INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/038

Audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service

The Service needed strengthen mechanisms to support collection and communication of military information from field operations

24 August 2022
Assignment No. AP2020-600-03

Audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service (CMOS) in the Office of Military Affairs (OMA), Department of Peace Operations (DPO). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of CMOS in implementing its functions. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020, updated with relevant developments in 2021, and included a review of: (a) the implementation of the functions of CMOS; and (b) human resources management.

The work of CMOS contributed to the general performance of military operations. However, hesitance by military staff in field missions to share information on military operations on a timely basis created additional workload and undue pressure on the limited resources in CMOS and other related personnel to follow up and provide relevant analyses to senior leadership at United Nations Headquarters. Also, inadequate participation by CMOS in the development, review and improvement of SAGE (an incident and event tracking database application system) impeded its ability to provide advice on military operational and technical reporting, which is part of its mandate.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, DPO needed to:

- Specify in the revised United Nations Force Headquarters Handbook the authorization and specific responsibilities of relevant military staff branches and positions in field missions for maintaining technical reporting and communication links on behalf of the head of military component with CMOS and other teams and services in OMA, as appropriate; and

- Task CMOS, in collaboration with other stakeholders in Headquarters and field missions, to participate in the development, review and improvement of operational military reporting to add to and synchronize good practices across all peace operations in any future expansion/enhancement of SAGE.

DPO accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

CONTENTS

Audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service

I.   BACKGROUND

1.   The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service (CMOS) in the Office of Military Affairs (OMA), Department of Peace Operations (DPO).

2.   According to the current Secretary-General's bulletin on organization of the erstwhile Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO, ST/SGB/2010/1), the functions of CMOS include: (a) advising heads of military components (HOMCs) on technical aspects of military operations and interacting with permanent missions of Member States on all military technical operational issues, significant incidents, accidents, injuries, deaths, repatriations and other current issues; (b) providing the Military Adviser and senior leadership at United Nations Headquarters with military information and analysis related to current events and situations relevant to United Nations peacekeeping; (c) coordinating visits by Member States, the military and police adviser community and senior military staff from Headquarters to peacekeeping operations, and briefing and debriefing visiting military officials; and (d) coordinating responses by OMA to disciplinary issues involving military personnel.

3.   CMOS is headed by a chief at the P-5 level and its other posts include a deputy chief and 16 desk officers at the P-4 level, and three programme management assistants at G-5 level. The chief and desk officers are seconded active-duty military officers who normally serve for two years, which can be extended up to a maximum of four years. In the 2021/22 budget proposal (A/75/785), two P-4 posts were formally redeployed to the Military Performance and Evaluation Team (MPET).

4.   CMOS is organized into three teams based on regional presence of United Nations field operations: (a) Africa; (b) Europe, Central Asia, Americas; and (c) Middle East, Asia Pacific.

5.   Comments provided by DPO are incorporated in italics.

II.   AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

6.   The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of CMOS in implementing its functions.

7.   This audit was included in the 2020 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the importance of CMOS activities in achieving OMA objectives and the sensitivity and risks associated with them.

8.   OIOS conducted this audit from December 2020 to November 2021. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020, updated with developments in 2021, as appropriate. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium risks areas in CMOS activities and focused on: (a) the implementation of its functions; and (b) human resources management.

9.   The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; and (c) analytical review of data.

10.   The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Implementation of CMOS functions

<u>CMOS contributed to the general performance of military operations and took action to prepare a comprehensive annual workplan</u>

11.   Within DPO, OMA is responsible for overseeing 12 peacekeeping missions and seven special political missions. Each desk officer in CMOS is responsible for at least one mission and provides backup for at least one other mission depending on the size of the mission. CMOS performed its functions through 30 different tasks and delivered approximately 7,000 outputs in 2018, and over 2,000 outputs each in 2019 and 2020. The higher number of outputs in 2018 reflects mission drawdowns and closures, which required frequent interactions with permanent missions of Member States.

12.   In addition, as shown in Table 1, CMOS performed several tasks related to organizing training activities, workshops and conferences, which were not included as part of its four functions as listed in paragraph 2. Some of these tasks were assigned as part of DPO's implementation of an Action Plan to improve the security of peacekeepers.

