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## FORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR PRESERVING PEACE<sup>1</sup>

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*ABSTRACT: Based on public opinion survey data, Hungarian citizens have a clear need and expectation for living in peace and security. Therefore, bearing in mind the rapidly and sharply changing security challenges in the world, our country must be able to preserve peace, security, and stability continuously and under all circumstances. The Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF) have a main role in fulfilling the citizens' needs and expectations, as well as Hungary's effective defence policy. We can face the challenges of our time and efficiently manage the risks and dangers that have arisen only with well-equipped armed forces that are supplied with modern weapons, material stocks of adequate quantity and quality, as well as excellently trained and loyal soldiers who are committed to their country.*

*In his study, the author reviews the previous situation and condition of the Hungarian Defence Forces, then analyses the reasons for launching the Military Development Program, as well as its international and domestic circumstances. He presents the issues of strategic command and control, followed by the characteristics and concrete stages of the military career path model. Finally, he assesses the results achieved so far in the field of force development and outlines the remaining tasks.*

*KEYWORDS: National Defence and Military Development Program, force development, human resources, military capability, modern equipment, career path model, military career guidance, preparation*

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## INTRODUCTION

In order to create and develop our armed forces fully meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we launched the Zrínyi 2026 National Defence and Armed Forces Development Program in 2017, which was expanded in 2020 with concepts and plans extended to 2030 and then to 2032. We put the person, the soldier himself, at the centre of the implementation of the program, starting from the simple fact that the procurement of modern military equipment is basically a “matter of time and money”, but the continuous availability of loyal, dedicated, excellently trained, and motivated soldiers for a real, national force cannot be solved “only” with financial means. First of all, this is because salaries (allowances, pay-

<sup>1</sup> The author closed the manuscript on 30 December 2022. As the 2023/1-2 issue of the Hungarian Defence Review published the presentations of a professional conference, the HDR had the opportunity to publish the study in this issue.

ments) alone – which are strong incentives, but not sufficient – cannot create patriotism, loyalty, sacrifices, and self-sacrifice. The sum of these human characteristics represents a kind of capability for the Hungarian Defence Forces, and thereby for the country, which will have full value if it is accompanied by a commitment on the part of the personnel; this human value and way of life is called vocation, which must form the basis of the predictable national military. For these outstanding human values, we can call our soldiers' activities "professional military service", an honourable epithet that distinguishes it from the ranks of other professions. This service must be based on the harmony of strict expectations and requirements as well as decent remuneration.

## SECURITY AND PEACE ARE AT RISK WITHOUT ARMED FORCES DEVELOPMENT

For decades, the soldiers of the Hungarian Defence Forces have been waiting for the moment when, as a result of a comprehensive development of the armed forces, Hungary would have modern Hungarian Defence Forces, as members of which they could proudly serve the interests of our country and the Hungarian people. The Hungarian Defence Forces must be reliable defenders of the nation, being at once an allied force recognized by our international partners, a strong member of NATO, and one of the premier military forces in our region.

There were three fundamental reasons for launching the Military Development Program:

- 1) First and foremost, to develop Hungary's defence capability and at once its national resilience, as well as its capacity to assert its own interests. In this connection, we had to take into account the following objective necessities and facts:
  - Like all countries in general, Hungary has its own (short-, medium-, and long-term) national interests. It is well known and obvious that the stronger a country is, the more firmly it can assert its interests and attain its goals in practice as well.
  - Our country also has its own national values that are based on historical foundations and handed down from generation to generation – these were created and shaped for us by our ancestors over centuries (be they spiritual, cultural, material, natural, communal, or of any other origin). We must be able to preserve, develop, and expand these values at all times, that is, to further enrich them and pass them on to future generations.
  - Last but not least: in addition to the interests and values of the country, we must think of our fellow humans, fellow citizens, relatives, family members, and loved ones, for whom we are responsible; whom we must protect and defend, which already in itself requires the creation of a strong defence capability.
- 2) Another fundamental reason for launching the Military Development Program is that the security situation of our region has deteriorated noticeably and visibly, and is still deteriorating in several respects. This is partly because serious unprecedented challenges and threats have emerged, often unpredictable in terms of their outcome, which have a significant impact on the development of the international and regional security environment that determines people's everyday lives. All this has an impact on the security and defence policy of our country, and that of the international organizations and institutions of which we are members. Today's events are also exerting a significant influence on the security situation in our region, see, for example:

- the Russo-Ukrainian War and the associated economic crises, the related challenges to the stability of energy security, as well as the risks associated with the effects of sanction measures on Europe and our country, and their social and political consequences;
  - existing tensions between certain countries of the Western Balkans, regional instability;
  - political, economic, and social (national-ethnic, tribal, and religious) instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region<sup>2</sup> and Asian countries, as well as the migration crisis that has been affecting Europe for years;
  - from Russia’s annexation of Crimea to the present day, information operations conducted by the Russian side, the emergence and strengthening of new forms of hybrid warfare;
  - risks, threats, and dangers arising from cyber operational activities, which are posing an increasing risk, and their potential consequences;
  - the intensification of information operations, including distorting, exaggerated, deceptive, false, and untrue statements;
  - environmental impacts and their consequences, which are often extreme and are caused by climate change;
  - and the emergence of epidemics and other health risks on a global scale.
- 3) Further triggers include our responsibilities under our allied commitments. For the region of Central Europe – and thus also for the area of Hungary –, NATO sets out a direction of dual threat. As a result, Hungary, and within it the Hungarian Defence Forces, have priority security and defence policy tasks in both designated threat directions, which also require the creation of newer and more modern defence capabilities.

NATO has emphatically formulated the risk of a “threat from the East”, which has clearly meant the threat posed by Russia for many years now. This earlier perceived threat has become a reality today due to the Russo-Ukrainian War. As the military force of a NATO Ally, the Hungarian Defence Forces perform support, cooperation, and reinforcement tasks in this direction of threat. Thus, Hungary is involved in the implementation of the processes and operations falling within the scope of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP)<sup>3</sup> adopted at the Wales Summit and belonging to the concept of NATO’s strengthened Deterrence and Defence Posture.<sup>4</sup>

The other direction of threats is that of the threat from the South, which directly affects Hungary due to the instability of the Western Balkans region. In this direction, NATO presents the challenges posed by mass illegal migration and – especially after the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 and in Brussels and Germany in 2016 – the growing terror alert and terrorist threat. Hungary is doing its share of these tasks by deploying a significant portion of its military forces engaged in peacekeeping operations<sup>5</sup> in this endangered direction. Moreover, it has assumed a role in NATO’s defence assistance and contributed to the military reinforcement of the NATO Strategic Direction – South Hub (NSD-S HUB).

<sup>2</sup> MENA: see, among others: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/middle-east-and-north-africa-mena\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/middle-east-and-north-africa-mena_en).

<sup>3</sup> RAP: see, among others: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160627\\_1607-factsheet-rap-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-rap-en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> “Besides the deterrence and defence posture, the participants of the Warsaw Summit emphasized the importance of dialogue, because the existence of the Russian Federation is a reality in Europe”. Source: Keckskeméthy 2017, 114–126.

<sup>5</sup> Current missions of the Hungarian Defence Forces, 2020.

At the same time, as a committed and active NATO member state situated for more than twenty years now at the intersection of the two main directions of threats, feeling responsible for preserving the security not only of our country but also of our region, in cooperation with several neighbouring countries, we have established the Headquarters Multinational Division Centre (HQ MND-C)<sup>6</sup> in Székesfehérvár and the Regional Special Operations Component Command (R-SOCC)<sup>7</sup> in Szolnok.

Because of the emergence and intensification of the aforementioned security challenges and risks, in order to guarantee our security, it was our primary goal to implement a comprehensive development of the armed forces in the shortest possible time and at a rapid pace, which serves the security of our country and at the same time, the creation<sup>8</sup> and strengthening of our flexible national resilience.<sup>9</sup>

As one of the segments of generating military capabilities, we have also set the goal of developing the domestic defence industry, which, in a given case and under given circumstances, is capable of greatly reducing the risk factors of supplying our country and the Hungarian Defence Forces with material stocks and equipment by providing the appropriate military equipment and assets. At the same time, it serves the realization of our country's employment policy goals by creating numerous new jobs, and through all this, also contributes to the economic strengthening of our country.

