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HUNGARIAN SOLDIERS IN EUTM MALI

Abstract

One of the most discussed events of 2013 was the conflict in Mali, followed by the French military intervention against the Islamist's radicals. After the successful French-Malian joint operation, the European Union began a training mission in Mali, tasked with restructuring and reconstructing the poorly trained and equipped Malian military. In this article, I'll share the experiences of the Hungarian officers and NCO's in EUTM Mali.

Keywords: EUTM Mali, Islamist's radicals, European Union, Hungary, Mali, sniper, training,

It became obvious by the beginning of 2013 that – while Hungary has regarded its participation in operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans as its main priority – an increased presence in the African operations of the EU will be necessary. When the need for the establishment of an EU training mission in Mali arose, the Hungarian leadership indicated its willingness to provide at least 5-10 military instructors for the mission. The final numbers were determined at the informal meeting of the EU ministers of defence in Dublin, on 12-13 February 2013.

By then it was decided that a liaison officer, a 3-man medical team and 6 sniper instructors will be sent to Mali.¹ Not all of the soldiers designated to be instructors were snipers, most of them lacked experience in military instruction, and their overall language skills were not perfect, either. As it turned out later, the soldiers of other countries also had a meagre knowledge of French, so the

¹ Of the 10-man Hungarian contingent, the liaison officer started his service at the mission headquarters already in March 2013, the 3-man medical team followed on 18 March, while the 6 sniper instructors on 13 April. The Hungarian medical experts serve at the German field hospital, along with German and Austrian experts. The members of the Hungarian sniper instructor group participated in the training of two Malian battalions, then their tasks were taken over by the Portuguese.

mission provided for a special French course (Besenyő 2013a, 74). The only problem was that the course was run by a high school teacher from Bamako, who spoke French perfectly, but could not speak English. Thus the course was less effective.² The leadership of the mission has employed English-speaking French, Bambara and Tuareg interpreters to support the instructors, but this took double the time than in the case the instructors had actually spoken French.

The marksmen travelled to Mali knowing only little about what circumstances would await them in the country, where would be their accommodation, their exact tasks, etc., so they had to improvise a lot in the first days. The Portuguese who replaced the Hungarians avoided this problem by sending a preparatory team one month before the replacement's arrival, the members of which gathered any available information and also visited the Hungarian instructors in order to get information about the training activities. Thus, the arriving Portuguese group could begin almost instantly the overtaking of training activities from the Hungarian soldiers.

At the end of the preparation, the instructors received their uniforms, medical and other equipment. During the operation it was realized that the breathability of the newer model of desert fatigue dress provided for them was not suitable for the Malian conditions, thus when they left the air-conditioned rooms, they started to sweat heavily.

As it turned out, they did not need a lot of equipment – e.g. bedroll, chemical protection equipment, goretex jacket, polar sweaters, goretex gloves, etc. On the contrary, the inflatable raft could be utilised quite effectively during the marksmanship training. They did not have problems with the other equipment that provided adequate safety and comfort for the soldiers, and the

² As a researcher focusing on peacekeeping in Africa, I have indicated for years on several forums that it would be important to provide for French language courses – besides English – for those who are to be deployed on the African continent. Since the major part of conflict zones can be found on the territories of former French colonies, where the official language of the country remained that of the former colonizers. This is also true for Mali, where the populace belongs to more than 30 ethnic groups. During the training it became conspicuous that a significant part of the troops to be trained could communicate with both the members of other ethnic groups and the instructors only in French. Only a negligible amount of them speaks English. Not only the sniper instructors had problems with the French language in Mali: none of the medical team sent to Mali spoke French, while they could communicate in English, German and Danish. There were opinions that since they served in the German field hospital, they did not need to speak French. However, this is hardly maintainable in the case of a mission where more than 50 percent of the participants used French as its native language, and most of the soldiers in training also speak this language.

clothing also met the requirements.³ The IFAK medical kit⁴ issued to them proved to be extraordinarily useful. Besides this, they brought substantial supplies of several types of medicine, like Lariam, used against malaria. Lieutenant Zámboři was relentless; he demanded that everyone took the anti-malaria medicine on time. Thus, there was no malaria infection amongst the Hungarians, even though almost every one of them got hit time by time by viral diarrhoea.

