

# MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM AT “NICOLAE BĂLCESCU” LAND FORCES ACADEMY

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## ABSTRACT

*Nowadays, the military conflict success consists of understanding the way of doing the combat at every level and this relies on the competency, initiative and self-confidence of leaders in every appointment. The core mission of Land Forces Academy is to get ready these leaders in order to answer to all challenges imposed by the modern operational environment. The core mission of trainers is to find out new means and methods to level up the training process.*

**KEYWORDS:** fighter, battlefield, leader, training

## 1. Introduction

During the Cold War, military challenges and threats were posed and addressed by coalitions and state entities employing large armies, by means of conventional and nuclear weaponry.

Starting the third millennium, every conflict has been mainly conducted among states and non-state actors, like terrorist organizations and rebel factions. This has resulted in quitting employing huge armies and the military domain has been facing profound structural changes by essentially modifying the power centers, the character and contain of threats, and the diversity of weapons and tactics.

Recent military conflicts confirm the direct link between training and success in battle. The units that train themselves the same as they intend to fight will later fight as they would train. Therefore, Romanian Land Forces base their future combat success on a core philosophy: **Train as you fight!** The key of success comes from understanding the way of doing combat at every level; it relies on competency, initiative, and trust in the leadership performed by all level commanders.

Training represents the foremost way by how Land Forces units and their leaders reach the necessary capability for fulfilling their missions.

*The military training* is that activity of the military personnel conducted for realizing the forces' capacity by achieving specific missions using military equipment. Military training stays in line with units organizing, personnel manning, and military equipment supply as one of the core activity in forces' preparation (Rațiu, 2012).

The general objective of Land Forces training is to realize and maintain the necessary operational level in order to conduct the full spectrum of land and airborne military operations, in all-weather conditions, day and night, in every environment, independently, jointly or combined. Moreover, Land Forces would fight inside NATO multinational units or coalition, on their territory and abroad, along with the ongoing projected modernization and reform programs.

Totaling the evolution of strategies, techniques, and training procedures employed in NATO and its modern armies, numbers multiple efforts, evolutions, and progresses. Training aims to complete the interoperability not only inside own structures but international units, and it targets the complementary preparation for the upcoming unconventional combat from 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A major domain of Land Forces officers' education is represented by military training conducted inside Land Forces Academy and it results in formation of the military competency. The main objective of military training is accomplishing the professional domain along with four specific professional roles: soldier, specialist, instructor, and small units' leader (Bârsan, 2016).

In our opinion, the contribution of military training for these competencies resides in four essential disciplines: General tactics training, Infantry weapons firing training, Military physical training, and Military pedagogy.

## 2. General Tactics Training

General tactics is a principal training category that combines all knowledge gained from all the other training disciplines. Its goal is to form the necessary skills for using the firepower, equipment, and combat vehicles in order to accomplish the mission in a very challenging and modern operational environment. The main objective targets a polyvalent, independent, motivated, well-trained soldier, capable of using his firepower in the battlefield, able to react at any intervention or external stimulus, no matter of situation or condition. The soldier would be able to rapidly move, marching and maneuver, taking advantage of terrain, using the individual weapon, when fighting against aerial, armored or pedestrian enemy (Ostropel, 2008).

General tactics training aims individual, team, and squad training. This training category consists of multiple successive stages, involving various forms and methods.

The soldier's tactical training takes place in training camps. The training speeds up no matter of weather and this helps soldiers to strengthen up their body and psyche, developing a recovery capacity, necessary for mission accomplishment.

**Fighting skills** are action procedures adopted with the purpose of accomplishment of a particular mission. There are two standing action procedures: individual and collective. Fighting skills are used during the training; their role is to develop fighting abilities. Thus, combat action is seen as successive individual and collective fighting skills.

Fighting skills are engaged within individual training at general tactics training, infantry weapons firing training, engineering training, etc. That is why fighting skills need to be addressed as training techniques only, apart from pure combat techniques.