Table 1: CMOS tasks related to training activities, workshops and conferences for the 2018-2020 period

Tasks	Outputs		
	2018	2019	2020
Provide surge capacity during mission start-ups as directed by the Military Adviser	1	2	0
Coordinate the preparation for the annual celebration of International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers	1	1	1
As part of the Action Plan to Improve Security of Peacekeepers, to organize and conduct training courses as directed by OMA leadership including drafting project documents for extrabudgetary funding of these activities:			
1. Train of Trainer Course for Command Post Exercises	1	1	0
2. Infantry Battalion Commanders' Course	0	3	1
3. Sector Commanders and Force Chiefs of Staff Course	2	2	0
Support the Integrated Training Service/ Policy, Evaluation and Training Division in organizing other training efforts:			
1. Intensive Orientation Course at Headquarters for newly appointed Force Commanders and selected Deputy Force Commanders	2	2	0
2. Train of Trainer Course for Command Post Exercises	0	0	1
3. Command Post Exercises	0	4	0
Organize meetings and conferences on behalf of the OMA leadership:			
1. Heads of Military Components Conference	1	1	1
2. Chief of Defense Conference	0	1	0

13.   CMOS also coordinated and provided responses on behalf of OMA to requests for comments from the Conduct and Discipline Service in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance on disciplinary issues involving military personnel, and updated OMA leadership on data and description of military conduct and discipline cases in field missions. These responses and updates, however, were not archived, and CMOS did not track the number of responses and updates provided. In

addition, CMOS supported OMA in drafting caveat[1] procedures, which focused on (i) formalizing the definition of caveats covering both declared and undeclared caveats; (ii) reviewing the caveat declaration process as part of force generation and consideration of declared caveats in selecting contingents, and (iii) monitoring undeclared caveats, including a consultative process to resolve them. According to the caveat tracker maintained by CMOS (Table 2), there were 29 undeclared caveats raised before 31 December 2020, among them 23 had been resolved and 6 were still outstanding as of 28 July 2021. The number of new undeclared caveats had also been reduced from 12 to 3 between 2019 and 2020.

Table 2: Status of undeclared caveats raised before 31 December 2020, as of 28 July 2021

Year	Number of caveats		
	Raised	**Resolved**	**Unresolved**
Before 2019	14	13	1
2019	12	8	4
2020	3	2	1
Total	**29**	**23**	**6**

Note: Not all undeclared caveats may have detrimental impact on mandate implementation and performance.

14.   While CMOS sent a list of projects and activities that required direction and inputs from OMA leadership to the OMA front office, the list was not comprehensive of the tasks CMOS performed and did not constitute an annual workplan. For example, the list did not include routine outputs and activities of CMOS such as the daily situation reports. Although CMOS performed tasks around its mandated functions, the tasks were not consolidated for prioritization, and to assess the workload vis-à-vis the authorized capacity and to measure its effectiveness in performing the functions. In practice, CMOS relied on its standard operating procedures (SOPs) for routine tasks to be performed and regular direction from OMA leadership on task prioritization. CMOS, therefore, lacked a comprehensive annual work plan, which consolidated the tasks it was expected to deliver. Preparation of a comprehensive annual workplan and systematic monitoring and reporting on implementation progress are important management steps to enhance the visibility of CMOS functions, and to assist in the measurement of its performance for accountability.

15.   DPO commented that like all other services and teams in OMA, CMOS used to send a list of important and special events planned for a year to the Office of the Chief of Staff in the form of calendar events, without routine tasks included. A detailed CMOS workplan for 2022 has now been developed and submitted to the Office of the Chief of Staff for incorporation into the overall OMA workplan. Based on the action taken, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

The Force Headquarters Handbook needed to assign specific responsibilities for technical reporting by field missions and authorize them to communicate with CMOS

16.   The functions of CMOS include providing the Military Adviser and senior leadership at United Nations Headquarters with military information and analysis related to current events and situations relevant to United Nations peacekeeping. For this, CMOS needs regular reporting from and working level communication with the military force headquarters in each peacekeeping mission. Current military information is also needed for situation awareness, which would be relayed to the leadership in

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[1] Caveats: Any limitation, restriction, condition or constraint imposed by a troop contributing country (TCC) on its military contingent deployed in United Nations peace operations that impedes United Nations commanders in deploying and employing these assets fully in accordance with United Nations strategic and operational guidance and decreases the ability of Force to accomplish its mandated tasks. They can be declared (explicitly stated by a TCC prior to a deployment) or undeclared (brought out when a national peacekeeper, unit or contingent commander acts contrary to orders in a way that limits their operational employment).

Headquarters, and for briefings of Member States and the Military Staff Committee as required, especially at times of crises.

