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MODEL OF AN IMPROVED MULTI-LEVEL TRAINING SYSTEM FOR ENLISTED AND SERGEANT PERSONNEL OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF UKRAINE

The article examines the problem of improving the training system for enlisted personnel and sergeants of the National Guard of Ukraine in the context of armed aggression and adaptation to international standards. Based on a comparative analysis of training models in NATO countries (the United States, Great Britain, Germany) and Ukraine, key differences are identified, in particular the lack of integration of leadership elements at the basic level.

A model of improved multi-level training is proposed, which provides for the introduction of initial leadership courses at the stage of basic general training.

Keywords: National Guard of Ukraine, sergeant corps, enlisted personnel, multi-level training, leadership courses, NATO standards, professional competencies, motivational programmes, career growth, military education, national security.

Statement of the problem. Against the backdrop of ongoing armed aggression against Ukraine and in the context of adapting the defence sector to the standards of modern armies around the world, high-quality training, professional development and career growth of enlisted personnel and sergeants are of particular importance. Junior management plays an important role in ensuring the effective functioning of units, as well as in organising the daily activities and control of subordinate personnel, maintaining internal discipline and forming an appropriate moral and psychological state. Junior commanders exercise direct control over the performance of tasks in units, which determines their leading role in the structure of the security and defence sector.

The 2015 Law of Ukraine "On the National Guard of Ukraine" defines the National Guard as "a military formation with law enforcement functions, which is part of the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and is designed to perform tasks to protect and safeguard the life, rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens, society and the state from criminal and other illegal encroachments, maintaining public safety and order and ensuring public safety, as well as, in cooperation with law enforcement agencies, ensuring state security and protecting the state border, stopping terrorist activities, the activities of

illegal paramilitary or armed formations (groups), terrorist organisations, organised groups and criminal organisations" [1].

Accordingly, personnel, in particular junior commanders (privates and sergeants), are entrusted with a wide range of functions, from direct combat operations to performing special functions characteristic of the activities of the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU). This requires not only a high level of professional training, but also the development of leadership competencies, which include the ability to make unconventional decisions in difficult conditions, as well as psychological and practical readiness to act in crisis or emergency situations.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issues of developing enlisted personnel, as well as the training and professional development of future sergeants, have been addressed in the scientific works of domestic and foreign researchers. Scientists D. Viter and V. Oliferuk studied the issue of improving the concept of the development of the military education system in Ukraine [2], while S. Belay and S. Kapelyushny analysed the state of staffing for the development of professional sergeants and senior sergeants in units and subunits of the National Guard of Ukraine [3]. Scientists V. Vasyshev, and O. Kaplyuchenko researched the formation and development of

leadership competencies of junior commanders in the training centres of the National Guard of Ukraine [4]. Researcher Yu. Chernykh formed a new view on the definition of professional military education [5]. Scientists M. Dumenko, D. Nosov, and V. Muraško substantiated the directions for the development and improvement of the system of staffing the Armed Forces of Ukraine with privates and sergeants [6]. Despite the wide range of issues addressed in the above works, the practical implementation of training for enlisted personnel and sergeants of the National Guard still needs improvement, as the mechanisms for ensuring this remain insufficiently effective.

The purpose of the article is to conduct research to identify problematic issues in the training system for enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers of the National Guard of Ukraine and to provide justification for the components of a model for an improved multi-level training system for enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers of the National Guard of Ukraine.

Summary of the main material. A comparative analysis of the training systems for enlisted personnel and non-commissioned officers in NATO countries [7, 8, 9] is based on common principles, but each of them has its own national characteristics, determined by legislative, organisational and cultural factors. Common to all models are a competence-based approach, a practical focus on training, and the structure of training.

At the same time, a comparison of training systems in NATO countries (the United States, Great Britain, Germany) and Ukraine reveals significant differences, particularly in terms of the integration of leadership elements at the initial stage. In NATO countries, the foundations of leadership competencies are formed during basic training, while in Ukraine this process is mostly postponed to the sergeant level. This approach directly affects the effectiveness of training and the level of motivation of personnel. Table 1 compares the training of sergeants and enlisted personnel in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Ukraine.