In the end, the members of the Hungarian sniper instructor team travelled to Mali on 13 April 2013, and arrived already at about 20,00 hrs to Bamako, being greeted by the Hungarian ranking officer. The next day they received their briefing about the workings of the mission and the different rules and regulations at the mission headquarters; then travelled to Koulikoro Training Camp (KTC), located northeast from the Malian capital. After their arrival, they were shown around the camp, and then attended various military, professional and medical trainings for days.

The supplying of the instructors was provided by the European Defence Agency (EDA) with the inclusion of international and local sub-contractors, from the financial framework of ATHENA. It included sustenance, provision of drinking water, cleaning, and later also the operation of the canteen, also with the inclusion of different sub-contractors.⁵ It was recognized by the health service that they could not provide meals of adequate nutritional value and vitamin content at all times, due to the limited local possibilities of procurement. The alimentation could not be improved initially, as in the camp there was no shop or store other than the kitchen, where the soldiers could have bought food. The provision of drinking water was unlimited and continuous. There is a spring in Mali, the water of which is a European-quality mineral water that is bottled by the locals under the name Diago. The water was also tested by the German

³ As it is more and more probable that Hungarian soldiers will participate in more African operations, it would be worthwhile to look up the missionary developments of the 1990s, as the Hungarian soldiers who served in Angola, Rwanda and Mozambique have mentioned on several occasions that they received such experimental clothes that were exceptionally suitable for tropical work. Possibly, it would also be worthwhile to continue exchanging peacekeeping experiences with the French and Austrians, started a few years ago, including the issue of the appropriate uniform. Read more about the experiences gained during earlier African operations at Besenyő (2013b).

⁴ The personal first aid kit provided to the Hungarians (IFAK – Individual First Aid Kit) is also used in the American forces.

⁵ Regardless, there are nations – like the Germans – who created their own national supply group, thus they are capable of operating independently from the mission's supply system in many areas.

lab, and approved for consumption⁶. The bottled water was also checked continuously, as the locals tended to collect the discarded empty bottles, wash them, and fill them with tap water, which led to different infections among the European soldiers. The Hungarian soldiers prevented this by cutting up the empty bottles, evading such risks. Besides this, the mission has provided bottled drinking water indefinitely at the distribution point in the training center that was open in the morning and the evening for a one-hour period. The medical service – due to the German field hospital⁷ – operated among far better circumstances, but luckily, other than frequent intestinal infections, diarrhoea, a dental issue and an insect bite, the Hungarian soldiers did not confront serious medical issues.

While the instructors received laptops from the Hungarian Defence Forces, it was realized only in Mali that – due to security reasons – internet access was restricted by the French, thus the laptops could be used only limitedly. In the camp, the more than 500 instructors could use only two computers with internet access. The computer use was monitored, of course,⁸ thus when the commander of the instructor group has reported in an e-mail to the Hungarian liaison officer in Bamako that the members of the “Waraba” battalion were rioting, he was warned not to do so in the future. Thus, when he had something of importance to report, he rather reported via phone. While the Hungarian soldiers conducted quite an intensive activity during the training, they managed to get to Bamako a few times, where they could regenerate. There were not a lot of such opportunities in the camp, as there were no internet cafés, gyms, or canteens then. The importance of stress handling and relaxation was recognised only by the end of the mission, when they strived to organise smaller-larger events for the instructors, where they could disengage from the daily hustle.