17.   The Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations requires HOMCs to maintain a technical reporting and communication link with the Military Adviser as a secondary information advisory communication that should in no case circumvent the primary reporting line and command/supervisory relationships. The Policy also provides that technical reporting lines be transparent and formalized in approved documentation. In this regard, DPO issued in 2008 a directive authorizing HOMCs and other mission military personnel approved by the HOMC to communicate with military colleagues in OMA.

18.   However, CMOS desk officers sometimes experienced hesitance from field missions' military staff to share information on military operations on a timely basis. In these instances, the desk officers followed up and tried to resolve the issues through different channels of communication, including contacting the mission military chief of staff to authorize the provision of the requested information. Very rarely did a situation need escalation to OMA leadership, but the extra efforts required by CMOS desk officers to obtain access to information created additional workload and undue pressure on the limited resources in CMOS and other related personnel. In a recent case, CMOS indicated that it requested an operational update in mid-December 2020, but the mission concerned only shared the information in early May 2021. CMOS stated that due to budget constraints, its desk officers no longer had familiarization visits to the missions they are responsible for to foster working relationships.

19.   OMA was revising the directive to HOMCs to update and further delineate the technical reporting requirements from missions' HOMCs to individual services and teams in OMA. Undergoing revision also was the United Nations Force Headquarters Handbook (2014), which encompasses peacekeeping organizational framework; commanders' and staff functions; coordination aspects; and force headquarters' organization structure, roles and responsibilities, among others. OMA confirmed that the current Handbook would be referencing the revised directive to HOMCs for technical reporting on military operations and communication link between field missions and United Nations Headquarters.

20.   Nevertheless, it is still important that the revision to the United Nations Force Headquarters Handbook include assignment of responsibilities for technical reporting of military operations to specific staff branch(es) and staff positions in a force headquarters. Military staff officers in field missions are subject to periodic rotation as they have typically one-year terms, and it is imperative that they become familiar with the responsibilities associated with their official functions on a timely basis. As such they would benefit from various measures offered by the Organization such as training (pre-deployment, in-mission and self), briefings, standardized test upon arrival and evaluation, which must employ relevant United Nations guidance and authoritative documents such as the Force Headquarters Handbook. CMOS stated that other services and teams in OMA may also benefit from such clarification of technical reporting from field missions in the Handbook.

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(1)   DPO should specify in the revised United Nations Force Headquarters Handbook the authorization and specific responsibilities of relevant military staff branches and positions in field missions for maintaining technical reporting and communication link on behalf of the head of military component with the Current Military Operations Service and other services and teams of the Office of Military Affairs, as appropriate.

DPO accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the above-mentioned authorization and responsibilities had already been incorporated in the revised United Nations Force Handbook, now renamed the Deployed Military Headquarters Handbook, which was expected to be approved soon.

<u>CMOS role of providing advice on military operations reporting needed formalization in the development, review and improvement of SAGE</u>

21.   SAGE is an incident and event tracking database application system initiated in 2016 to facilitate in-mission communication and reporting. At that time, the Under-Secretary-General of DPKO envisaged that SAGE would facilitate the digitization of field-based reporting to United Nations Headquarters as part of the organizational transition to a modern database driven reporting architecture, and that the ongoing review of DPKO and the Department of Field Support's SOPs on integrated reporting role would include roles for the two entities in the system. He also expected that SAGE would serve as a standard tool in Unite Aware, which is a platform designed to provide a coherent, comprehensive and integrated approach to situation awareness and information analysis for United Nations Peace Operations, as SAGE would be reviewed and optimized in the future.

22.   A study conducted by DPO in 2020 highlighted the lack of involvement of key stakeholders at United Nations Headquarters in addressing the evolving information needs of offices at Headquarters, including those of OMA in SAGE. It also indicated that some sections in field missions continued to use their own reporting templates, thus considered the use of Unite Aware or of SAGE as an additional burden. Currently, CMOS did not have full visibility or a role in the development of technical reporting of military operations in SAGE for field missions. Therefore, CMOS could not provide advice on military operational and technical reporting, which is part of its mandate. At the time of writing this report, SAGE had been deployed in all peacekeeping missions except the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. These two missions were expected to implement SAGE in due course.

23.   Further, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations in its report A/72/19, requested the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, a separate section on safety and security, including statistics on targeted attacks on peacekeeping operations, the possible causes and other related information. CMOS collects data on hostile incidents against peacekeepers from field missions and provides the quarterly consolidated data to the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre for uploading into a Power Business Intelligence (BI) tool. This process could be automated to avoid human error and free up human resources currently relaying such information manually by email and Excel spreadsheet between field missions and CMOS. When properly configured, the automated process could also help to eliminate potential double reporting of single hostile incidents involving different mission components, which are collected by different offices at Headquarters responsible to support individual components.