The individual fighting skills being used within general tactics training are simple parts from combat procedural forms; they contain all individual actions at militaries use to achieve specific operational objective. The individual fighting skills are taught during the initial basic training only, ensuring the transfer of necessary knowledge for action in the battlefield. The way of teaching is relatively simple here, students learn these fighting skills out of any tactical scenario, and the only point here is to learn the movement correctly. For this reason, individual fighting skills training stays at individual level only, while squad level training comes with collective fighting skills.

Inside general tactics training, collective fighting skills are performed within a team or squad. Collective skills redo in fact the individual fighting skills but this time they happen within a more complex momentum or tactical situation, pursuing the action and cohesion of the fighter in his team or squad. By teaching collective fighting skills, the trainer aims to form fighters capable of performing in various conditions: urban terrain, heavy terrain, forests, mountainous area, both in defensive and offensive actions.

Starting with the next modules, students will pass collective fighting techniques inside Situational Training Exercises that apply for the infantry squad.

Future conflicts have started to prove and show their new characteristics like follows:

- Lack of a precise front line that separate own troops from the enemy;
- The increasing ratio or urban terrain action; doing combat in populated areas requires restrictive rules of engagement in order to reduce and eliminate collateral damages;
- The enlargement role of special operation forces, capable of performing critical missions based on timely, reliable and accurate intelligence;

- The growing proportion of actions during nighttime or in situation with limited visibility; this requires night vision and firing equipment;
- Tactical units have become mobile, supple, with large fire and maneuver capacity.

Consequently, we consider that general tactics ought to adapt to future battlefield conditions. As for the students, they should develop fighting skills and action capabilities in tactical field, day and night, specific to main forms of combat. However, a critical target for success is to move the training more to the urban terrain, to teach ambush, incursion, and raid.

Also, land navigation skill needs more training, day and night, with or without specific equipment. Last, but not the least, there is a need for continuous challenging modules that teach survival, eluding, resistance and escaping, survival in temporary isolation conditions, as well as practical troops leading procedures at squad level, adapted to various situations.

**3. Infantry Weapons Firing Training** – represents a main discipline inside general military training curriculum and contributes decisively to Land Forces fighter formation and education. The general objective is to get the knowledge, form and develop abilities to discover and engage the targets, destroy them by firing individual weapons as well as using hand grenades, from multiple firing positions, static and dynamic, in all weather and light conditions.

The actual firing exercises ensure the initial firing skills formation and development. Thus, the actual exercises mention no urban terrain shooting exercise, and it is on the unit commander to plan and realize special/specific shooting exercises adapted to modern operational environment.

In our opinion, we consider that students (starting with 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study) should execute specific shooting exercise, based on their military specialty, including

shooting in urban terrain environment. Why this? It is well known that shooting in urban terrain requires high stress, reflex, small and limited spaces, low observation, multiple targets, smoke, noise, and confusion. Urban terrain combat requires specific TTP familiarization, physical agility, controlled aggression, emotional equilibrium, and a very good shooting ability. Principles that governs shooting in urban terrain aims shooting efficacy, directly related to the following trio: tactic – precision – execution speed.

We consider that there is necessary to execute some specific shooting exercises in order to objectively order the students based on their shooting skills, by scoring the results after shooting against fixed targets. Moreover, we assume that once the newly projected firing range is built, new shooting exercises would be practiced, from shooting against moving targets (different speed and angles) to shooting when students move towards targets or antitank shooting against rubbish armored vehicle.

We assume that the shooting exercises related to military applicative competition (shooting duel and patrolling), experienced since 2014, have been contributing to increasing reaction speed of students when perform shooting with individual weapon.

Partially concluding, we affirm that the present way of training strategy assures forming and developing of shooting skills. However, it is necessary to impose reviewing of overall educational politics, strategies, tactics and techniques involved in shooting training domain, as well as to adapt the specific logistics (ranges, simulators) to the imperious requirement of future operational environment.