It is important to know in order to understand the workings of the mission that, while the command of the mission was in Bamako, they did not intervene in the professional work at the training camp. Those serving at the command were the ones who communicated with the Malian government, the United

⁶ For details see: University of Utrecht, 2006.

⁷ A Role II-level institute.

⁸ Besides this, the use of pendrives was also limited, only data carriers provided and approved by the mission could be used. Thus the soldiers were forced to write their mails on the computer themselves, these contained only the most necessary informations due to the introduced time limitations.

Nations, the commander of “Operation Serval”⁹, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. The commander in Koulikoro was a colonel, responsible for the operation of the training camp, and the activities of those serving there. The actual work was conducted by his deputies though, as he had to participate at political-military talks, and welcome delegations and visitors. One of his two lieutenant-colonel ranked deputies was an Irish officer operating the camp, responsible for the defense and supplying of the camp and the work of the interpreters and other auxiliary personnel. The other deputy, a French lieutenant-colonel, was responsible solely for training duties. Thus, if the commander of the Hungarian instructor group had any questions, he did not wait for the commander’s briefing, but could directly turn to the lieutenant-colonel responsible for training.

It must be known about the training that the leaders of the European Union have undertaken that they would prepare 4 combined arms tactical groups¹⁰, designated by the Malian army, in 10-week intervals¹¹ during their 15-month mandate (Besenyő 2013d, 27). The Hungarian team conducted its actual instructing activity between the 4th and the 7th training week, when the elements receiving special training (engineering, TACP, INTEL, BTR, sniper) were separated from the companies. Since the Hungarian soldiers arrived in the 2nd training week of the first battalion, they had the opportunity to observe the end of the initial training, as well as participate as a counterforce in the forging of the battalion after the 4 weeks of their own training. Their task was to have the taught knowledge applied both by the snipers and the company commanders. This was necessary since the knowledge of the commanding personnel was meagre, thus every special instructor group also had to occupy itself with the theoretical training of the commanders (Binnie 2013).

The EUTM Mali mission, starting on 18 February 2013, included 200 instructors, a 150-man logistical, medical and administrative group and another 150-man group tasked with force protection (Besenyő 2013a, 70). The European

⁹ See more about „Operation Serval” at Besenyő (2013c).

¹⁰ Combined Tactical Arms Groups (GTIA): a group means in this case an extended-number battalion.

¹¹ In one of my earlier articles (Besenyő 2013a), I mentioned that I find this time period insufficient for the training of a battalion, since it generally requires 27 weeks. The main problem is not presented by the individual abilities of the soldiers, but by the issue whether they would be able to operate as a coherent, cooperating group after a 10-week training, to consolidate the authority of the government in the northern territories, as well as winning the hearts and minds of the often hostile civilian (Arab and Tuareg) population. Since, if this does not work and there are no radical changes in Mali, then the leadership of the country can expect another Tuareg rebellion.

instructing personnel consists currently of 565 persons (Duijn 2013). So far, three battalions have finished their training, the preparation of the fourth will be ready by May 2014.¹² The Hungarian instructors took part in the training of the “Waraba” and “Elou” battalions. In spite of the optimistic official reports, the prolongation of the mission’s mandate was mentioned several times, because the European instructors faced some unforeseen difficulties during the training, which in many cases influenced negatively the results of their work.

Such a problem could be the attitude of Malian soldiers towards the issue of human rights, and their negative relations with the Tuareg and Arab populace in the northern territories. A good example is when the members of the “Waraba” battalion received tasks in the northern territories after the training, where they had to work together with the French soldiers assigned to them from “Operation Serval”.¹³ There, Islamist militiamen have attacked the soldiers of the battalion. They could not exploit the element of surprise though, and were pursued by the Malian soldiers. After the unsuccessful pursuit, the government soldiers have plundered a smaller settlement and a gas station on their way back to the barracks. While the case did not get much media attention, the hunt for a scapegoat started instantly, since there were so high expectations towards the first battalion trained by the EU. Sadly, the Europeans can hardly comprehend that while they taught the African soldiers for 10 weeks about Western practices, democracy and the observation of human rights (Delafortrie 2013), when they got into combat, they acted again according to the African practices that have been employed for several hundred years. These practices are inappropriate from the perspective of Western democratic notions. There was a similar case with the soldiers of the “Elou” battalion, at whom the civilians of a northern settlement threw rocks. When in response a soldier shot in the crowd, several civilians got injured. Besides these cases, there were several lesser encounters between the northern civilian populace and the Malian government forces, even though the media coverage of these events is limited. The report by the Spanish