> **(2)   DPO should, in collaboration with other stakeholders in Headquarters and field missions, task the Current Military Operations Service to participate in the development, review and improvement of operational military reporting to add to and synchronize good practices across all peace operations in any future expansion/enhancement of SAGE.**
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> *DPO accepted recommendation 2 and stated that the DPO-DOS (Department of Operational Support) team defining the Peacekeeping Situational Awareness Framework had been requested to include desk officers from CMOS and MPET as well as the Assessment Team in the development, review and use of SAGE as well as the Unite Aware System.*

<u>Missions had begun granting CMOS desk officers access to SAGE for official functions</u>

24.   In addition to military daily and weekly reports, CMOS collects and compiles on monthly and quarterly bases, the regularly required data on military operations in pre-determined templates from field missions by email. This includes data that should already exist in SAGE such as mission basic fact sheet,

hostile acts report, deployment maps, operational and mandated activities, caveat reports, road traffic accident reports, loss of ammunition/weapons and related equipment reports. For other information needs between reporting periods, such as current information on special operations for inclusion in a formal report or in preparation for briefings for Member States and the Military Staff Committee, CMOS requests its counterparts in field missions to provide the requested information by email or other means of communication.

25.   Due to time difference between field and Headquarters' locations, and administrative and operational situations on the ground, CMOS counterparts in field missions may not always be available to address the time-sensitive information requests expeditiously. Without access to SAGE, CMOS had to rely on the availability and diligence of mission colleagues to extract and communicate data or reports that may have already been recorded in SAGE. This avoidable burden on CMOS desk officers and their mission counterparts could be alleviated by granting CMOS desk officers access to the relevant areas of SAGE to independently acquire the required information in SAGE at a convenient time. This would also obviate the risk of human error in communicating information through channels outside SAGE and remove the need for military staff in field missions to compile and communicate information to CMOS by email. However, not all field missions granted access to the responsible CMOS desk officers upon request.

26.   In a code cable dated 22 July 2021, the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support requested peacekeeping missions to grant access to authorised staff in CMOS and the Assessment Team to the SAGE Power BI Dashboard so that they can provide timely situational awareness and threat analysis to DPO leadership. As of December 2021, four field missions had granted CMOS desk officers access to SAGE. Therefore, OIOS is not making a recommendation on this issue, but CMOS needed to follow up to ensure the required access is granted by all missions.

B.   Human resources management

CMOS was taking action to bridge the gap between outgoing and incoming CMOS desk officers

27.   The vacancy rates at the end of 2018, 2019 and 2020 among professional posts in CMOS were 17 per cent, 6 per cent and 28 per cent respectively, compared to the budgeted vacancy rates allocated to OMA of 15 per cent. Due to challenges in recruiting and onboarding new staff and the process to obtain Member States' approval to extend the terms of service of seconded military personnel beyond the initial two-year period, new CMOS desk officers only joined after previous incumbents had departed. This added to the workload of the remaining officers, which could be exacerbated during times of crises or temporary deployment of CMOS desk officer to field missions.

28.   DPO commented that it would use the possibility of circulating job openings six to eight months before the end tour of duty of any CMOS staff to build good momentum and continuity in CMOS functions and institutional memories.

CMOS capacity for training responsibilities

29.   The SOPs for CMOS dated 1 November 2019 include conducting and coordinating training in specialist areas such as the Sector Commanders and Force Chiefs of Staff Course, the Infantry Battalion Commander Course and the Command Post Exercises training of trainers' course for newly deployed military training officers in field missions. CMOS organized or assisted in training activities outlined in Table 3 during the audit period.

Table 3: Summary of trainings organized or assisted by CMOS

	2018	2019	2020	Total
Intensive Orientation Course	2	2	-	4
Sector Commanders and Force Chiefs of Staff Course	2	2	-	4
Infantry Battalion Commanders' Course	-	3	1	4
Command Post Exercises	-	4	-	4
Command Post Exercises – Train of trainers	1	1	1	3
Total	**5**	**12**	**1**	**19**

30.   However, job openings for CMOS desk officers did not specify any required or desirable competencies for conducting or coordinating training activities. While not all CMOS desk officers would engage in providing or coordinating training activities, CMOS needed to maintain capacity in this area to fulfil the responsibilities assigned to it by OMA as part of the Action Plan to Improve Security of Peacekeepers. Member States might not be fully aware of the need to nominate candidates with such qualification and experience. Therefore, DPO needed to ensure that job openings in CMOS include competencies required for conducting and coordinating trainings in specialist areas.