Table 1 – Comparison of training for sergeants and privates in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and Ukraine

Country	Level	Structure of Preparation	Training Duration	Features
United States	Private	Basic combat training. In-depth individual training	10–12 weeks	Specialisation, physical and mental training, realistic training
	Sergeant	Basic Leadership Course (BLC). Courses for senior leaders of a higher level	4 weeks	Leadership, tactical management, communication, command of small units
United Kingdom	Private	Phase 1 – initial training. Phase 2 – professional training	14 weeks	Focus on initiative, practicality, mentoring
	Sergeant	Junior sergeant courses (platoon commander course)	6–8 weeks	Leadership skills, preparation for section command
Germany	Private	Training ground – specialised training	12 weeks	Basic training + professional specialisation, high ethical and legal components
	Sergeant	Junior commander course	2–3 weeks	Platoon command, development of communication and administrative skills
Ukraine	Private	Basic training	4–8 weeks	Multi-level training system
	Sergeant	Leadership courses, advanced training for sergeants	8 weeks	Retraining, advanced training

In the United States, Basic Combat Training (BCT) lasts 10-12 weeks and covers not only physical and tactical training, but also elements of leadership. In particular, the final stage focuses on developing leadership skills, self-discipline and tactical thinking. This gives soldiers initial experience in managing small groups, making decisions under stressful conditions and motivating others. This approach helps to form a highly mobile and psychologically resilient team from the very beginning of their service. Leadership is seen here as a basic quality that develops in parallel with basic skills, preparing military personnel for possible promotion to sergeant positions through courses such as the basic leadership course [7].

An identical focus on leadership can be observed in the United Kingdom, where the 14-week initial training stage (phase 1 – basic training) includes elements of leadership and management. The programme focuses on developing initiative, practical skills and mentoring: recruits learn not only basic military skills, but also the basics of communication, teamwork and ethical leadership. In the first stage of training, soldiers are viewed as potential leaders, with the main focus on character and intellectual development. This approach distinguishes the training from purely technical training and ensures a smoother and more motivating transition to junior commander training courses (in particular, junior sergeant courses) [8].

In Germany, basic 12-week training combines general military education with the development of professional competencies, with an emphasis on moral and legal norms. The concept of "internal leadership" permeates the entire training process, promoting the development of critical thinking, responsibility and communication skills. Thanks to this approach, Bundeswehr servicemen acquire basic leadership competencies, including small group management, teamwork development and critical thinking [9].

In contrast, in Ukraine, basic training lasts one to two months (depending on the training programme) and focuses primarily on general military skills such as tactics, marksmanship and physical endurance, without any clear integration of leadership courses at the initial stage to identify potential commanders. Leadership programmes

only begin at the sergeant level of training over a period of two months, resulting in a gap in competency development. The lack of an early focus on leadership reduces the motivation of enlisted personnel for career growth, encourages them to remain in their old positions, and hinders the formation of a sustainable personnel reserve. This differs from NATO models, where leadership is developed gradually, ensuring continuity and compatibility.

The main goal of multi-level training is to develop competent, motivated, and independent junior command personnel, as well as to ensure that they achieve the appropriate level of professional readiness to effectively perform their functional duties in accordance with job requirements [10].

Due to the need to improve the professional capabilities of personnel, a number of professional training standards for privates and sergeants were developed for the NGU. Their implementation is aimed at forming a highly qualified personnel reserve capable of effectively performing combat duties in various conditions.

The training programme is implemented in accordance with the standards developed by the NGU Main Directorate, which are divided into specialised programmes created with military specialities in mind. The programmes are aimed at developing professional competencies. At the same time, they do not fully contribute to the development of leadership qualities, unit management skills and teamwork, which are crucial for the professional development of future junior commanders. Figure 1 shows the professional standards for NGU enlisted personnel and sergeants.