¹² The Malian army currently consists of 8 battalions, their training, equipment and personnel is inadequate, as well as the abilities of the officers. The EU undertook the training of half of the Malian army (four battalions) in the framework of EUTM MALI. However, the equipping of the battalions advances only difficultly, this also hinders their training. Thus more and more European countries have offered the Malian army uniforms, firearms and other equipment. The experiences of the training of the first two battalions made it necessary to train the officers of the third and fourth battalion beforehand, since the professional knowledge and leadership experiences of the majority of Malian officers are abysmal. More information: <http://www.eutmmali.eu/>

¹³ This could be attributed to the fact that the European instructors cannot follow the Malian soldiers trained by them to the North in order to check how they apply the acquired knowledge in practice. Thus, follow-up is conducted by the French, who mentor the Malian units trained by the EU afterwards.

lieutenant-colonel serving in the Brussels group supporting the operation EUTM MALI also states that the soldiers deployed in the north still have to learn a lot about the upholding of human rights and the cooperation with civilian authorities and organisations (Barea 2013). A similar statement was made by the UN Secretary-General in his report S/2013/582 (UNSC 2013), as well as in the 2013 November report of Amnesty International about Mali, where they specifically asked the decision-makers of the EU to put even greater emphasis at the trainings of EUTM MALI on the issue of human rights and make the Malian soldiers understand that the torture or ill-treatment of the civilian populace is forbidden (Amnesty International 2013).

As mentioned before, the training could be begun by the Hungarians only on the second week after their arrival, when the ammunition and firearms required for the training arrived via the German air lift.¹⁴ By then it was also realized, though, that the Hungarian soldiers will not have to conduct sniper training, but scoped rifle training. As it turned out, a part of Malian soldiers did not have any kind of military expertise or combat experience, and without these, it is highly improbable to train professional snipers in the time of several weeks. The Hungarian instructors received only 4 weeks for the freshly invented scoped rifle module training, thus they had to design a totally new training plan, in accordance with the totally different conditions. According to the requirements of the Malian army, 27 soldiers per battalion – 9 per company, 3 per platoon, 1 per squad – had to be trained.

As the first step, the Hungarian instructors conducted maintenance on the weapons brought with them, and ranged them at the firing range of the base. Then they had the opportunity to meet with the personnel to train. It was realized within hours that the soldiers did not have military experience, they did not know the weapon types assigned to them; they could not read a map, make a field sketch, use a compass or determine the northern direction¹⁵. Thus the Hungarian instructors had to organise such a training that taught those basic skills to the Malian soldiers, which they should have already possessed by the beginning of the training. As the soldiers did not possess maps or compasses, these also had to be requisitioned by the Hungarians, then, after teaching the

¹⁴ The firearms and the corresponding ammunition were provided by the Hungarian Defence Forces.