The results of the examination of the root causes of force development and the system of their combined impacts may help us to better understand why it was necessary to launch such a large-scale, wide-ranging development since we had been members of NATO for nearly two decades at the beginning of it, whose founding treaty<sup>10</sup> has always placed important requirements on its member countries.

At the same time, the question may arise: in previous periods, for many years, did we not attach importance to the cause of national defence, including the development of the armed forces? Perhaps even a lay outsider may rightly ask: Have circumspect studies and findings been lacking? Or, maybe, has defence and security research not covered all the necessary areas? Or, was it superficial or erroneous conclusions that put the Hungarian Defence Forces responsible for the armed defence of the country in such an unworthy situation? To continue the reasoning: perhaps the excuse was that this was not the most important issue to be dealt with by government leaders of the day; or they thought that although providing national defence capability is an important task for the country, Hungary's economic situation "at the moment" does not allow the development of military forces.

I am certain that all the above reasoning has a role to play in the situation that has arisen. At the same time, it is also a fact that while seeking the causes and triggers of the decline of defence capabilities, we must look further than domestic decision-making and decision-makers and consider some of NATO's strategic guidelines as well. Here I have in mind the extremely positive interpretation of the "end of the Cold War" or the excessive emphasis on expeditionary forces over military "heavy capabilities". All these NATO policies and measures not only gave member states' political leaders the opportunity to choose simpler

<sup>6</sup> HQ MND-C: See, among others: <https://defence.hu/tag/hq-mnd-c.html>.

<sup>7</sup> R-SOCC: see, among others: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_10/20191022\\_1910-factsheet-rsocc.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_10/20191022_1910-factsheet-rsocc.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Act on the Coordination of Defence and Security Activities, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Resilience means flexible responsiveness, stamina, resistance, toughness, and flexibility.

<sup>10</sup> North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C., 4 April 1949. It entered into force on 24 August 1949.

and cheaper solutions but also offered their adoption almost as a recommendation. Among others, these guidelines led to the partial decommissioning of Hungarian heavy equipment from the army. However, it was clearly a domestic mistake not to adequately manage basic Alliance expectations<sup>11</sup> under the secure protective umbrella of NATO's<sup>12</sup> collective defence. It is true that strategic concepts (which at the time perhaps seemed economical and therefore logical), such as elements of NATO's Smart Defence program,<sup>13</sup> played a significant role in this; just like the fact that we placed the emphasis above all on building capacity for tasks related to foreign mission, which pushed the preservation of comprehensive defence capabilities – and even their strengthening as needed – into the background.<sup>14</sup>

However, we cannot cite them, since the development of the capabilities of the national armed forces as a whole, including all subsystems within it, is in our fundamental national interest, that is, our task, our responsibility, which entails obligations for all decision-makers now and in the future. In this spirit, in 2015, the Ministry of Defence was tasked by the government to establish the Hungarian Defence Forces capable of meeting the requirements and challenges of the age, equipped with the most up-to-date technical equipment, providing a premier force of the region consisting of well-trained and prepared soldiers committed to their homeland, and capable of ensuring national self-sufficiency. We had to plan all this with such a calculation that the Hungarian military with the above characteristics would be available by 2028, and we would not commit mistakes like the ones of which Péter Tálas gave a fairly accurate overview in his article “On the framework of investigating attempts at the reform of the Hungarian armed forces over 25 years”.<sup>15</sup>

## THE SITUATION OF THE HUNGARIAN DEFENCE FORCES AHEAD OF DEVELOPMENT

Since the 1990s, the Hungarian Defence Forces have had to painfully run the gauntlet, which was not even ended by joining NATO. On the contrary, although it is incorrect to think, as a freeloader, from then onwards the slogan that “NATO will protect us” became a reference. One can trace how the place, role, and thus importance of the Hungarian Defence Forces have been present in Hungary's political leaders' perception of security and threats in recent decades.

As a consequence, we have reached the point where the former Hungarian People's Army with a manpower of more than 155,000 was reduced to the less than 24,000-strong Hungarian Defence Forces in little more than 15 years, by 2007. In recent decades, the year 2007 was the one with the lowest personnel strength and the smallest number of available soldiers. As a result of the suspended conscript service, the number of available trained reserv-

<sup>11</sup> Washington Treaty, § 3. See, inter alia, the NATO-official text: The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949.

<sup>12</sup> “In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” Source: The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949.

<sup>13</sup> See: Smart Defence and the Future of NATO, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> The NATO concept has changed significantly in ten years. In 2003, NATO wanted to develop an expeditionary force with light capabilities, therefore the capabilities providing heavy armaments were largely eliminated or significantly reduced in Hungary as well. By contrast, in 2013, NATO's expectations took a 180-degree turn. Member states were expected to develop the heavy capability and declare it to NATO.

<sup>15</sup> Tálas 2014, 9–22.

ists was continuously reduced, and the draft board exam of conscripts, the reporting and registration obligations, as well as the execution of planning the reservists' positions, and ensuring their availability were abolished. The mobilization exercises and those conducted jointly with reservists were cancelled, although these exercises in themselves were a significant indirect risk factor for the country's defence capability. These capability losses were compounded by the fact that the age limit of men who may be called up for compulsory military service was reduced from 50 to 40 years.

In summary, it can be said that the massive reduction of the manpower of the Hungarian Defence Forces, the decreasing strength, and the lack of availability of trained reservists, the neglect of the duties arising from compulsory military service, the closure of a significant number of barracks, and the reduction of the capabilities of service branches to a minimum have all resulted in a decrease in the performance of national defence tasks and the country's resilience.

The Zrínyi 2026 National Defence and Military Development Program was created to eliminate the above-mentioned problems. It defined the tasks to be carried out for ten years and also included objectives concerning the manpower level of the Hungarian Defence Forces. All this was recorded in a resolution of the National Assembly,<sup>16</sup> which also determined how many personnel are needed to perform peacetime tasks (broken down by personnel category), and also included the staffing needs for the development of the armed forces.

At the current stage of program implementation (in the fifth year of the program), we can state that by 2026 (unless further deterioration of our security environment occurs) some 30,000 active-duty professional and contract soldiers, 7,000 to 8,000 defence employees and at least 20,000 volunteer reservists will be needed. We can conclude and state that the set goal proved to be viable at the end of 2022 as well and reflected a feasible situation which, among other things, also pointed out that the introduced measures created a solid basis for achieving the original objectives of the National Defence and Armed Forces Development Program, on which we can build with confidence. On the other hand, the development of the armed forces beyond 2026 requires us to further raise the manpower level – as also included in the 2020 amendment –, so that it becomes capable of fully ensuring the availability of deployable active-duty military personnel and trained reservists required for national defence in the shortest possible term and as large numbers as possible.

The serious situation in the Hungarian Defence Forces has been exacerbated by the fact that, in addition to the significant downsizings that have occurred over the past decades, their items of military equipment have unfortunately also become obsolete and depreciated. Their withdrawal, upgrading, and modernization have become indispensable. The HDF leadership, led by the then chiefs of defence, continuously assessed and tried to manage the critical situation. Thus, in 2007 and 2009, and again in 2010, the second month after the formation of the new government, the Prime Minister received personal, verbal reports about the issue. These reports accurately illustrated the situation that had arisen and its untenability, the essence of which was that the further fate of military equipment must be decided in 2009 or 2010 at the latest, and the procedures for procurements, overhauls, or modernization must be initiated accordingly.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Parliamentary decision on HDF manpower, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> A decision has to be made on whether to withdraw assets from the system, refurbish, upgrade, or modernize them, and how and with what to replace these decommissioned assets.

