

**Equal Opportunity for  
Women NCOs in the Romanian Army**

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## **Equal Opportunity for Women NCOs in the Romanian Army**

The Romanian Army has an ethics problem with respect to female NCOs. Most of the senior NCOs and officers joined and were trained during the communist regime. Under communist doctrine, men and women were treated equal but in practice this was not the case. Women had the same job and pay as men but the expectations were different. Women only worked in the office and were excused from the extra duties such as staff duty NCO or duty NCO. For Romania and the Romanian Army the year 1989 was a crucial one because on December 22 communism collapsed and all political and military systems began reform. In a short period of time communist military procedures were replaced with NATO style procedures. Unfortunately, senior NCOs and officers are still adhering to the old customs and traditions they were trained in. Before the Romanian Revolution the Army comprised approximating 2 percent women; today there is more than 5 percent with an end goal of 20 percent in 2010.

In 2002 the Romanian Army created a new NCO position based on the US Army model. One of those positions was CSM for battalion level and higher. The duties of the CSM were previously done by officers. According to the job description the CSM is in charge of all warrant officers, NCOs, and lower rank enlisted personnel from his unit.

In 2003 the 811<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion was assigned the new battalion CSM. The battalion CSM was one of the first senior NCOs trained under the new system. Upon arrival he included women on the NCOs' battalion duty and the battalion commander approved it. The roster was implemented without incidents or complaints.

A year later the battalion deployed to a 12-day field exercise on the firing range. Almost 400 soldiers participated in this exercise and slept in tents. When the brigade commander visited the battalion he found out that in this battalion there were two young female NCOs participating in the exercise. He expressed his interest in talking with them. During his discussion with them

about their new assignments and accommodations, he was surprised why the females had a whole tent for only two of them. The battalion CSM explained to the colonel that it is proper and normal for females to stay in a separate tent. Upon returning from the exercise the colonel told the battalion CSM, if the women go on the exercise, they sleep in the same tent with the men; no special treatment. He knew this order would make it awkward to take women on future exercises.

That same year the battalion CSM attended a two-month course and when he returned to his unit he found out that all female NCOs were removed from the duty NCO roster. At the same time one of the female NCOs complained to CSM that the male NCOs were not respecting their position.

The next day the battalion CSM organized a meeting with all the female NCOs. First he asked about their complaints and what they expected. They said they wanted equal opportunity for everything, including their turn on the duty roster. He reminded them that in the Romanian Army men and women have equal pay and responsibility for equal rank. He read them the duty NCO regulation which states that all NCOs have to perform duty NCO according to their rank and MOS. All women at the meeting filled in a request for duty NCO, mentioning their wish for equal opportunity.

The battalion CSM collected facts relating to the situation and reported the finding to the battalion commander. He also expressed his concern to the commander and said he believed the disrespect was due to the women not pulling NCOs duty. The battalion commander told the CSM that females' not pulling duty NCO was the brigade commander's decision. The battalion CSM called and informed the brigade CSM about this situation and proposed that he ask for the brigade commander's approval for him to place women on the duty NCO roster. The brigade CSM advised the battalion CSM to implement the plan and he would inform the brigade

commander. The battalion CSM informed the battalion commander about the discussion he had with the brigade CSM about the women NCOs and he approved a new duty roster.

A few weeks later the brigade commander called the duty officer. A female duty NCO answered the phone. The brigade commander was surprised to hear a woman's voice on the phone. From the discussion, the colonel found out that female NCOs were back on duty NCO, and that the battalion CSM was responsible. He immediately called the battalion CSM asking him why the women were back on the duty roster, why his order wasn't respected, and why he wasn't informed.

The next day the brigade commander scheduled a visit to the battalion and again he questioned the battalion CSM about females on the duty roster. The battalion CSM explained that it was the best solution for the situation in the battalion, and he made this decision after he informed the brigade CSM and the battalion commander. Their discussion continued about women in the Romanian Army and equal opportunity. Finally the battalion CSM showed the brigade commander the women's request for duty where they mentioned their wishes for equal opportunity. The brigade commander now understands that it is necessary for men and women to work equally. He agrees that the battalion CSM made a good move after the brigade CSM explained that he forgot to inform him about this situation. The brigade commander let it be known that he still believes that it is a mistake to empower a woman for duty NCO.

The Romanian Army is going to be 20 percent women in all MOSs by 2010. The given example is just one from the 811<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, but there are many other examples.

If withholding authority from women continues from the older soviet trained NCOs and officers, the 15,000 women will lack professionalism and authority. This continue the inequalities will have a devastating impact on the Romanian Army's capabilities.