Determining the significance of practical military skills applied by the special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs to deliver combat objectives

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Abstract:

The paper presents findings from a study conducted to determine the significance of practical military skills applied by the special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs to deliver combat objectives. The findings indicate that the following are the key practical military skills: marksmanship skills as prowess with various types of weapons; the ability to move silently and promptly take up an advantageous fighting position; the ability to rapidly defeat the enemy when the encounter is unexpected; the ability to contain the enemy and cover assault teams; hand-to-hand fighting (with or without weapons) in various conditions; the ability to locate, apprehend and terminated terrorists; skills of camouflage and concealment; mastery of different entry techniques.

Key words: practical military skills; special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs; professional training; counter-terrorism operations.

Introduction

The present-day professional military activities of the special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs require new approaches to organizing the training of Army personnel.

The top priority for special forces personnel is to complete a program that encompasses tactical, firearms and physical training. The corresponding training curricula should be deeply interrelated and complementary.

Tactical training should focus on learning how to seize (neutralize) armed criminals in different sites. Counter-terrorism operations may involve firearms discharge or hand-to-hand combat. All necessary techniques are to be perfected during firearms drills and physical training held in a certain tactical set-up.

At tactical training sessions, one is required to select the most appropriate ready position; to observe all standard safety precautions governing the handling of weapons; to take a shooting position that is both the most advantageous and the least vulnerable. When practicing hand-to-hand combat, it is important to know safe ways of leaving the line of attack and to be able to decide on the best way of action in a particular situation. Blows and actions should be correct, precise, realistic, but vary in intensity (Bolotin & Erastov, 2013; Bolotin & Sivak, 2012; Bolotin, Napalkov & Zyukin, 2014).

At present, there is a strong emphasis on the physical and professional development of the special operations personnel of the MIA Internal Troops. Individual training standards are changing as conducting combat operations against armed bands requires special forces personnel to have a vast array of specialized military skills (Bolotin & Chistyakov, 2013; Bolotin & Petrenko, 2014).

Russian experience in the field of special operations shows that special purpose regiments have to routinely undertake hazardous tasks, which explains why they are required to display high levels of specialized skills and military abilities.

Under current conditions, the high-level specialized skills and military abilities of special forces personnel are considered to be of critical importance in preventing terrorism (Bolotin & Layshev, 2012).

It is common knowledge that the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops are held responsible for combating terrorism, organized crime and armed bands. Special purpose regiments fight the battle against the illegal use of various weapons, ammunition, explosives and toxic agents. All the above factors impose high requirements on special forces personnel in regard to their combat readiness.

A summary of preliminary research findings indicates that one of the key factors contributing to an advanced state of the readiness of special forces for the conduct of counter-terrorism operations is the high level of combat readiness for military activities in extreme conditions. Therefore, there is a real need for a military training model designed especially for the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops with regard to the specifics of counter-terrorism operations.

As of now, there is much tension around the issue of the combat training of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops. The whole training system has to be improved as the capacity of the special forces of the MIA Internal Troops to successfully terminate terrorists and armed bands is narrowly dependent on their operational readiness (Bolotin & Petrenko, 2014; Bolotin, Napalkov & Zyukin, 2014).

Past experience in fighting terrorism and armed bands shows that the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops should have excellent marksmanship skills combined with the advanced ability to handle different types of small arms. Besides, heavy demands are placed on their physical abilities, their readiness to solve complicated tasks in unconventional combat action (Bolotin & Skripachev, 2014; Bolotin, Napalkov & Zyukin, 2014).

Combat readiness, therefore, should be based on the commitment of special forces personnel to physical and professional development. It follows from the above reasoning that combat readiness has a subjective and an objective aspect. The objective aspect is determined by the need to protect public order and national security while the subjective aspect is defined by a set of prerequisites to a high state of the military readiness of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops.

The analysis of the specifics of the counter-terrorism activities conducted by the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops suggests that their operational readiness is conditioned on the approach they employ to solve particular tasks. These tasks are mostly concerned with protecting the internal security of the state, maintaining military operations in various hot spots and fighting against terrorism (Bolotin & Petrenko, 2014; Bolotin & Sivak, 2012).

Executing counter-terrorism operations in troubled areas induces overexertion which leads to physical and moral exhaustion, and requires specialized military skills. For this reason, the training and practice of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops should be delivered under operational conditions similar to those found in real counter-terrorism operations, which is impossible to accomplish if special forces personnel fail to adopt a proactive attitude towards their military training.

As the military activities of special operation forces draw out physical skills and abilities acquired during their tactical training in the most consistent way, it is very important to put a particularly strong emphasis on these aspects of the training aimed at enhancing their combat readiness.

The readiness of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops for the conduct of counter-terrorism operations can be viewed as a special state of all the systems of the military man's body. It means that all the psychological and physical systems of the special forces personnel of the MIA Internal Troops undergo mobilization, which maximizes their operational efficiency in combat.