As newly appointed chief of defence – in the summer of 2010, together with the then minister of defence, on the occasion of a report to the Prime Minister –, I was told that the needs of the military were legitimate, adequate, and absolutely necessary. Therefore, as soon as the economic situation of the country allows, they require an immediate solution, since the country needs strong defence forces. Following these instructions, our short-term objective has become quite limited: for the time being, we have no other option but to stop the further decline in military capabilities, primarily the reduction of personnel numbers, the closure of barracks, and the deterioration of the operability of military equipment. There was no alternative but to “survive” the coming period, to hold out until the country’s economic situation provides an opportunity for starting the development of the armed forces.

The first encouraging signal came in 2015 in the form of a stable, reliable long-term budget projection. This was the start of the detailed planning of the long overdue development of the armed forces, followed by the actual launch of the practical steps of force development in 2017. We could breathe a sigh of relief. I would say let bygones be bygones, let us look forward, not backward. But we still need a brief retrospection, because future generations need to be aware of what happened in the last 25 years and what happens if we do not feel that the cause of national defence is important. They must be given the opportunity to look at the past decades and to judge if what happened to the military was right or wrong, so that they can draw conclusions and learn from the procedures that have taken place and the measures taken, from good and bad examples. All in all, the changes in personnel numbers, the combat availability of military equipment, and the number of functioning barracks, the size of the central budget, i.e., the financing of the military, the evolution of soldiers’ salaries, and other allowances – all these indicators prove that the Hungarian Defence Forces, including the soldiers who serve their country devotedly, have been the “stepchildren of the past decades” until 2015. This, unfortunately, amounted to a failure not only of the material but also of moral appreciation. All this changed the social status and perception of the soldiers. Thus, starting from this low point, from such a situation, we had to start the development of the armed forces.

## STEPS TOWARDS THE FULL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES

Our starting point was that in the face of the challenges of the 21st century, the Hungarian Defence Forces should not only be able to keep pace but also be able to handle the tasks to be solved in a timely and effective manner, and that it should always have available (human, technical, and material) resources of sufficient quantity and quality, as well as the complex capabilities that are needed to tackle the challenges. Therefore, from the very beginning of planning, the primary and most important aspects included<sup>18</sup> the need for soldiers with specific competencies and the forms of training, preparation, and education to be implemented for achieving this goal. Furthermore, it was specified what kind of individual equipment, means, material technical stocks, procedures, commanders’ command and control systems, and means are necessary for the Hungarian Defence Forces. Thus, the most basic complex capabilities which we have taken into account in the force planning process can be summarized as follows:

<sup>18</sup> See Pölöskei 2021, 36–46.

- the capability needed for the comprehensive provision of human resources (including opportunities for the recruitment and selection of future personnel; elements of the organizational and operational unit of preparation, training, and education, as well as retention on the career path);
- elements ensuring the operational, servicing, and user capabilities of military equipment;
- the needs and systems for infrastructural accommodation and servicing tasks, as well as the capability needs of modern command and control assets.

We considered it an important aspect to reduce the risk of our dependence on other countries, therefore we also gave high priority to the creation of domestic defence industrial production, as well as the research, development, and innovation capabilities inseparable from it. As a result of all this, we intend to implement the above-mentioned national defence and military development program in two broad areas, in close connection and unity.

One area is the national defence part of the program called “soldier and society”, which is about the soldiers themselves and the social environment and social circumstances surrounding them. Within this, particular emphasis is placed on the military career path and its components. This program element puts the person himself at its centre. It defines the preparation of persons, their places and roles in society, and emphasizes the importance of their appreciation. In addition, it includes the tasks of the “socialization of national defence”, especially the forms and phases of patriotic defence education aimed at directing them to military careers, as well as the expectations and tasks of volunteer reserve military service.

The other area of the program is its force development side, the so-called “military technology and defence industry”, which includes the procurement and construction of military equipment and assets, as well as the necessary means and systems of command, the implementation of infrastructural investments, and the establishment of the new Hungarian defence industry, as well as ensuring the unity of research, development, and innovation required for this.

The program is a long-term project, which practically defines the tasks to be accomplished for a decade, and which, based on feedback and surveys, has been successful and time-proportional so far. Therefore, we are now on track with the development objectives we set out in 2018 for 2030.

Not surprisingly, we witnessed an interesting and reassuring coincidence when the NATO 2030 agenda was adopted at the NATO Summit in Brussels in 2021, ahead of NATO’s eighth Strategic Concept.<sup>19</sup> Having read the document, we conclude that our concept of force development is in line with NATO’s objectives<sup>20</sup> and with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg’s statement that “as the world changes, NATO will continue to change”.<sup>21</sup>

I think that we must continue to follow this agenda in the future, too, so that we can be able to “recognize, face, and effectively address tomorrow’s challenges” at all times under all circumstances.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> NATO’s new 8<sup>th</sup> Strategic Concept, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> What is NATO 2030?

<sup>21</sup> NATO 2030: Making a Strong Alliance Even Stronger.

<sup>22</sup> Szenes 2021.



## WITHOUT COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC COMMAND AND CONTROL, THERE ARE NO STRONG NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCES

One of the key issues of the strong Hungarian Defence Forces is the unity and harmony of their independent leadership based on professionalism. Therefore, a new ministry structure was established to eliminate its integration with military professional and political leadership. As a result, a strategic-level, independent military command element, the Command of the Hungarian Defence Forces was established on the basis of the existing and effectively operating HDF Joint Force Command, while preserving its advantages. The tasks of the HDF General Staff – as strategic-level military tasks – were transferred to the Command. At the same time, the military leadership element (General Staff) was discontinued in the ministry, and instead, an organizational block responsible for national defence affairs was established, headed by the State Secretary for National Defence, who performed his duties not as a soldier, but as a senior state leader, albeit with many years of high-level military professional preparation and experience.<sup>23</sup> As a permanent and active participant in ministerial decision-making, the State Secretary for National Defence was responsible for assisting the Ministry in controlling, tasking, and supervisory work based on military professional aspects, and also for supporting the implementation of the concepts of the commander of the Hungarian Defence Forces. In other words, the State Secretary for National Defence is an active participant in the coordination of political and military tasks, and he is also the professional permanent representative of military needs within the ministry, while at the same time, he performs interministerial defence tasks, especially those of the country's defence administration.

The new ministry had to meet three basic requirements:

- be able to define precise, understandable, and accountable tasks for the top-level military leadership – i.e., the commander of the Hungarian Defence Forces – based on the government's political decisions and objectives;
- create and provide the Hungarian Defence Forces with the conditions necessary for the execution of specified tasks, i.e., “money, horses, weapons” for soldiers responsible for the reliable operation of the Hungarian Defence Forces;
- continuously monitor the professionalism and regularity of the use of provided conditions in addition to performing the tasks of civil democratic control, monitoring, and supervision (“civilian control”).

As a result, a streamlined, transparent, and effective strategic leadership level has been created, with organizational elements dealing with political, administrative, and defence issues, and being responsible for their respective areas of expertise. This command structure and division of tasks ensured, at all times, timely decision-making, provision of conditions, flexible response, and close, effective cooperation with ministries and international organizations.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Act CXL on National Defence, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the basic tasks specified in the law, it also ensured the simultaneous implementation of action against illegal migration, tasks arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian War, as well as the time-proportional steps of the defence and military development program, which in some areas were brought forward if necessary.