31.   OMA stated that while the Integrated Training Service is the lead DPO entity to coordinate and conduct training events for the Department, it does so with limited resources. CMOS does coordinate the organization of a small number of high-level military courses per necessity, and CMOS desk officers are already selected for the management and coordination competencies and an awareness of training fundamentals. The Department, therefore, considers the addition of training competencies in the job openings unnecessary. In light of DPO's explanation, no recommendation is made on this issue.

IV.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

32.   OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of DPO for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(*Signed*) Muriette Lawrence-Hume
Chief, New York Audit Service
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[2]/ Important[3]	C/ O[4]	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date[5]
1	DPO should specify in the revised United Nations Force Headquarters Handbook the authorization and specific responsibilities of relevant military staff branches and positions in field missions for maintaining technical reporting and communication link on behalf of the head of military component with the Current Military Operations Service and other Services and Teams of the Office of Military Affairs, as appropriate.	Important	O	Receipt of the approved Deployed Military Headquarters Handbook specifying the authorization and specific responsibilities of relevant military staff branches and positions in field missions for maintaining technical reporting and communication link with CMOS and other OMA services and teams.	31 December 2022
2	DPO should, in collaboration with other stakeholders in Headquarters and field missions, task the Current Military Operations Service to participate in the development, review and improvement of operational military reporting to add to and synchronize good practices across all peace operations in any future expansion/ enhancement of SAGE.	Important	O	Confirmation of the participation CMOS in the Peacekeeping Situational Awareness Framework for the development, review and use of SAGE and the Unite Aware System.	31 December 2022

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[2] Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

[3] Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

[4] Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

[5] Date provided by DPO in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

TO: A:	Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General, Office of Internal Oversight Services	DATE:	18 August 2022
		REFERENCE:	DPO-2022-01594
		CLASSIFICATION:	Confidential

THROUGH:
S/C DE:

FROM: Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General,
DE: Department of Peace Operations

SUBJECT: **Draft report on an audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service**
OBJET: **(Assignment No. AP2020-600-03)**

1.   I refer to your memorandum OIOS-2022-00462, dated 4 April 2022, regarding the above-mentioned audit. We accept two of your recommendations and have initiated action to implement them. The third recommendation requires an alignment of functions and capacity before implementation. Please find attached the action plan with target dates for the implementation of the recommendations of the report along with our comments.

2.   Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We stand ready to provide any further information that may be required.

CC: Gen Birame Diop
      Ms. Eleanor T. Burns
      Ms. Fatemeh Ziai

Management Response
Action Plan

Audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	DPO should specify in the revised United Nations Force Headquarters Handbook the authorization and specific responsibilities of relevant military staff branches and positions in field missions for maintaining technical reporting and communication link on behalf of the head of military component with the Current Military Operations Service and other Services and Teams of the Office of Military Affairs, as appropriate.	Important	Yes	OMA COS	31 December 2022	It has already been incorporated in the revised UN Force Headquarters Handbook which has been renamed as the Deployed Military HQ Handbook and is expected to be approved soon.
2	DPO should, in collaboration with other stakeholders in Headquarters and field missions, task the Current Military Operations Service to participate in the development, review and improvement of operational military reporting to add to and synchronize good practices across all peace operations in any future expansion/ enhancement of SAGE.	Important	Yes	OMA COS	31 December 2022	OMA has already tasked CMOS accordingly. The DPO-DOS team to define the Peacekeeping Situational Awareness Framework has been requested to include CMOS, AT and MPET Desk Officers in the development, review and use of SAGE as well as Unite Aware System.
3	DPO should ensure that job openings in the Current Military Operations Service include competencies required for conducting and coordinating trainings in specialist areas, pending a long-term solution to align function and capacity for these training activities.		No	N/A	None	The Integrated Training Service is the lead DPO entity to coordinate and conduct training events for the department; it does so with limited resources. CMOS does coordinate the organization of a small number of high-level military courses, per

[1] Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

[2] Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response
Action Plan

Audit of the functions of the Current Military Operations Service

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical[1]/ Important[2]	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						necessity. This requires management and coordination competencies, which CMOS personnel are selected for, and an awareness of training fundamentals, which these personnel also possess, due to their professional experience as military officers. The Department, therefore, considers the addition of training competencies unnecessary. Should there be a future re-alignment of functions and capacity, approved by the General Assembly, the job descriptions would be amended accordingly.