#### 4. Military Physical Training

Success in combat requires training of fighters that have particular physical qualities necessary to fulfill the given missions. Romanian military specialists

consider that “*a good physical condition stays in fighter agility, in his reaction speed, and in his easiness and efficiency to apply attack and defense techniques*” (Stănciulescu, 2016a).

Military physical training done during training modules aims to developing of force, mobility, skillfulness, and increasing resistance to any effort posed by military specific activities.

The development of qualities and motoric skills necessary in combat “*represents a complex process whose time period is determined by the pedagogical art of military physical trainers as well as the application of the latest principles, forms, methods, and means in order to exploit the biological potential of human body, in short time, with maximum efficiency*” (Stănciulescu, 2016b).

Completing these objectives is being done by practicing some sport disciplines with a profound military character like self-defense, swimming, obstacles and skiing. This show of motoric skills like speed, skillfulness, and resistance shown when practicing these disciplines, substantially contributes to obtaining of self-confidence, calm, and high morale (Stănciulescu 2008).

We consider that following steps are necessary to develop motoric qualities to students attending fighting specialties, qualities that matches modern battlefield requirements:

- Development of procedures and self-defense techniques by practicing KRAVMAGA discipline;
- Intensive training on CISM obstacles path until the new obstacles endurance and psyche resistance path would be built in „PERII DĂII” training camp, based on FM 21-20 US model;
- Swimming for 15 meters fully equipped (combat equipment, weapon, helmet and four magazines);

- Practicing of extreme sports (skydiving, escalade, alpinism, parkour and free running);
- 6 Km rapid march carrying 25 kilos individual charge.

Within Land Forces Academy, the permanent challenge of trainers is to identify *“the optimization modalities of methods and procedures in order to fulfill main objectives comprised in the plan that aims formation and consolidation of specific skills needed in military activities”* (Stănciulescu, 2016c).

**5. Military Pedagogy** is that pedagogical discipline that studies military educational specific problems. In other words, it is the discipline that studies *“fighter formation, as unitary process, where education is done by instructive education, while training is subordinated to educational objectives”* (Stănciulescu, 2016c).

This discipline is critical to future students as they become educators and instructors. Platoon leader function requires certain abilities to form and train others by using, transfer and apply the knowledge. Platoon leader needs also capacities, abilities and certain exceptional attitudes to optimize human relations and connections within training, along with his capacity to positively influence the unit and individuals, role playing, some abilities of using the authority, and efficient communication skills.

**Training methodology** is meant to theoretically reconstruct the knowledge achieved by the student in the view of further instructive educative tasks. Therefore, the methodology suggests the future leader the problems that need to be solved, research opportunities. The methodology offers solutions as well as known and verified didactic procedures and techniques validated in current activity.

Students' training methodology is realized upon modern concept and principles that were applied and verified

within NATO land forces during latest conflicts. Also, the approach relies on the Romanian Land Forces lesson learnt resulted from recent operations.

Another critical role is posed by the junior command training stage. This stage aims to colate theory with practice and permits *“deeping the knowledge, forming skills and abilities to apply the theoretical concepts, as well as developing the creative and leadership capacity”* (Bumbuc, 2015).

We consider that every student in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study should perform as a junior trainer within a discipline that is taught inside the training module. This way, students forge and exercise intellectual and practical skills in order to be able to organize and efficiently lead the squad and platoon training. It is also necessary that a bunch of unit admin tasks to be organized and lead by the students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study, following the West Point model.

## 6. Conclusions

The future battlefield characteristics and particularities require an exceptional military training of the combatants, but more important the training of leaders at all levels. The actual military training program at Land Forces Academy matches the actual battlefield challenges. However, the future military leaders should get ready not only for present and tomorrow conflicts, but also for future conflicts. The crucial role of the trainers is to get ready these leaders from the military perspective.

The selection, formation and training of future military leaders should be done based on strict rules that provide coherence, complementarity, efficiency, as well as actionable compatibility with NATO structures. There are students that cannot achieve the assumed and proposed objectives. Like every competitive domain, there are winners and losers. The Land Forces Academy should assume losses, as selection remains a way to success.

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