The NGU Training Centre is the main institution for military and professional training of enlisted personnel and junior officers serving under contract. It provides training in blue-collar professions and military specialities focused on the current requirements of the NGU. In addition, the centre has the capacity to provide professional (vocational) training in blue-collar specialities and military accounting fields not only for the NGU's own needs, but also for other military formations and law enforcement agencies established in accordance with Ukrainian law.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	
"Combat medic"	"Controller (particularly important state facilities)"
"Physical training and sports instructor (military service)"	"Armoured personnel carrier gunner (machine gunner)"
"Dog handler"	"Armoured personnel carrier gunner-operator (machine gunner)"
"Mechanic-driver (driver) of an armoured personnel carrier"	"Sapper (demining)"
SERGEANT PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	
"Chief Sergeant"	"Instructor (military service)"
"Squad commander (military service)"	"Sergeant of Logistics Support"

Figure 1 – Professional training standards of the National Guard of Ukraine

The multi-level system of professional training for NGU privates and sergeants functions as an integrated structure aimed at the gradual acquisition of the skills and knowledge necessary to perform official duties. The system covers basic, specialised and professional training, implemented through courses of varying levels of complexity, ensuring continuity of professional development. Military personnel who successfully complete training at NGU training centres receive the appropriate certificates and return to their units for further service [11].

However, despite the functioning of the existing training system, many of those who undergo training do not express a desire to hold sergeant positions or move further up the career ladder. After returning to their units, military personnel often remain in their previous positions without further promotion or even resign. This situation is due to the lack of basic leadership courses that would develop the necessary management skills, motivation and focus on development. Additional deterrents include limited visibility of career prospects and insufficient support during the transition to higher positions.

As a result, the potential of the training system is not fully realised: personnel receive a sufficient level of professional knowledge and skills, but there is no proper systematic approach to the development of management and leadership qualities. This reduces the system's ability to identify and develop potential leaders at the basic level, limits their career advancement opportunities, and complicates the training of future sergeants as a key link.

Taking into account the experience of NATO countries and the development of the NGU, a

training system has been developed that provides for the introduction of leadership courses at the basic level as a fundamental basis for the professional development of future sergeants. The introduction of such a system is aimed at developing leadership competencies, ensuring appropriate conditions for further professional and career growth, and creating the preconditions for promising advancement to officer positions.

The model of improved multi-level training for NGU privates and sergeants provides for the introduction of initial leadership courses at the basic level as a fundamental basis for future junior commanders. It focuses on the development of leadership qualities and creates conditions for further professional and career growth. The purpose of introducing an initial leadership course at the basic general training stage (BGT) is to focus the attention of future military personnel on career prospects. The course is aimed at developing critical thinking, psychological resilience and leadership qualities necessary for managing subordinate personnel. After completing BZVP, military personnel undergo a comprehensive assessment, which includes practical exercises, theoretical tests and an evaluation of leadership qualities (passing exams) to confirm the competencies acquired. Based on the results of the exams, military personnel are awarded a certificate confirming their level of competence, which can be used as a recommendation for further appointment to the position of junior commander. Strengthening the practical component of leadership courses should be one of the key areas for improving the military training system. Figure 2 shows a model of an improved multi-level training system.

