub-units from different garrisons that could be rapidly redeployed, when and where necessary.

Fourth, countries have adopted different solutions regarding the degree of integration of conscripts into regular structures. In Finland and Israel, for example, conscripts man entire (sub)units and are often led by conscripted officers and NCOs, resulting in coherent

Countries have adopted different solutions regarding the degree of integration of conscripts into regular structures

structures. In countries such as Norway, by contrast, many conscripts are integrated into sub-units with contract soldiers and are led by full-time NCOs and officers, enabling the transfer of knowledge and experience between different personnel categories. A different kind of integration was practised in the former East German and West German armed forces, where some sub-units integrated conscripts from different call-ups so that more experienced soldiers could exert influence on the young soldiers, thus maintaining a relatively stable fighting power after a new intake of young soldiers had replaced older ones. The type of integration also depends, to a certain extent,

on the purpose of conscription which may vary between the different services.

Fifth, conscription may be universal or selective. Currently, only Israel comes close to employing universal conscription that applies to both men and women but not to Haredi Jews and Israeli Arabs, who constitute over 30% of the Israeli population. In Finland, all male citizens are conscripted while female citizens are encouraged to volunteer for military service. In Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Lithuania, conscription is selective in that military requirements determine not only the quality but also the number of citizens to be conscripted.

Sixth, most of the case study countries actively seek volunteers to increase the effectiveness of conscript systems. Those countries that conscript to provide manpower for standing units or reserves try to attract motivated young men and women who are willing to be conscripted voluntarily (e.g., Norway) or to serve longer than others (e.g., Finland) without actually enlisting. Those countries where conscription is voluntary for women (e.g., Denmark and Finland) work hard to encourage more women to volunteer for service as conscripts or to be enlisted.

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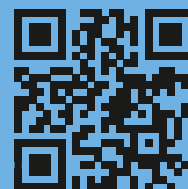
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