

New Romanian NCOs Core

Everything started in late 1998 when I was called to ensure a job as a driver instructor inside Noncommissioned Officers (NCO) Training School for Land Forces. NCO Training School for Land Forces was my former military school where I was teaching basic military since 1994 and I became NCO in 1996. For two years long I was appointed as an APC Driver into Ceremony Battalion which belongs to 30 Guard Brigade. My Military Occupation Specialty, Motor Transportation, was rarely into a big infantry brigade so I tried to find myself integrate inside of that structure which main role was to ensure military parades organized on special events and to defend two main airports from Bucharest. On that time my attitude wasn't prepared to think over the border of military system which was predominant into Balkans' Area. My experience to work with foreign nation military wasn't develop so I had to make face on that challenge who was close on that time.

As soon as I get to Pitesti, this on the other hand was my born city; I assumed my position into NCO Training School for Land Forces. The main mission of this school was to form and prepare Warrant Officers (WO) and NCOs for Romanian Armed Forces and other Romanian Organizations from National Defense and Public Order System. On January 1999 I had read about a selection among NCOs which basic requirement was to be well fit and to know Basic English. I decided to subscribe on that exams which final result was integration into a small unit designated to be train and educated to work with foreigner military. We've been involved around 60 NCOs but only 32 of us were selected. 32 NCOs were ready to start their training course on 1st of March 1999.

I was glad to be back on my former desk and to feel again as a student, but on this situation was different. We started fast to learn military English terms and classes were taught in

English under the command of 5 officers who put beside their knowledge and experience a part of their soul and count on our powers to become more educated.

We started to see many movies with different types of military actions which were taken by United States in different locations all around the world and came as a ramp for new tactics methods e. g. patrols, ambushes. We received explanations why nowadays psychological war is more important than a classic action and how came the result of it into a short period. We started to learn how to read proficient a map and what are NATO symbols for different units and actions for area of operation.

Everything looks to be new and modern and we were prepared to absorb as sponges each piece of knowledge which was delivered us. No one felt uncomfortable about verbal communication barrier and little by little our work started to be well appreciated by instructors.

The most attractive point of our training was military exercise. On the end of April 1999, we had to travel somewhere at the edge of the city and we lived for two weeks long. It was the time to prove what we've been learned in class is easy to apply no matter when, where or how.

On May 1999 all of 32 NCOs graduated instructor's course and only 25 of us were selected to go forward into Basic Training Leadership Course together with United States Marine Core Delegation.

Based on this little NCOs' core on 24th on May 1999 get born NCO Training Center which main goal was to form and train future NCOs based on a new curriculum and new concept. Those who join this center and become involved into basic training were requested to have completed their mandatory service. We call indirect way to become NCO. The direct one was connected to those young high school graduates who intended to join military and they never had any connection with military life before.

On 1st of July 1999 NCO Marine Core Delegation arrived in Training Center and we get together to know each other. The delegation consist of eight marines one Marine Corps Sergeant Major R.J. Kirby, leader of the team, one Gunnery Sergeant Leonard Barnett deputy leader, Staff Sergeant Rafael Santos, Sergeant Frank Scott, Sergeant Benny Barrios, Sergeant Paul Haley, Sergeant Chris Cabanas and Corporal Shannon Middleton. Soon we made a compact group and sharing not only military experience but also civilian one. We taught them few hours of geography and cultural classes to know better Romania. Even if they received country briefing prior to depart from USA, they remained amazed to discover new things in their natural shape and environment without aid of computer or visuals. We had some socialization trips to mountains and seaside. We presented them our costumes and the marvelous myth about Dracula versus Vlad the Impellor. We debated military style of teaching and we agree to change more from the old style through our collaboration.

Basic Training Leadership Course started on 6th of September 1999. All of us were energized by the new situation which we get through and step by step we discovered things that we never knew. Started with Leadership we as NCOs gain knowledge of making the right decisions in stressful situations and we obtained information about the way of accomplishing mission on the right way from the first time. Land Navigation we revealed overlays and all techniques concern map reading and interpretation of new symbols and graphics. Followed by tactics we improve actions at small team level and marines revealed more about guerilla fight and military operations in urban terrain and their experience was the significant factor who leads us to a better understanding of those actions. We found interesting the military law system and its areas of function and marines delivered more about military justice and sexual harassment. Also we had plenty of visual aids and power point presentations related to amphibious warfare,

field artillery, infantry, topographic analysis, military police, civil-military relations, defense resource and security assistance management, logistics.

A direct effect on Army personnel was the change based on searching always to improve values, teamwork and discipline. We've been taught how to plan, prepare, execute and assess well to operate independently and to create an environment of trust and understanding to encourage feature subordinates.

Some references about that collaboration I found on Foreign Military Training and Department of Defense Engagement Activities of Interest, Volume I Joint Report to Congress, March 1, 2000: "U.S. bilateral military assistance is focused on helping Romania contribute to stability in Southeast Europe by establishing and training a strong, efficient military under effective civilian control and enjoying a cooperative relationship with NATO, including through active participation in the Partnership for Peace. Training Romania's military also is helping Bucharest to strengthen its NATO candidacy. Our Foreign Military Financing (FMF) assistance includes a \$2 million program under which the U.S. Marine Corps is helping Romania develop and train a modern NCO corps on NATO-interoperable standards. Eight USMC NCO trainers are on the ground in Romania now instructing Romanian NCO trainers."