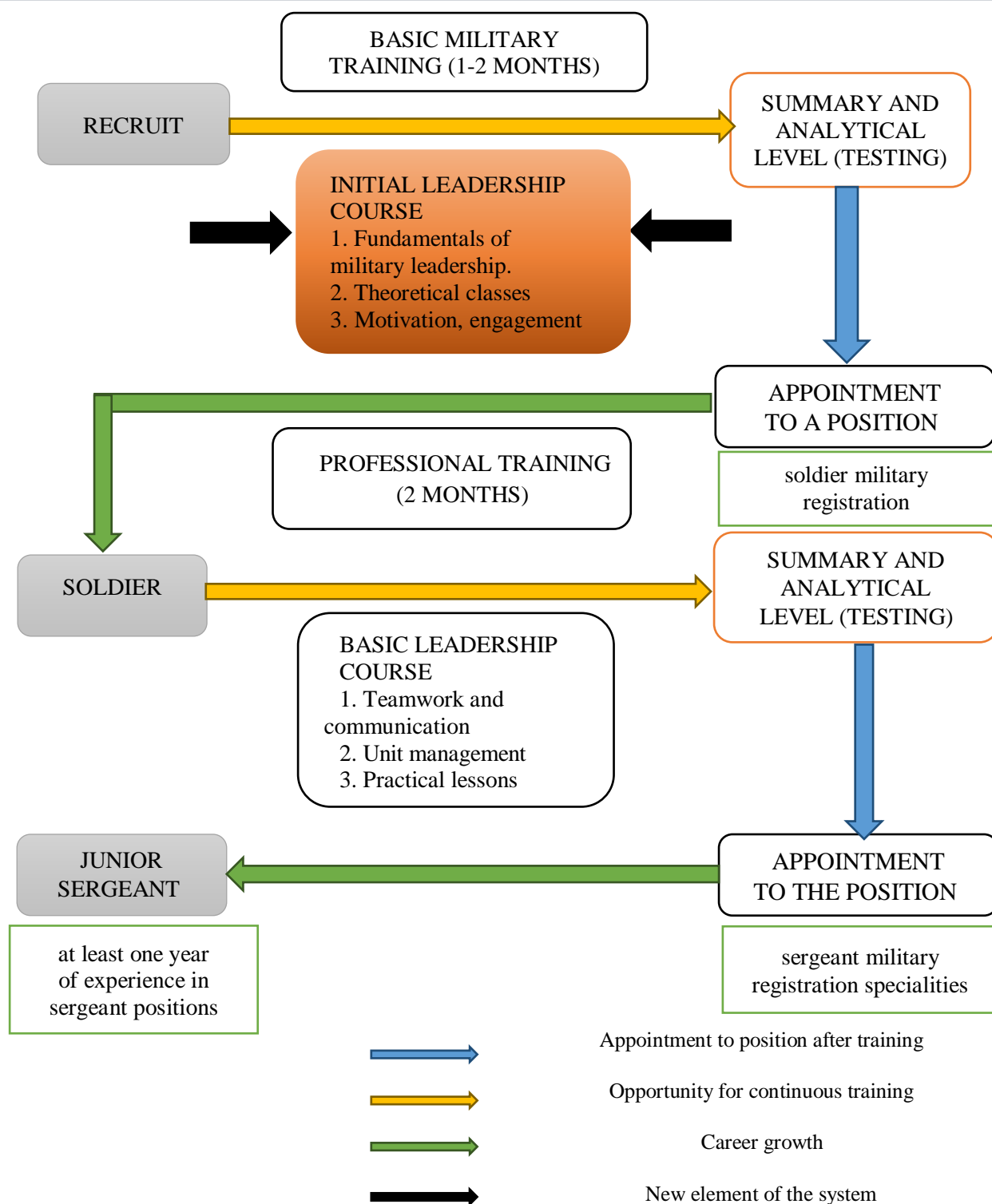


Figure 2 – Model of an improved multi-level training system

Another important area is the implementation of comprehensive motivation programmes. These should include both material incentives (financial rewards, bonuses for successful completion of courses) and non-material motivation mechanisms,

in particular: clear information for military personnel about career growth opportunities and the creation of a transparent system of promotion. It is also important to promote the positive experiences and success stories of sergeants who

have risen from the basic level to higher sergeant and officer positions, as such examples will increase motivation, create a sense of attainable career goals, and contribute to the growth and prestige of the service as a whole.