¹⁵ Francois Ducrotté and Elena Marda (2013) made similar statements in the June 2013 volume of the European Security Review, referring to an EU instructor, but the targets of their criticism were not the aforementioned skills of the soldiers, but those of the officers. How could we expect the Malian soldiers to be able to read a map when neither can their officers?

basic skills, the practical, scoped-rifle training has started. Here, the instructors faced another problem. The firing range created at the training base was not ready on time, and was not built in the way as requested¹⁶. The instructors were also limited in the use of the firing range due to the busy schedule, thus they had to take this into account when combining the theoretical and practical courses, and balance it in order to have also time for field training exercises, orientation exercises, and night operations exercises (marching, area security, patrol, etc.). Due to the decision of the mission commander, both instructors and trainees had to spend one night a week in the open air, in order to practice night operations. The practical training consisted of compass use, urban operations, target reconnaissance, etc. At these exercises the groups were often divided, thus tasks were better allotted, and it was easier to attend to the Malian soldiers individually. For instance, Malian soldiers did not know their personal weapons so much, thus these were initially maintained by the Hungarian instructors, and afterwards was maintenance taught to the Malians. Despite this, until the end of the mission, firearms maintenance was conducted under the close watch of the instructors. This is was also necessary due to security reasons.¹⁷ At the end of the training module, the Hungarian soldiers have double-checked and maintained every weapon before placing them in the firearms cabinets.

Other problems presented themselves, too. For example, the Hungarian instructors were not really satisfied with the marksmanship skills of the Malian soldiers, as they ranged the assault rifles to 25 metres instead of 100, according to French practice. In spite of this, they could not hit the targets even from this range. They started shooting from 100 metres, then they advanced to first 200, then 300 metres, but at that range there were almost no substantive hits. In the end, they became really effective at a 100-metre range. There were of course some – mostly Tuaregs – who were “natural” marksmen, and the training improved their skills, but this was not common. There were also problems with the discipline of the Malian soldiers, but the instructors attributed this to the

¹⁶ The Hungarian instructors proposed the building of a 600-metre-long firing range, but in the end only a 300-metre-long one was constructed.

¹⁷ The Malian soldiers kept their weapons with them at all times, but the ammunition was locked away in the arms depot. In spite of this, when a company was inspected, more than 200 pieces of live ammunition were found at the soldiers. These, however, did not originate from the storage of the EUTM. Since the military was divided by many bloody conflicts in the past period, and not all are pleased about the EU presence in Mali, the command of the mission reacted strongly regarding this issue, too. The very idea is unbearable to think about what could have happened if any Malian soldier would have used his weapon against one of his peers or an instructor. Unfortunately, such cases happened frequently in Afghanistan, where the allied Afghan military and policing forces, trained by NATO troops, opened fire upon their Western colleagues. The possibility of this cannot be totally excluded in Mali, either.

differences in mentality between trainees and instructors. The uniforms of the Malian soldiers were quite mixed at the beginning of the training, but equipment and uniforms arrived continuously due to the various donors. The head of the Polish logistics group, a lieutenant-colonel, was constantly reporting to the commander about the arrival of new equipment. By the end, all Malian soldiers were in the possession of two replacements of brand new uniforms.¹⁸ However, in the case of weaponry, the situation was not satisfactory. Weapons also arrived to the mission but their quality was far from adequate. On one occasion, the head of training asked the Hungarian instructors to visit one of the Malian companies, where they would have had to range a few AK assault rifles. Lieutenant Zámboři did not undertake this task, however, because the material quality of the rifles and assault rifles was so low sometimes that it endangered the operator of the weapon. The quality of their ammunition was even worse. The lieutenant could recall only a few cases when the ammunition by the Hungarian Defence Forces misfired, compared to every fifth of the ammunition provided by the Malian military. Their ammunition cases were not even made of steel, but of copper. It was such a low-grade design that the cartridge case was sometimes damaged even by being dropped.