Also on www.defenselink.mil/news I found a report about activity of Marines NCOs in Romania: "BUCHAREST, Romania (NWS) -- How do you establish a professional NCO corps in a military that has never had one?"

Call in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Eight Marine NCOs from Quantico, Va., and Camp Pendleton, Calif., are "training-the-trainers" at the Romanian NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer) school near the city of Pitesti. The Marines are slated to remain in Romania for two years.

Defense Secretary William S. Cohen praised the Marines' work as he spoke with European defense ministers here. Cohen said the training program is an example of U.S. commitment to Romania.

The program is an outgrowth of a 1998 visit by Romania's president and defense minister to the Marine Corps base at Quantico. Impressed by the professionalism of the American NCOs, Romanian Defense Minister Victor Babiuc asked the Department of Defense to help his military develop a professional NCO corps -- one that would be interoperable with NATO.

Romania previously followed the former Soviet military model where NCOs were more like senior privates. They were conscripts with no real training, motivation or sense of esprit.

In the Soviet model, senior conscripts were assigned as sergeants and put in charge of younger conscripts. After two years service, the soldier returned to civilian life.

Small unit leadership is at the heart of the three-month course Marine instructors devised for the Romanians, according to Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. R.J. Kirby. "We did land navigation, close order drill, and a lot of NATO training so they will be interoperable," he said.

The Romanian soldiers spent 12 nights in the field learning military operations in urban terrain and noncombatant evacuation operations, among other things. "It was pretty intense," Kirby added.

The 25 Romanian NCOs trained in the program will in turn teach future classes of Romanian soldiers. According to Kirby, the Romanians hope to train 750 NCOs per year.

The Romanian NCOs will first practice their teaching skills by instructing their Marine Corps trainers. The Marines will evaluate how they do, give them advice and help them through their first couple of classes.

The biggest obstacle the Romanians must overcome, Kirby said, is convincing some of the

older officers that professional NCOs will benefit their military.

"These young men have a tremendous amount of talent," Kirby said. "They just need the opportunity and the experience. When I speak with Romanian officers I tell them they have to let the NCOs do NCO work."

The Romanian NCOs have learned there's more to being a good NCO than just ensuring a soldier gets fed. "We teach (that) they've got to take care of him, his family and any personal problems the soldier has. Everything in that soldier's life is their responsibility," Kirby said. "At the same time, a good NCO is 'growing' other soldiers who want to be just like him."

The United States Government specified: "United States Government assistance helped the Government of Romania to implement military reforms to improve Romanian-U.S. interoperability and meet NATO force goals.

Anti-terrorism training programs augmented the current capabilities of Special Forces and intelligence capabilities. Focused assistance supported the development of a non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps with tailored joint contact events, a Romanian NCO Academy partnership, and scholarships to U.S. NCO schools."

Later on 2003 National Defense Magazine was related; "The Romanian military sought assistance from the U.S. Marine Corps to help set up a training school, in an effort to mass-produce non-commissioned officers. The plan is to train senior enlisted personnel to take over much of the decision-making duties and command functions. By the end of this year, Romania will have 40,200 NCOs and warrant officers, a number that will outweigh three times the officer corps of 18,000.

The total number of Romania's armed forces will be 112,000 by the end of 2003, according to government documents. "The first problem was that we had to understand how to

create the fighting NCO,” that also is a leader, Col. Mihai Chirita told National Defense. Chirita runs the NCO school. The school came to life in 1999 with the help of the U.S. Marine Corps, which provided training assistance. The school trains the NCO in tactics, but also encourages them to choose a specialist track that they can use in the force or later in their civilian life. Up to 600 students graduate from this school each year. It costs about \$2,000 to put an NCO through training for one year, said Chirita. Gunner Marius Postaliu took the drill instructor course at the U.S. Marine base in Quantico, Va. “They teach you how to plan your time, how to do everything in five minutes. They taught us small details that we were not aware we could do in such little time,” he said. “We learned new tactics, new physical training and close combat, which we will teach here as well.” They also have practiced survival in the water wearing all their equipment, something they had never done before, he said. “They just throw you in, and then they ask you if you can swim. You say, „No,“ and then they tell you to make it to the other side,” Postaliu said. The NCO school is planning to incorporate martial arts training, similar to the Marine Corps’ courses. “These methods teach you how to handle certain weapons,” he said. “We can’t do all, because it all costs money.” Martial arts methods involve a certain amount of physical pain and abuse that may be hard to use on the Romanian soldiers, said Chirita. “The soldiers may think that we are trying to harm them physically instead of just training them.”

Gunnery Sgt. Constantin Radu said that they had to change basic practices, once they started training with the Marine Corps. “We used to communicate among each other verbally,” he said. “The MC has taught us hand signals and signal systems based on their handbooks.” On a larger scale he said, the Marine Corps, “made us see that being a NCO does not mean being in a company, taking care of equipment.”

Competition for training at this school is fierce. There are about 10 people for one spot. The candidates are both military and civilian. About 100 women also are currently training at the center, and the first female instructor has just graduated, said Chirita.

The U.S. Company Cubic Defense has a contract with the Romanian Army to advise the center.”