## THE MILITARY CAREER MODEL AS A CORNERSTONE OF PROFESSIONAL MILITARY SERVICE

One of the most important areas of capability development of the Hungarian Defence Forces is the provision of human resources at all times and on all sides. Whether it is young people preparing for military careers, active-duty professional and contracted soldiers, or volunteer reservists, everyone needs to know what expectations they have to meet during their service, what they have to do in order to meet them, and what organizational interests require of them. The interest of successful armed forces development requires that soldiers be excellently prepared and trained, loyal professionals who are committed to their vocation and work and can be counted on under any circumstances. The solid foundation of the armed forces, which can be planned for the long term, must be formed mainly by those who undertake professional military service, who undertake a vocation that “spans a career” (not only for active-duty military service but indeed for a lifetime). Among other things, a career-spanning vocation can ensure the stability of the Hungarian Defence Forces at all times, as well as the creation and reliable operation of the country’s full-scale resilience. Taking all this into account, a career model<sup>25</sup> has been developed for professional soldiers, which has stages with specific characteristics that can be precisely interpreted, followed, and calculated. The goal for the soldiers is to be dedicated and loyal and set an example for society to follow. At the same time, they should be respected members of society, because the vocation they practice is unique in the country. A vocation in which they offer not only the best of their knowledge and preparation but also the most precious value of human existence, their life, to the service of their nation.<sup>26</sup> Such sacrifice is exemplary, and therefore those who serve their nation in this spirit deserve predictable appreciation from the nation, based on mutual respect. I am convinced that in the long run, only a career model built by taking into account such human factors can ensure a high degree of recognition (prestige) of the profession towards society and the primacy of the profession on the part of the soldiers. Together, they can make a significant contribution to the success of the National Defence and Military Development Program, to the creation of a strong national force – and thus indirectly to Hungary’s peace and security.

I am convinced that the career path model must be applied in accordance with these principles and expectations, which – in the case of professional soldiers – must operate throughout a lifetime, always along the lines of organizational interests, but taking into account individual interests at the same time, in a transparent and fair manner.

Based on this, the career path of professional soldiers should be divided into the following three basic stages.

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<sup>25</sup> Hazafi 2014, 9–88.

<sup>26</sup> Quote from the military oath: *“I will defend Hungary’s independence, the rights and freedom of citizens with courage, by observing and enforcing the Fundamental Law and legal codifications, with the strength of the soldiers and weapons entrusted to me, even at the cost of my life.”* Act CXL on National Defence, 2021.

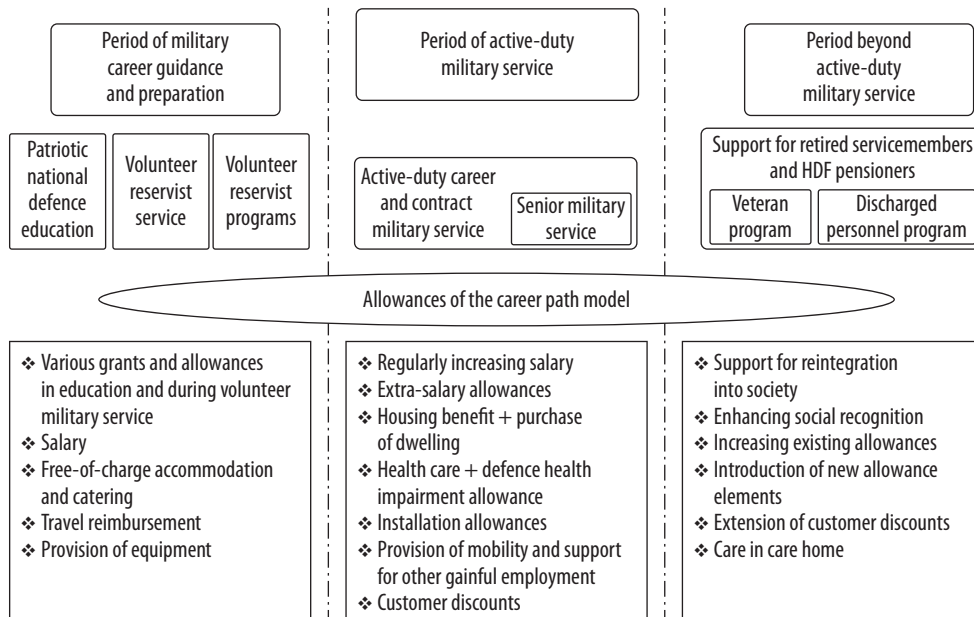


Figure 1 *Stages of the military career model (Edited by the author)*

## The first phase of the career path, the period of guidance on a military career

The phase preparing for the career path or laying its foundation serves the education in commitment and patriotism to one's country, the preparation for homeland defence, the mastery of the cause of national defence as a civic duty,<sup>27</sup> and the furthering of guidance on a military career path. This period is intended to provide the indispensable arena for establishing the military vocation and its personal conditions, means, and methods, with the help of which we can achieve our goals of having soldiers committed and loyal to their country. Soldiers who serve the country do not become patriotic and dedicated citizens because they put on their uniforms, but because they are capable of making the greatest sacrifices in their emotional commitment, dedication, thinking, and actions. The harmony of all these ensures the moral state of the Hungarian Defence Forces at all times, which is a determining element of the soldiers' combat readiness and thus that of the Hungarian Defence Forces not only in wartime conditions but also in peacetime and in the period of special legal order. It follows from all this that young people undertaking military service should not be prepared to feel respect and patriotism for their homeland when they begin their military service, but the Hungarian Defence Forces need young people who are already committed to their homeland. At the same time, the security of the country requires that not only those preparing for the military career path should get acquainted with the concepts of loyalty and patriotism to their homeland,<sup>28</sup> and with the things one can do for the peace and security of our country. It is obvious that

<sup>27</sup> "All Hungarian citizens shall be obliged to defend the country". Fundamental Law of Hungary, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Patriotism (noun): The love one feels for one's country or people, ready for sacrifice and even self-sacrifice. A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára [Interpretative Dictionary of the Hungarian Language].

the more people feel the importance and necessity of all-round defence of the security of the homeland and society, the responsibility for and loyalty to the defence of the homeland, and the more people acquire the knowledge of the defence of the homeland, the more will the defence capability of the country strengthen. Historical periods have shown that the threat that surrounds people can significantly amplify the sense of patriotism. This was also observable in Hungary, especially during the period of the wars of independence and freedom fights, as well as during the era of the so-called Wurmb reforms within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy,<sup>29</sup> when military subordinate and main real schools, cadet schools, and military academies began to operate within the framework of independent military institutional education. But we can also observe these aspirations in volumes VII–VIII of the subject Defence Studies published in 1943,<sup>30</sup> in which it was emphasized in particular that:

The military spirit is one of the most important constituent factors of the state. It must be educated and nurtured! However, education and nurturing is not a single, short event, but a long, continuous process. This means that the education and cultivation of the military spirit must be involved in every aspect of national life, free from artificiality and without forcedness! The soldiers' spirit is the lifeblood of the peoples' souls, so its presence is self-evident and natural.

The importance of preparation for the military vocation and at the same time the methods of its implementation, which differ from period to period, should be examined in a complex, inter- and multidisciplinary approach. Two books provide very important additional information: József Martinkó's *Cögerek és katkósok*<sup>31</sup> [Cadets and Military Dormitory Students] published in 1998, which examines the issue mainly from military pedagogical aspects, and Zoltán László Kiss's volume entitled *The Hungarian Military Elite, 1945–1989*,<sup>32</sup> published in 2005, which examines the basically military sociological aspects of the topic.<sup>33</sup>

It is a fact that the unity of patriotism<sup>34</sup> and national defence<sup>35</sup> is one of the defining elements of a strong state, therefore, caring for the cause of national defence is a high-priority task of states. Within this, the planned, conscious foundation of knowledge, the harmonization of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, is one of the most important things, because this determines the soldiers' overall individual attitudes and abilities. That is, education and preparation require thoughtful planning and time, so their implementation must be comprehensive and continuous. Unfortunately, there has also been an omission in this area in Hungary. Concurrent with the reduction of the Hungarian armed forces – which caused a serious decline in the morale among soldiers<sup>36</sup> as well as uncertainty and unre-

<sup>29</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> Fond Group – Educational Institutes [no year].

<sup>30</sup> Honvédelmi ismeretek [Defence Knowledge], 1943.

<sup>31</sup> Martinkó 1998, 7–16, 100–135, 136–151.

<sup>32</sup> Kiss 2005, 145–149, 496–512.

<sup>33</sup> The work examines the problems primarily in historical comparison, by comparing the data gathered in the information and empirical database with the historical periods before the First World War and the interwar years.