Conclusions

Improving the training system for enlisted personnel and sergeants of the National Guard of Ukraine is a key condition for ensuring the effectiveness of units, enhancing the professional capabilities of personnel, and creating prospects for career growth. A comparison with the experience of NATO countries (the United States, Great Britain, Germany) shows that the integration of leadership elements at the initial stage of service contributes to the early identification and development of potential commanders and the formation of responsibility and motivation among military personnel. This approach is consistent with the principles applied in NATO military structures and contributes to the adaptation of the training system for junior commanders of the National Guard of Ukraine to international standards.

Thus, the improved model of multi-level training is capable of ensuring the formation of a stable personnel reserve for the National Guard of Ukraine and increasing the effectiveness of the performance of combat duties. The proposed model for improving the training system for junior commanders of the National Guard of Ukraine through the integration of initial leadership courses at the basic general training stage is particularly important for increasing the effectiveness and professionalism of military personnel. It not only develops fundamental leadership competencies, such as critical thinking, psychological resilience and management skills, but also provides comprehensive testing of knowledge through practical tasks, tests and assessments, with the issuance of certificates. Strengthening the practical component of courses with the participation of experienced instructors and the introduction of motivational programmes – both material and non-material – contributes to the formation of a stable personnel reserve, increased motivation and prestige of service, which ultimately has a positive impact on the further development of the rank and file sergeant corps.

Further research will focus on improving the system, taking into account leadership courses,

which will contribute to an overall increase in professional capacity, the formation of personnel potential and the prospects for the promotion of sergeants to officer positions.

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**МОДЕЛЬ УДОСКОНАЛЕНОЇ БАГАТОРІВНЕВОЇ СИСТЕМИ
ПІДГОТОВКИ РЯДОВОГО ТА СЕРЖАНТСЬКОГО СКЛАДУ
НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ГВАРДІЇ УКРАЇНИ**

Розглянуто проблему вдосконалення системи підготовки рядового та сержантського складу Національної гвардії України в умовах збройної агресії й адаптації до міжнародних стандартів. Установлено, що вдосконалення системи підготовки рядового та сержантського складу Національної гвардії України є головною умовою забезпечення ефективності діяльності підрозділів, підвищення професійної спроможності особового складу та створення перспектив для кар'єрного зростання. Порівняння із досвідом країн НАТО (США, Великої Британії, Німеччини) показує, що інтеграція елементів лідерства на початковому етапі служби сприяє ранньому виявленню і розвитку потенційних командирів, формуванню відповідальності та мотивації військовослужбовців. Цей підхід відповідає принципам, які застосовуються у військових структурах НАТО, і сприяє адаптації системи підготовки молодших командирів Національної гвардії України до міжнародних стандартів.

Обґрунтовано, що вдосконалена модель багаторівневої підготовки здатна забезпечити формування стійкого кадрового резерву Національної гвардії України, підвищити ефективність виконання службово-бойових завдань. Запропонована модель удосконалення системи підготовки молодших командирів Національної гвардії України через інтеграцію початкових лідерських курсів на етапі базової загальної підготовки є особливо важливою для підвищення ефективності та професійності військовослужбовців. Вона не лише формує фундаментальні лідерські компетентності, такі, як критичне мислення, психологічна стійкість та навички управління, але й забезпечує комплексну перевірку знань через практичні завдання, тести й оцінку з видачею сертифікатів. Посилення практичного складника курсів за участі досвідчених інструкторів і впровадження мотиваційних програм – як матеріальних, так і нематеріальних – сприяють формуванню стабільного кадрового резерву, підвищенню мотивації та престижності служби, що в кінцевому підсумку позитивно впливає на подальший розвиток рядового сержантського складу.

Подальші дослідження будуть зосереджені на вдосконаленні системи з урахуванням лідерських курсів, що сприятиме загальному підвищенню професійної спроможності, формуванню кадрового потенціалу та перспективам просування сержантського складу на офіцерські посади.

Ключові слова: *Національна гвардія України, сержантський склад, рядовий склад, багаторівнева підготовка, лідерські курси, стандарти НАТО, професійні компетентності, мотиваційні програми, кар'єрне зростання, військова освіта, державна безпека.*

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