Researchers have identified a whole array of characteristics indicative of an ideal state of military personnel that attest to their combat readiness, e.g., displaying the largest possible number of functions performed at the maximum reaction rate, maintaining the ultimate performance and endurance capability, and demonstrating adequate responses to external influences.

The combat readiness of the special forces personnel of the MIA Internal Troops encompasses many elements, such as knowing efficient ways to deliver results, military, psychological and physiological preparedness. It is rooted in orientation, moving abilities, military skills, field experience, and practical knowledge of achieving combat objectives.

Physical preparedness is another critical component of combat readiness as it also contributes to the effectiveness of counter-terrorism operations.

It must be emphasized that the readiness of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops for the conduct of counter-terrorism operations is impossible to provide if the acquired level of at least one kind of preparedness is insufficient. None of the elements can act as a counterbalance to the other readiness components.

So, the readiness for the conduct of counter-terrorism operations is a core ingredient of the effective military activities of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops. However, to determine the state of combat readiness, one has to be aware of proficiency requirements they have to comply with.

Results

To assess the significance of practical military skills applied by special forces personnel to deliver combat objectives, 74 military officers with combat experience in various hot spots were surveyed. The survey findings are presented in Table 1.

Russian experience in containing local armed conflicts shows that the operational activities of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops display specific distinctions and require extensive preparation. They have to be ready to deploy at a moment's notice and engage in combat at any time of the day, in any terrain or building.

Preventing, containing and terminating armed bands require the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops to perfect all of the above-mentioned skills.

The military activities of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops depend on the following key factors:

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- the numerical strength and operational efficiency of armed bands and their preferred methods of combat;
 - climatic and geographical environment as well as other operational conditions;
 - opportunities to ensure security among civilians.

Table 1. Assessment of the significance of practical military skills applied by special forces personnel to deliver combat objectives (n=74)

Significance (ranking number)	Practical military skills	Ranking index (%)
1	Marksmanship skills as prowess with various types of weapons	20.7
2	The ability to move silently and promptly take up an advantageous position	18.3
3	The ability to rapidly defeat the enemy when the encounter is unexpected	15.1
4	The ability to contain the enemy and cover assault teams	12.8
5	Close combat skills implying the ability to perform hand-to-hand fighting with or without weapons in various conditions	12.2
6	The ability to locate, apprehend and terminated terrorists	9.9
7	Skills of camouflage and concealment	6.7
8	Mastery of different entry techniques	4.3

Discussion

Past experience shows that the special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs should only perform the tasks within the area of their expertise as assigning them miscellaneous duties proved less effective.

The special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops are first and foremost involved in counter-terrorism operations. A long-standing history of successful band termination makes it possible to identify certain areas of concern. The following issues are considered to be of ultimate importance:

- significant problems related to the management of counter-terrorism operations;
- ineffective coordination of teams engaged in joint effort to contain, cover, apprehend and terminate illegal armed groups;
- inadequate planning of counter-terrorism operations.

With regard to the above, it is possible to outline the ways and means to increase the tactical effectiveness of the MIA special forces personnel involved in counter-terrorism operations. The examples of those are:

- establishing an effective training model for special forces personnel;
- selecting options, ways and means that are most effective in the military struggle against bands and terrorists;
- holding activities aimed to develop cohesion and cooperation among special forces divisions in a timely manner;
- designing counter-surprise measures to apprehend bands or terrorists, penetrate weapons and ammunition storage facilities, contain and terminate;
- disrupting and destroying all possible supply lines for weapons and ammunition used by illegal armed groups;
- employing most rigid, unbending fighting techniques against terrorists and other types of assailants. In such a context, getting involved in any kind of negotiations is counterproductive as it may give adversary forces time to regroup, restore their fighting efficiency and result in unjustified losses of federal military personnel.

Special forces personnel are thus subject to minimum essential training requirements and expected to maintain a high degree of constant combat readiness for the conduct of short-notice counter-terrorism operations. Meeting the requirements means achieving a sufficient level of military training, which can be ensured by using new learning technologies. Special attention should be paid to whole new instruction techniques that can be adopted and applied in training the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops. The effectiveness of military operations against armed bands or terrorists relates to the proficiency of special forces personnel to handle unconventional military activities. In order to be ready to perform in hard-to-reach areas and strange conditions, they have to undergo additional training with due regard to forthcoming counter-terrorism operations.

Special purpose teams are to move as quietly as possible with consideration of specific terrain features and force apportionment. Particular attention should be given to clothing and equipment as they are instrumental in detaining and terminating armed bands and terrorists.

Walking over rough or steep terrain may exhaust military troops fairly quickly, which is also to be factored into the training program for the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops.

Conclusions

The current training system for the special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs should be further improved and optimized to better prepare the personnel for real combat. As of now, however, it fails to provide a strong relationship between different types of training and indices contributing to the readiness to conduct counter-terrorism operations.

The military activities of the special purpose regiments of the MIA Internal Troops involve making use of arms in order to promptly locate and terminate armed bands.

In summary, the present study revealed the significance of practical military skills applied by the special purpose regiments of the Internal Troops of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs during their military missions.

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