<sup>34</sup> Patriotism (noun, singular only): Self-aware, active, sacrificial patriotism. A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára [Interpretative dictionary of the Hungarian language].

<sup>35</sup> National defence (noun): Defence of the homeland. A magyar nyelv értelmező szótára [Interpretative Dictionary of the Hungarian Language].

<sup>36</sup> In terms of team spirit; when trust in the superior, the cohesion, and selfless camaraderie expected of the group suffer because of arising feelings of frustration, the selfish search for oneself and one's place and role, hopelessness, and perplexity, which present themselves, especially in prudent foresight, determination, commitment, and motivation as well as discipline. (Author's note)

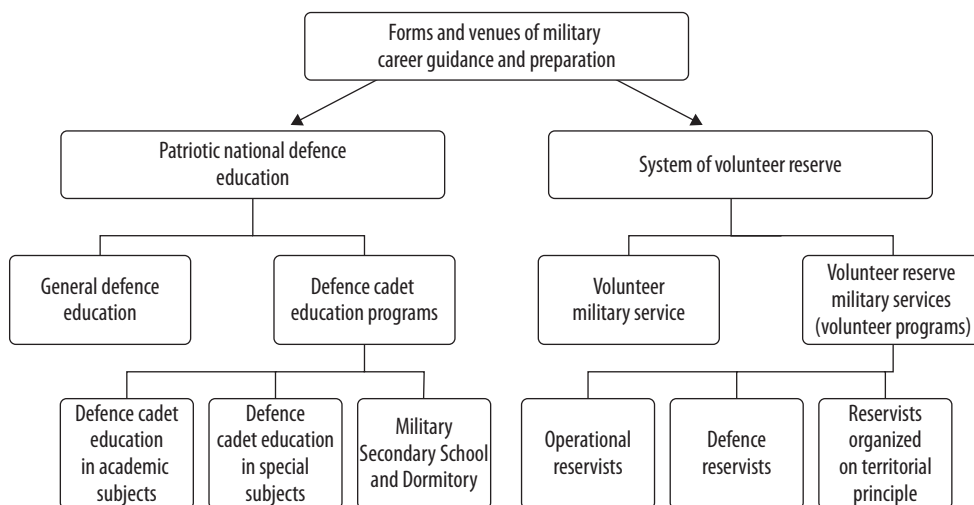


Figure 2 *Forms and venues of military career guidance and volunteer reserve military service*  
(Edited by the author)

dictability in society –, the venues of patriotic education, i.e., military colleges in secondary schools and military vocational schools were also discontinued, leaving aside the fact that one of the characteristics of a strong state is its strong armed forces, which need educational institutions providing excellent preliminary military training and career guidance.

In the Military Development Program, we intend to fill this gap by establishing forms of education and training and institutions providing patriotic defence education, as well as by creating opportunities provided by the volunteer reserve military service.

With all this, our primary goal is not to ensure that all young people in education pursue military careers or undertake military service, but that as many young people as possible receive patriotic defence training and preparation, where they learn the obligations of defending their homeland. Where they learn what community life and team spirit mean, why adaptation and following instructions are important. Where they learn to solve tasks together, where they acquire the characteristics of respect for others, patriotism, and courage. That is, they acquire everything that a strong society needs.

The causes of patriotism, love of the homeland, and national defence are not age-specific characteristics, so it is important to make them known to all age groups. Within the framework of general defence education, we would like to enrich the everyday life of primary-school-aged children, mainly through subject clubs and extra-class events, as well as experience-rich activities. The program includes learning the importance of team spirit, the will to fight and perseverance, sportsmanship, healthy lifestyle, and regularity. They do not participate in military-type activities, but they can get an insight into the everyday life of the Hungarian Defence Forces and soldiering within the framework of the defence camps organized every year.

Also popular is the National Military Tournament, which is co-organized with the Defence Sports Association. Since 2021, this sports competition has been expanded into an international competition within the framework of the Cadet Cup. Thanks to this, a year lat-

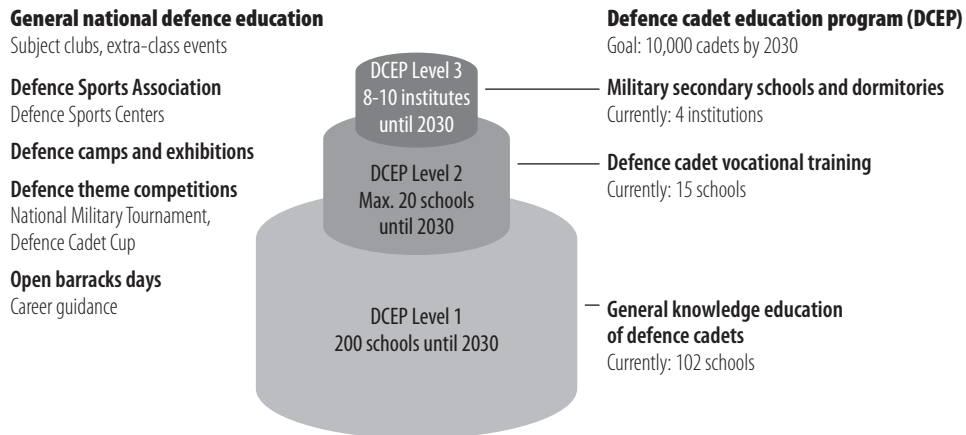


Figure 3 Venues of patriotic national defence education (Edited by the author)

er, we were able to organize the 6<sup>th</sup> National Military Tournament and the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Cadet Cup Competition.

The next area of patriotic and defence education – that is, the cadet training program – already has a definite goal. In particular, “to raise awareness of the importance of loving and defending one’s homeland and to contribute to the education of young people to be responsible citizens.”<sup>37</sup>

As shown in Figure 3, this is achieved in three venues. The Defence Cadet Education Program (DCEP)<sup>38</sup> Level 1 is the

general knowledge education for military cadets, which enables students – defence cadets – to learn the basics of national defence subjects for 1–2 hours a week, during which they can get acquainted with the defence tasks of Hungarian citizens and also with the tasks that the Hungarian Defence Forces perform in defence of the homeland.

This form of education is intended to support the career guidance of young people and the supply of enlisted personnel.

The DCEP Level 2 is the defence cadet vocational training,<sup>39</sup> the next stage of the cadet education program.

The vocational training of defence cadets takes place at a technical school in five years. After the first two years of basic education in the defence sector, defence cadets take a sectoral basic examination, then in the second part of the training (grades 11-12-13) they participate in vocational education corresponding to the occupational specialty. If, at the end of grade 12, a cadet decides to continue their careers as soldiers after graduating from the technical school, they may complete the technical school in dual training at an organization (unit) of the Hungarian Defence Forces in the final year.

This form of education is already about promoting conscious career orientation, primarily to the military career of non-commissioned officers. Taking into account the specialization of the mentioned personnel category, we limit the number of educational institutions

<sup>37</sup> Cadet Program website: <https://kadetprogram.hu/>.

<sup>38</sup> Patriotic and Defence Education – Defence Cadet Program.

<sup>39</sup> Patriotic and Defence Education – Defence Cadet Program, <https://kadetprogram.hu/>.

– as opposed to the DCEP Level 1 form of education. According to our concept, altogether 20 such vocational training schools will have been opened by 2030.

The most intensive military career guidance – the DCEP Level 3 form of training – takes place in military secondary schools and dormitories,<sup>40</sup> where “[t]he boarding school provides knowledge of national defence and the Hungarian Defence Forces in classes, practical sessions and the dormitory”. Taking into account the opportunities offered by further staff increases and the senior phase of active-duty service, this form of training requires 8-10 such institutions by 2030.<sup>41</sup>

In light of all this, we have set a goal in the National Defence and Military Development Program to the effect that by 2026 we should have at least 5,000 students who receive(d) cadet education. The persistent work of the past five years has resulted in this form of education becoming very popular, and as a result, we already achieved our goals in 2021. Therefore, in the spring of 2022, we increased the number of students to receive cadet education to 10,000, which is double that of the original plan. The newly projected target is not far from reality, because by the 2022/2023 academic year, 121 secondary schools have already joined the program, in which altogether more than 7,100 cadets are pursuing their studies.<sup>42</sup>

## Preparation for volunteer service

In addition to providing career guidance to school-age young people, it is extremely important to ensure that citizens of military age (18–50 years) are prepared for patriotism and the defence of the homeland. The experiences of recent years have shown that this works excellently in various forms of volunteer reserve military service.