During the training, the Hungarians could get to know better the Malian soldiers, their habits, culture, and differing mentality, which was not an easy task. The soldiers of the African militaries had a different attitude towards the more unpopular tasks than the Europeans: many soldiers were absent from the trainings. The Hungarians were lucky, since the soldiers assigned to the scoped rifle training were very motivated, thus the instructors had to face the absence of only a few soldiers. Similarly, they did not experience serious ethnic tensions among the trainees, either. There were only relatively few Tuareg soldiers serving in the “Waraba” battalion; their numbers were much higher in the “Elou” battalion.¹⁹ A significant part of them served formerly in the northern territories, they also possessed a certain level of battle experience. The oft-mentioned tension between the different ethnic groups could not be observed here, they could work together well during the exercises. One of the greater problems for them was that, by the end of the training, their salary was reduced

¹⁸ The Polish were not only assuming a role in counseling and training, but as a donor state they provided substantial material support for the Malian military. See Pietrzak, 2013. In spite of that, the equipment of the Malian army is lacking and inadequate, which, besides other factors, limits greatly the applicability of the military.

¹⁹ In the first battalion, less than 4 percent of the personnel (30-40 persons), while in the second battalion about 15 percent (150-160 persons) was the ratio of Tuareg soldiers.

as they did not receive their combat subsidies of about 100 USD, that everyone received who served more than 25 days in the northern territories (Thiénot 2013). Still, the greatest issue was not this, but the non-existent sum that the participants of the training expected from the EU. The cause was that the United States formerly operated the “Pan Sahel Initiative” and then the Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) counter-terrorism programmes (Lecocq and Schrijver 2007, 143-145; Diarra 2012, 20) in cooperation with the Malian government, and trained special forces for the fight against the AQIM. During the training, the soldiers of the unit received extra salary and subsidies from the Americans.²⁰ While nobody told that the EU would give any kind of extra allowances at the end of the training, some of the Malian soldiers in EUTM Mali still thought so. They completed the training in a disciplined way, and waited for the pay-day. After they did not receive the expected rewards, they rioted one day before the planned ending ceremony, because someone spread false news according to which the generals of the Malian army “stole” it. Regrettably, as corruption is so widespread in Mali, nobody questioned the trustworthiness of the statement. At first, they grumbled only among themselves, and then they gathered in their camp and demanded the “premium” louder and louder. Since the camp of the Malian soldiers was not in the training centre, at first only a few instructors – among them Hungarians – noticed the problem, and after the mass became less and less manageable, and their own battalion commander could not restore order, the then commander of the training centre, Colonel Christophe Paczka was summoned there. The soldiers told the colonel that they do not have any problems either with him or the instructors, but they demand the extra allowances for the training. As the colonel saw that he cannot pacify the rioting masses, he notified the deputy of the chief of general staff of the Malian military, who visited the training camp personally. In the end, it was him, who convinced the soldiers to return to their barracks. Due to this commotion, the ending ceremony was not held at the originally planned time, even though many guests were invited. Taking this into account, it is understandable why General Francois Lecointre, the commander of the mission has declared after the end of the training of the first battalion that “although their capabilities have improved, they still have room to enhance their discipline, cohesion and trust in the Army chain of command.” The general also stated that the reconstruction of the Malian military still requires a lot of time, since it could still collapse at any time (Barea 2013).

²⁰ During the lessons of policing forces, the EUPOL used a similar motivation in Afghanistan.

This problem was not present at the training of the second battalion, as it was made clear to the soldiers that they cannot expect any kind of reward or additional allowances during the period of the training. As the personnel of this battalion was selected more carefully – there were more soldiers who possessed preliminary military training and combat experience – there were less issues with them than with the personnel of the Waraba battalion.²¹ Of course, neither the “Elou” battalion could finish the training without issues. The joint final exercise of the battalion took place following the 10-week training, where it turned out that they did not receive sufficient sustenance. It turned out at this time that during the training period the Malian military provided so inadequate sustenance that it threatened the success of the training, but the soldiers did not complain. Then, when they returned to the camp after the battalion exercise, they did not get food, but they still did not complain. However, they got to know the next day that they would get 10 days of leave so that they could visit their families. It turned out then that the soldiers would not receive the subsistence allowance which they received during the training period, and the personnel started to grumble. Colonel Philippe Testart, then commander of the training centre, ordered instantly the distribution of 400 MREs to them, moreover, he purchased them a cow that they could slaughter for the ending ceremony. The colonel called the Malian general staff afterwards, and arranged that one of the generals would visit and speak with the soldiers, as well as arranged for the payment of 3 days of subsistence allowance to the Malian soldiers. A more serious uprising was prevented this way.

