

Major Ethical Problems in Macedonian Armed Forces

*Senior NCOs on leadership positions and
problems with inexperienced NCOs after 2001
and possible problems with sexual harassment*

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People can recognize different ethical problems in the different organizations. Sometimes ethical problems in the Army for example, are minor misunderstandings in other organizations. The opposite is also true; a non-existing or small ethical problem in some civilian organization may be a very big ethical issue in the Armed Services. According to my experience, Macedonian senior NCOs and senior NCOs in all armies in the world are very sensible to the ethical problems that are the same or similar to the problems I will describe in the next three pages.

In my opinion as a leader and senior NCO in the Macedonian Army, our Country and our Army face two major ethical problems. These long term problems may negatively influence the quality of work of the Army in the society and in the World in our deployments as a part of the coalition in the war against terror. It is also possible that in the future Macedonian Army will not be able to fulfill its basic training and other tasks not facing the ethical problems and covering sexual harassments. Some of the senior leaders in the Macedonian Army don't want to recognize or don't believe there are ethical problems.

The first major ethical problem is implementing the Frame Agreement of July 2001 between the Macedonian and Albanian block political parties and its influence on the quality of the training and fulfilling the basic tasks of the Macedonian Army. Second is accepting females to serve in previously "male" positions and in the combat units, and covering possible sexual harassment.

There are few minorities in the Republic of Macedonia. One of them is the Albanian minority which includes people that migrated from Kosovo. This minority makes up almost 20 percent of the total number of people living in Macedonia. According to the Frame Agreement signed in July 2001 by the representatives of the largest parties from the Macedonian and Albanian block and President and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia, Macedonian

citizens with Albanian origin should represent 20 percent in every State Institution including and Armed Forces and Police. Until then, interest in joining the Armed Forces by the Albanians was very low because of the low salaries in the budget organizations, and other opportunities for private small business. After the signing of the Frame Agreement, the interest in joining the Army started to grow because of high unemployment in Macedonia after the war between Macedonian Government Forces and Albanian rebels. Leaders in the Army and senior NCOs faced the problem of filling the Army by using the quota system. The Army started educating NCOs, and establishing standards for training, but its success was very low due to a very short time for education, the language barrier and inexperienced instructors in this kind of situation. Under the pressure of the political parties, a large number of Macedonians with Albanian origin started to fill the positions in the Army. The ethical problem started to grow after the replacements when Albanians replaced some Macedonians from sensitive positions just because of quota system. The multinational nature of the society and Armed Forces of Macedonia has become very vulnerable in these areas especially after 2001. In my opinion this is one of the ethical problems in the Macedonian Army which will influence the development of the Army as a future member of NATO.

The second major problem is possible sexual harassment in the Macedonian Armed Forces and its possible effects on relationships among the people in service and effects on the harassed personalities.

Since 1995 the Macedonian Army started to accept females in the service. At the beginning females participated only in high ranking positions in services and in units for logistic support. After 1995 women started to volunteer for service in all branches of the Armed Forces. Serving in the Army for six months became one of the conditions for joining it. This process started with positioning the females in logistic services; mostly in hospitals, dining facilities,

veterinarian stations, and rigger positions. After 1997 females started to fill positions in combat units in “some” male jobs, too. My assumption is that like all armies in the World and our Army is not immune and it has the same problems with sexual harassment. However, in our Army we still do not have any reports for sexual assault or harassment. According to me, this is not a sign that these things don’t happen in the Macedonian Armed Forces. Possible victims are young, inexperienced, and at the beginning of their military career and like everywhere, victims do not report assaults or harassments because they are afraid of possible rejection from the society, family, friends and also their units. They also don’t want to report harassment because during the investigations, questioning reminds them of the event. In my opinion, this is a result of society environment or fear for their future military career.

Ethical problems which I see here are not only the possible assaults or harassments, but that the victims do not report them. This helps future growing of the number of harassments and also encourages the individuals that assault, harass, and abuse other persons or soldiers.

Our mission as senior leaders is to educate and train young leaders and junior NCOs, in order to prevent future harassments. With this type of training, junior NCOs should learn the effects of sexual harassment on their squads or platoons. Including training and psychologists from the main HQ is another task for our commandants. Their main mission should be the education of young officers and platoon and company leaders in the prevention of sexual harassment.

Our responsibility as senior leaders is not only in the military organizations but also encouraging society to educate personnel in the civilian organizations and helping the recovery of the possible victims and their incorporation in normal life and in the units.