Despite the fact that the legal possibility of volunteer reserve military service was already provided for in the years before the suspension of conscription,<sup>43</sup> the functioning of this form of service was characterized by serious deficiencies due to<sup>44</sup> social disinterest. Therefore, in 2010, we wanted to put this indispensable form of military service on a new footing and started to develop new forms and frameworks of the System of Volunteer Reserve (SVR). As a first step,<sup>45</sup> we relied on the experience and preparedness of “allowance soldiers”, which was organized not only for organizational interests but also to provide assistance and support to the personnel suffering moral and financial disadvantages due to previous government decisions. Within this, the volunteer defence reservist service was introduced in 2011 and the volunteer operational reservist service in 2012, but the remarkable impetus was created by the Defence and Military Development Program through issuing a call for military reservist service organized on a territorial basis introduced in 2017. Since then, the number of volunteer reservists has grown more and more dynamically, resulting

<sup>40</sup> Patriotic and Defence Education – Defence Cadet Program.

<sup>41</sup> See Figure 3.

<sup>42</sup> Töretlen a Honvéd Kadét Program népszerűsége [The popularity of the Defence Cadet Program is unbroken], 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Due to the downsizing of the Hungarian Defence Forces and the discharge of military personnel and, as a result, the unpredictability of careers, the military profession was not attractive.

<sup>44</sup> See Colonel (Ret.) (Eng.) András Kladek’s PhD thesis (2007).

<sup>45</sup> A soldier receiving service allowance is a person who falls under Act CLXVII of 2011 on the termination of early retirement pension, on benefits prior to retirement age and on service benefits, therefore as of 1 January 2012, a personal income tax burden of 16% is put on the sum of their earlier calculated service pension.

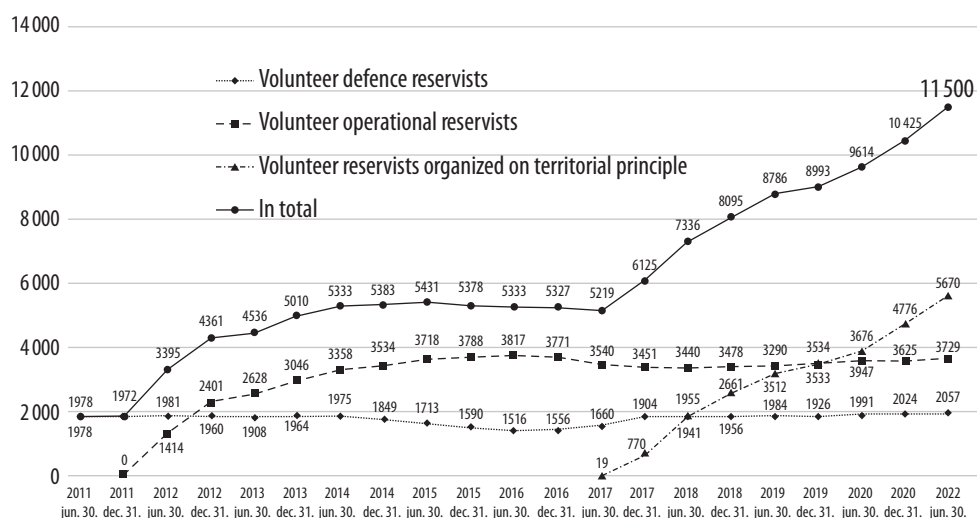


Figure 4 *The growing number of volunteer reservists undertaking service (Edited by the author)*

in significant progress in the number of reservist organizations and the personnel levels of volunteer battalions.

As a result, out of the seven territorial defence regiments planned for 2028, two regiments were already established and operated within a year after issuing the call, i.e., in 2018, and the schedule for bringing the others to full strength has been completed. The significant and dynamic increase in personnel levels provides an excellent basis for the conclusion that what we have planned for 2026 (providing at least 20,000 men<sup>46</sup>) – given that the existing personnel level already reached 11,500 by 2022 – can be considered realistic and feasible.

The volunteer reserve military service is therefore useful for society when not only the needs of individuals to participate in military training but also the interests of the Hungarian Defence Forces and the defence of the homeland are taken into account. It is therefore commendable that the social usefulness of the system placed on new foundations has already been demonstrated several times. For instance, in periods such as the great flood on the River Danube in 2013, in the everyday performance of tasks along the southern border for several years, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020–2021, and the execution of the military tasks of nationwide medical support.

In the field of representing the interests of the Hungarian Defence Forces, as well as military occupational specialty training and preparation – although other tasks arising from the health care emergency and various restrictive measures significantly hindered the process – by 2021, we laid the basis for our fundamental objective. Namely, our reservists who appear and perform tasks within the Hungarian Defence Forces be more than a “stopgap measure”, since they must also be able to perform professional service activities in individual positions and to perform force-level tactical and peacekeeping operational tasks based on their training and preparedness level. The first results of this came in 2021, when a volunteer

<sup>46</sup> The number of volunteer reservists is determined in accordance with the 25/2018 Regulations. (31/10) decision of the National Assembly sets it at 20,000 men. See Parliamentary decision on the manpower structure of the Hungarian Defence Forces, 2018.



territorial defence reserve company – now an independent subunit – participated in an international military exercise, the validation exercise of the Ohio National Guard’s 37<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and, also for the first time, the peacekeepers of a volunteer reserve platoon deployed for a six-month tour of duty in NATO’s largest mission, KFOR. They performed successfully in both areas, which proves that they can be fully counted on in addition to the subunits performing active-duty military service, meaning that our volunteer reservists are already present as a real capability in the Hungarian Defence Forces.

During the period of the health care emergency, a new, special volunteer military service was introduced, which served the purpose of ensuring that the Hungarian Defence Forces also contribute to helping citizens (and their families) in distress who lost their jobs. With this, the Hungarian Defence Forces also practiced the characteristics of operating with personnel living in a crisis situation. Another advantage for the Hungarian Defence Forces was that those who received military training increased the number of trained military-age reservists.

Already at the start of the cadet training, we were considering the idea of how we could recognize and reward the sacrifice of young people who volunteer for military service before starting their higher education studies. This is one of the reasons why we launched the volunteer military service in September 2021. As its name suggests, in this case, we are not talking about volunteer reservists, but primarily young people who start their higher education studies at a later date, or who want to get to know their skills, make sure that they persevere in their vocation, or simply “test” themselves for a short time on the military career path before deciding whether they want to choose a contract or professional military career. They undergo military training for at least six months and receive additional admission scores for this volunteer military service if they wish to continue their studies at a higher education institution.<sup>47</sup> This form of training is advantageous for the Hungarian Defence Forces not only because it increases the number of trained reservists but also because later several of them will also undertake volunteer reserve military service. At the same time, there are those who are motivated to pursue a military career, as during their training they become convinced that as a result of the Military Development Program, they can operate the most up-to-date, cutting-edge technology and equipment in the Hungarian Defence Forces. High-tech,<sup>48</sup> digitalization, and artificial intelligence,<sup>49</sup> as well as opportunities for research and development, are attractive in themselves to the young generation.

At the same time, the National Defence and Military Development Program will become truly successful, strong in its moral position, and thus Hungary’s “resilience” will be firm only if we always put man at the centre. If we do not do so, we will not be able to build a high-quality force in terms of sense of vocation, loyalty, commitment, and faithfulness to our country, sacrifice, commander’s responsibility, and care for soldiers, even though we will have the most up-to-date, state-of-the-art military equipment. However, an effective army, especially in the period of high-tech, must have soldiers of adequate quality in its ranks. When building a professional force, the above should always be kept in mind and efforts should be made to apply it already when young people are preparing for a military career. They must see that in addition to the system of strict require-

<sup>47</sup> Government Decree No. 129/2022 amending Government Decree No. 423/2012 on higher education admission procedure.