According to the opinion of the Hungarian instructors, the first battalion was more motivated and had a far better attitude towards the training, but they were less trained than the personnel of the second battalion. Probably this is why

²¹ The European instructors gained also other important experiences, as it presented a serious problem that the battlegroups, set up according to French standards, as well as the continuous planning and management tasks expected accomplished staff and commanders from the Malian army, even though it was lacking such capabilities. Exactly due to this, after the training of the first battalion – when the issue was recognized by the leadership of the mission – the specific training of the battalion staff and commanders appeared as a separate element. This however led to a new issue, as the commanders participating in the aforementioned training joined their own subdivisions only in the 4th and 5th week of the training, where the soldiers could hardly accept them. It caused problems at multiple times that the young, 20-30-year-old lieutenants and first lieutenants (platoon commanders, deputy company commanders, etc.), returning from the commander training and equipped with the knowledge acquired there, went about to lead the subdivisions confidently, but the personnel – while it executed their commands – did not recognize them as their commanders. Moreover, they presented constant problems (regular latencies, absencies, the loss of equipment, lack of concentration and attention, etc.) Thus the mission adjusted the training programme a little more. The training of commanders was not conducted during the 10-week training period, but beforehand, in a 3-week period. Thus they could execute the tasks along with their subdivisions, after their preparation. This strengthened the cohesion of the units, moreover, the personnel respected more their officers who were better prepared than the usual Malian officers.

the training of the personnel of the second battalion went better, as they already had “military records”. The firing range was also completed by then, thus the trainees had far more opportunities for shooting. On the whole, the morale was good, the Malian soldiers were willing and enjoyed to participate in the training, and got along well with the European – including Hungarian – instructors, too.²² So, the objective the Hungarian soldiers were tasked with was completed successfully. By the end of the mission, Lieutenant Zámbari prepared an English-language instruction material that included the experiences of the training of the first battalion, and which was rated so well by the French commander that the Portuguese replacing the Hungarians continued the training according to this material.

The military leadership should elaborate more in detail on the experiences of the soldiers who served in Mali and incorporate them into the preparation of the personnel to be assigned to future African operations, focusing especially on the teaching of French and on the provision of proper equipment,²³ as well as on the cultural differences and the current infectologic and hygienic challenges. It is important to organise the deployment of our soldiers to missions more carefully²⁴, as well as the support of the families of those serving abroad on missions.

We have to prepare for the African operations, as it seems that the EU wants to participate mostly not in peace enforcement, but in peacekeeping operations – mainly in the field of training and counseling – on the African continent, thus more and more Hungarian soldiers will have the opportunity to serve in African operations.

²² The acceptance and respect of the Malian soldiers towards the European instructors was high. Despite this, a few instructors behaved especially arrogantly with the trainees. They were not willing to understand what differences the low level of education and the socialization differing from Western norms could cause between the way of training of European and Malian soldiers. Based on my own experiences in Africa, I could definitely state that already due to the different cultural background, more patience and compassion should be shown towards African soldiers. In the case of adequate treatment, sustenance and training, they can perform equally well as any European soldiers.

²³ It is advised to take into consideration at the supplying of personnel the experiences and advices of those who served in earlier African operations.

²⁴ Even when it requires the deployment of a 2-3-man preparatory group, since these funds will offer returns by all means, if only even that the delegated Hungarian soldiers would face far less issues, thus they could dedicate all their time and energy to the execution of the objective they were deployed to complete. This includes that the mission personnel would know already before the deployment what is expected of them, and what conditions they would be facing – salary, sustenance, etc.

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