<sup>48</sup> High-tech is an abbreviation of “high technology”.

<sup>49</sup> HOLD lexicon: Artificial intelligence (AI) is an umbrella term for machine, software-based applications, and algorithms that aim to imitate human behaviour and thinking.

ments and the expectations that come with the profession, there is a unity of recognition and appreciation. The study grant system we have developed also serves this purpose.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, we also place special emphasis on this in the Military Development Program. As a result, we now provide four different scholarships to those young people who are preparing for military careers or are also serving as reservists in the military while pursuing their studies. It can be observed that the study grant system in the defence sector is comprehensive. It covers the fields of secondary education, vocational training, and higher education, and provides support for disadvantaged young people and, on the basis of equitability, for HDF orphans.

The main objective of military career guidance as the first stage of a military career is to ensure that as many educational institutions as possible undertake to assist the cause of national defence; as many young people as possible want to know and acquire commitment to their homeland, faithfulness, loyalty, camaraderie, perseverance, respect for others, as well as all the basic human qualities that a strong country needs; and that as many young adults as possible undertake volunteer military or volunteer reserve military service.

Overall, it can be stated that in the first phase of the career model targeted by the Military Development Program – as a result of effective patriotic-national defence education, cadet education, and volunteer reserve military training – a dynamic development was observable in terms of the number of participants. The result of the past five years proves that the procedures and methods used in the first phase of the career model are good, correct, and credible, thus suitable for achieving the long-term goals set by us.

### The period of active-duty military service as the second stage of the military career

This phase of the career model presents planned human resources management, primarily the career paths of professional non-commissioned officers, officers, and generals, and the assigned benefit system. These are the career paths of those who have an open-ended “employment contract” and who have to plan their length of service until retirement. This phase should include the following principles and processes of a system approach to ensure that soldiers moving on a career path are truly committed, loyal, and self-sacrificing so that they can always subordinate their individual and family interests to organizational interests:

- always provide a career picture that provides a credible, transparent, predictable career path that thus can be planned and chosen by the individual;
- education, retraining and further training, and the systems of their requirements, as well as the content elements of performance-based evaluation and the career path based on them, should be consistently built and implemented;
- the system of recognition and benefits should always be synchronized with the system of requirements;
- comprehensive care should be based on motivational and moral factors.

It is clear that attractive recruitment, long-term retention, education, and training to ensure a successful life path, the opportunity to choose interoperability, elements, and systems ensuring moral and material appreciation must be implemented at this stage of life.

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<sup>50</sup> Available and eligible grants: <https://kadetprogram.hu/osztondijak/>.

The realization of this career phase basically takes place through three systems, but we can also say that its success or failure rests on three pillars:

- the comprehensive career system and the corresponding salary and benefit systems;
- the accommodation and housing allowance scheme;
- the health promotion and damage insurance system.

Being the most important element of professional military service, the system of career and the related salary system are based on performance evaluation, which includes criteria for assessing knowledge, preparedness, experience, performance, personal human qualities, as well as physical endurance, and medical and psychological fitness.

The knowledge and preparedness requirements are formulated in the education and training chapter of the Military Development Program, in which we primarily set as goals more practice-oriented training, the creation of interoperability between legal relations in public service, the creation of the possibility of a two-way career path, and the conversion of student legal status to contractual military legal status. Like in the case of officer training, we focused on more practice-oriented preparation for non-commissioned officers, including the “Steel Cube”, an internal course-type non-commissioned officer training, which resulted in a significant increase in personnel number already on the first occasion.

In the field of education and training for the career of professional soldiers, we consider it an important aspect to ensure the expectations of Lifelong Learning (LLL), which enables them to gain more and more experience, further advance on their career path, be appointed to higher positions, and continue to serve uninterruptedly until reaching retirement age.

The government made it possible to introduce a salary system related to career advancement by ensuring long-term budgetary projections.<sup>51</sup> Thus, in 2015, we were able to start developing the soldiers’ salary by an average of 50%, one of the most important means of remuneration in their career model, which resulted in further continuous increases or other benefits such as “arms money” in subsequent years, until 2023.

Concurrent with the implementation of the military career, we did not forget about civil servant personnel who wear civilian clothes, but also ensure the operation of military organizations and the deployment of military forces as needed, and perform service and operational tasks. With the introduction of the “defence employee status”<sup>52</sup> in 2019, they received a 35% pay rise in four phases. At the same time, we encouraged them to take part in specialized courses linked to military qualifications, which could lead to additional remuneration as a result of extending their professional knowledge.

The second main area of active-duty military service, the pillar of stability is the housing allowance system, which primarily aims to provide social care for soldiers and their families while preserving the organizational interests of the individual’s mobility opportunities. Therefore, this support system is very wide-ranging, including both in-kind (service apartment, garrison hostel allowance) and cash support means, such as lodging money, rent contributions, rent subsidies, non-refundable allowances to help with the acquisition of own apartment (one-off monetary support), employer loans, and apartment management contributions to the housing costs of apartments.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Benkő 2023, 3–15.

<sup>52</sup> Act CXIV on the Legal Status of Defence Employees, 2018.

<sup>53</sup> Benefit scheme to help maintain apartment rental and leasing.

The health promotion and health impairment insurance system is the third pillar of active-duty military service, which ensures not only the combat readiness of the Hungarian Defence Forces through healthy, always combat-ready soldiers but also the morale of the military through the provision of comprehensive (ROLE 1–ROLE 4)<sup>54</sup> military medicine and health care. In order to create all these values and capabilities, the defence health impairment care system was introduced on 1 January 2017, the first year of the Military Development Program.<sup>55</sup> The aim of this type of care is, first of all, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, prevention, to provide professional and comprehensive medical support, and last but not least, to create existential security for those soldiers who are medically fit for military service with limitations or become unfit for it. In other words, let us do everything possible to be able to continue employing our soldiers with knowledge, preparedness, and experience in organizations serving the cause of national defence.

According to the statutory provisions, health impairment benefits apply to both professional and contract soldiers and serve the effective management of illnesses, accidents, and related life situations, first and foremost by implying an obligation on the part of the Hungarian Defence Forces (continued employment in a service position or non-military job), while it means an undertaking to do so on the part of the member of the personnel concerned. The introduction of this measure will greatly contribute to enabling the soldiers concerned (if they have the intention and will) to serve in the military or the field of defence until they reach retirement age.

The last phase of the active-duty stage of military service can be closely matched to this, the introduction and professional application of which is essential not only for health care but also especially for ensuring a smooth career advancement system. It is with these cases in mind that we have formulated the idea of introducing the so-called “senior military service phase” for the period immediately preceding the end of the period of active-duty service.

The aim of this 15–20 years before the retirement pension is to ensure that suitable, well-trained, and prepared soldiers can continue serving in the Hungarian Defence Forces in view of their knowledge and experience, which is necessitated by the narrowing of career opportunities as a result of the pyramid principle, the prevention of “aging” of personnel, and the appearance of certain health problems – or to find employment in sectors relevant to their field of expertise, applying the reconversion processes. All this helps the soldiers concerned to maintain their faith and self-respect and to find their rightful place and role in society, without leaving the military system as disappointed or embittered people. In this form, I think that organizations and institutions dedicated to the cause of homeland defence and the individuals concerned can benefit from it alike.

This is not a complicated or insurmountable task. It is only a matter of will where and how it can be accomplished. First of all, in the fields of state administration, public administration, defence administration, the jobs of defence desk officers in ministries, in general and patriotic-national defence education, cadet training, the leadership of volunteer military organizations organized on a territorial principle, in the training and preparation of the personnel serving there, and in the jobs of trainers and range officers employed at defence sports centres – to name but a few –, but also in the state enterprises, companies, and

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<sup>54</sup> Kopesó 2010.

<sup>55</sup> MoD Decree on Defence Health Impairment Benefits, 2016.

organizations where people are employed in so-called “retentional”<sup>56</sup> jobs. This is because a significant part of these jobs is dedicated to performing national defence tasks, and the Hungarian Defence Forces currently have more than 40,000 employees and places of employment of this job type. In the case of various civil companies and enterprises, as I indicated earlier, it can be implemented after an appropriate, specialized reconversion process.

## Retired soldiers for homeland defence

The period of active-duty military service is followed by the third stage of a military career, for the simple reason that for professional soldiers, the military oath is for a lifetime, as it binds them for life. Therefore, the cause of defending the homeland is crucial for our retired soldiers and overrides any party-political affiliation. Most of them not only feel and think this way but also act in accordance with it. In recent years, this has been evident in the responses to questionnaires filled out by young people who showed up in the recruitment office, as more than a third of them indicated that they received their inspiration to choose a military career from ex-servicemen (typically primarily from a grandfather, father, relative, or acquaintance). It was also possible to observe how much the briefings and lectures on the National Defence and Military Development Program touched them and, putting aside their other cares, how they espoused the cause of homeland defence. This proves that we have made the right decision in including this so-called third stage of the career path among the basic stages of a career. At the same time, I think it is right also because we are talking about our predecessors, our commanders, and, in many cases, our teachers, from whom we learned the “trade” and the military virtues. Therefore, the Hungarian Defence Forces must continue to turn to them with responsibility. Unfortunately, in recent decades, our retired soldiers have not received respect and attention to the degree that they deserve. Nothing proves this better than the results of investigations from empirical military sociological research, which are known to us from the research carried out by Prof. Dr. Zoltán László Kiss, university professor, head of the research team, and his colleagues.<sup>57</sup> We commissioned them to do this research in October 2020 in order to make scientifically informed decisions about “how to proceed”. First, we launched the Discharged Personnel and Veterans Programs,<sup>58</sup> which primarily provide shopping discounts to eligible former colleagues, then with the cooperation of the National Alliance of Comradeship Associations (BEOSZ) and the Trade Union of HDF Employees (HODOSZ), as well as the HDF Public Foundation for Social Policy, we initiated financial assistance for those in need. However, there is still work to be done, for example in connection with the creation of the so-called “Veteran House”, i.e., care homes for the elderly or other forms of support for those in need.

<sup>56</sup> People working in such positions cannot be called up as soldiers even in wartime situations, because their expertise and work are especially needed at the given workplace even in wartime circumstances.

<sup>57</sup> Prof. Dr. Zoltán László Kiss, university professor, head of research, and his colleagues carried out the empirical military sociological research called *Nyugállományban 2021* [In retirement 2021] upon a central order (MoD Defence State Secretary) among the concerned persons belonging to the sphere of care.

<sup>58</sup> Zavodnyik 2020.

## MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE ARMED FORCES DEVELOPMENT

We have reached the halfway point in the implementation of the National Defence and Military Development Program launched to preserve peace (Zrinyi 2026 at its launch), so it is appropriate to take stock. In the introductory thoughts of the study, it was mentioned that we can acquire modern military equipment at almost any time if the budget allocated to the Hungarian Defence Forces allows it. There are plenty of them on offer in kind, type, quality, and quantity, so we have a wide range of choices. It can be stated that the Hungarian Defence Forces are performing well in this area. The new items of military equipment are arriving continuously according to schedule, and their commissioning is progressing according to plan. In other words, we have achieved the time-proportional targets in time, quality and quantity, and the arrival of additional equipment is ensured – also as per the present situation. Thus, it has been proven that with adequate budgetary support, the procurement of military equipment poses no problems. Even the necessary budgetary infrastructure can be provided for it, although I think we need to move into high gear in this area.

The bigger challenge, as it has already been discussed several times, will be the provision of human resources. There are a great many reasons for this, but above all, it is due to the “national defence policy”, which has been neglected for decades and takes time to be put in order. First of all, this is because we need not just a few thousand, but many more patriotic, dedicated, loyal soldiers with whom it is really possible to build a national force. For this, however, it is necessary to change the established social relations, or rather social and human attitudes, because the social effects on people largely determine who and how many of them undertake the armed service of the homeland. That is why we have launched the Military Development Program with the objective of putting man, the soldier himself, at the centre of development. All this may seem to imply that we are talking about the person, the soldier, but this must always be interpreted as meaning the uniformed man who exists in and is represented by society.

Let us take stock in terms of human resources: what have we achieved in the last five years, and does this ensure that we achieve the objectives we have set for ourselves?

Let us proceed according to the stages of the career path model:

- In terms of the number of participants in the cadet training program designed to provide guidance and preparation for the military career, we have set the goal of at least 5,000 cadets studying at these institutions by 2026. Currently, more than 7,000 students are participating in the program, which means that by 2026, we may even be able to double the number of our cadet students compared to the set goal.
- The number of educational institutions has grown dynamically. Participation in the cadet training program has become increasingly popular among schools, parents, and students alike. Currently, 121 educational institutions offer such education.
- The number of volunteer reservists has increased by around 6,300 over the past five years – although this expansion was significantly hindered by the Covid epidemic – as compared to the 860 in the previous five-year cycle (2012–2017). This brings the total number of our reservists to 11,500, which will allow us to reach the target of 20,000 by 2026 through further intensive recruitment.
- The social acceptance of the cause of national defence and the increasing interest in military careers, i.e., the growing attractiveness of undertaking military service, are best reflected in the fact that the number of officer cadets applying to and enrolled on the Faculty of Military Science and Officer Training of the Ludovika University of

Public Service for the 2022/2023 academic year was nearly 40% higher than in 2017 and 3.5 times higher than in 2013.

- In the case of non-commissioned officers, the introduction of the “Steel Cube” NCO training system has also resulted in an almost fourfold increase in the number of non-commissioned officers who can be assigned to positions.
- The growing number of soldiers posted to international military staffs proves that our concept of human resources has been successful and recognized on an international level as well.

## GOING FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD

The successful implementation of the National Defence and Military Development Program ensures the creation of such defence capabilities that genuinely serve to preserve peace. However, different capabilities should not be understood as a set goal to be achieved, which must be accomplished by a specific date, but as continuous maintenance of this set goal after we have achieved it. Thus, in the case of the capability of preserving peace, we must talk about simultaneous permanence and continuity. In political terms, this is the task and responsibility of the government of the day, but from a professional point of view, it is that of the top military leadership.

In order to ensure the availability of human resources, along the lines of the previous thoughts, we have analysed, evaluated, and taken into account, shaped and formed the environment that surrounds those who undertake military careers and influences their lives, service, and fate. It can be stated that the career path model of the volunteer, vocation-based military service will only be effective, or even workable, if it proves to be applicable and acceptable by all parties involved, harmonizing organizational and individual interests. However, in order for it to be applicable all along the career path, it requires continuous monitoring and clarification, a so-called updated status. All this must be done in such a way that both organizational and individual interests can be asserted since the main motto of the Military Development Program is: Man, the soldier is at the centre of change and transformation!

As I have emphasized several times before, the creation of defence capability has a great many components, which are influenced and shaped by a great many factors and their interrelations. In my article, I highlighted the availability of human resources as a fundamental segment of creating defence capabilities. I am convinced that this will create a strong and unshakable foundation on which we can stably build in the long term; this is because only through human resources can we build a reliable, loyal, well-trained, and prepared military force committed to its homeland, which can indeed become a premier force in the region. Furthermore, only through it can we make the undertaking of the military vocation recognized, predictable, and attractive for the younger generation. At the same time, the course of human resource planning requires additional work to present the expectations and processes related to operational procedures, applicable doctrines, the use of forces and assets, education, training, and preparation. The emphasis on human resources management does not mean that the areas and means of technical capability development and the operational and servicing needs are pushed into the background, nor does it mean that the importance of research and development is underestimated.

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