

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study and recommendations to improve the management of paratroopers in the future. Limitations and suggestions for future research are also discussed in this chapter.

Overview of the Study

Having sophisticated and state of the art weapons' system alone is not sufficient to ensure a credible force to be reckoned with. The mental state of readiness of soldiers and in this context, paratroopers, should also play an important role in ensuring the overall state of readiness. The role played by paratroopers, irrespective of which country they belong to, is immense. NATO's Rapid Reaction Force, for example, saw the successful deployment of the British and French paratroopers in troubled areas around the globe. The US Army had also put their airborne units on high state of readiness for any mission that necessitates quick reaction.

Hence, it is important that soldiers from these units be nurtured. It is the aim of this study to determine the perceived combat behaviour of paratroopers in the Malaysian Army and make recommendations, where possible, to improve them. The model used for this study was based on that used by Brown and Moskos (1976) with some modification to suit the

Malaysian environment. The conceptual model presented relevant factors that impinge upon the behaviour of soldiers in combat. The research was conducted in four different camps based on two different groups of soldiers. A total of 240 respondents from the parachute and standard combat units were selected to participate in the study.

Summary of Research Result

The analysis of the findings was based on seven factors that contribute towards the motivation and combat behaviour of paratroopers. The factors which were identified by Brown and Moskos (1976) included the: military environment; combat situation; group relationship; social influence; discipline; leadership and training.

Results from the study revealed that generally paratroopers had more positive attitudes towards combat readiness as compared with those from the standard combat units.

An analysis of reasons for enlisting in the Army showed that the soldiers, irrespective of their units, put national interest first before self-interest and this augurs well for the future well-being of the organisation and the country. "A chance to serve my country" was ranked the most important reason that majority of the respondents decided to join the Army. This seemed to have contradicted the views of the respondents in a similar survey, which was conducted by the US Army. The respondents in US had indicated that the main reason they had joined the Army was, "to learn a new skill". In

short, it is important for aspiring youths to join the Army with the right objectives in order to ensure a credible force to be reckoned with.

An in-depth analysis on the preferred location of assignment showed that majority of the married soldiers from Sarawak in the parachute units would like to be posted back home. Currently this group of soldiers had served in their current units, namely in Peninsular Malaysia, between seven and 10 years. Hence some form of managerial action may need to be taken to meet this need of theirs. Pro-active measures by planning to send them back to their home stations could ensure continuous motivation at work.

On their career satisfaction, the paratroopers were found to be more satisfied with the Army as compared with those from the standard combat units. Out of five factors, as shown in Table 15, three factors were found to be statistically significant. Firstly, the respondents felt that the welfare of the paratroopers as compared with soldiers from the standard combat units are generally well taken care by their commanders. Secondly, paratroopers were more affirmative that the Army had made a man out of them as compared to the opinions of their counterparts. Lastly, there were more paratroopers than those from the other groups who agreed that they had their best friends in their platoon/section/troop. In order to motivate the soldiers it is important that they are satisfied with their work environment to enable them to perform well in their future tasks.

On social issues however, a diverse opinion prevailed among the soldiers. On the issue of hairstyle for example, a typical civilian attitude seemed obvious, especially among the paratroopers who preferred to have

longer hairs. However, the result is not so alarming as reflected by the low mean value. This item was somewhat confirmed, when more than 90% of the respondents had either agreed or strongly agreed that the decision to allow them to wear jeans was good.

However, when posed with the factor that the Army should maintain its tradition, they agreed too, especially those from the parachute units. Paratroopers for example, are generally not only proud of their maroon beret that they don but also feel honoured to be differentiated from other soldiers. Hence they fully supported the traditions of the Army. On the issue of prevailing civilian attitudes, the study conducted in US by Brown and Moskos (1976) also reflected the same result. However the fact that paratroopers reflected more positive attitudes that the Army should maintain its tradition shows that they are committed towards attaining military goals.

With regards to respect and trust for fellow soldiers, more than 75% of the respondents seemed to possess a high degree of this value. The paratroopers however, were more serious about not tolerating soldiers who run away from combat duties as compared with soldiers from the standard combat units. The results tend to suggest that paratroopers are more committed and can be depended in any combat assignment.

On how well they have been trained for combat, more than 80% of the respondents each generally agreed that they have been sufficiently trained and physically and mentally prepared for combat. Again, paratroopers seemed to show a higher level of confidence that they have been sufficiently trained and are physically prepared for combat. Training is important in

ensuring that soldiers are well prepared and always ready for combat duties. With sufficient training, it would reduce fear of the unknown and hence motivate soldiers to go for war, when the need arises.

The perception of the soldiers' readiness to participate in combat had very encouraging results. About 90% of the respondents each supported the view that they would do so if they were ordered and definitely volunteer too. Paratroopers however, seemed to be more positive to volunteer: whenever the Army needs them to go into combat; should the Communist Party re-emerge with their arms struggle; and if they have to participate in peacekeeping operations under sponsorship of the United Nations. Hence, it is hoped that paratroopers would perform well if ever deployed for any defence or combat missions.

The literature review in Chapter II had speculated that paratroopers have a strong sense of belonging and group cohesion as a result of the training that they undergo. Results from the survey tend to concur with the experiment conducted by Aronson and Mills (1959). The survey does support the fact that the more jumps a paratrooper makes the more cohesive and aggressive is his attitude towards combat.

Table 25 provides a brief overview of the survey results based on their objectives which were discussed in Chapter 1.

TABLE 25

**BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY RESULTS BASED
ON THEIR OBJECTIVES**

Objectives	Findings
To determine if paratroopers would be ready to fight in any combat.	Paratroopers seemed ready to fight in any combat and can be expected to perform well.
To determine if there is a difference in combat behaviour between paratroopers and standard combat unit soldiers.	Generally, the paratroopers showed more positive attitudes towards combat as compared with soldiers in the standard combat units.
To identify the relationship between the social values and commitment of soldiers towards military goals and to compare the differences in opinions between paratroopers and standard combat unit soldiers.	Generally they still reflect prevailing civilian attitudes especially among the parachute soldiers. However, positive attitudes towards maintaining the Army's tradition by the paratroopers should augur well for the organisation.

Implications of the Study and Recommendations

This study provides an understanding of the combat behaviour profile of parachute soldiers in particular as well as that of soldiers from the combat units. Results from this study suggest that military leaders should take some managerial measures to improve the mental state of readiness of soldiers and the paratroopers in particular. Specifically, areas that may need some attention in order to improve the well-being of paratroopers include:

- a. **Preferred Location of Assignment.** Soldiers, especially those married and from Sarawak who had served more than seven years in their current units should be posted to units nearest to their home towns. This managerial action is important to ensure that they remain motivated throughout their military career. Being too far and too long in the same unit do not augur well for the long term well being of the soldiers.

- b. **Prevailing Civilian Attitudes.** Although no immediate action would be necessary, unit leaders must instil in soldiers that discipline and traditions of the Army are of paramount importance. This is to ensure that soldiers remain committed and effective in achieving military goals.

- c. **Clear Objectives on UN Missions.** The objectives of the mission must be clearly spelled out to soldiers. They must go with clear objectives and not for monetary reasons.

- d. **Characteristics of Paratroopers.** The survey showed that soldiers who had undergone parachute training tend to develop a strong sense of cohesiveness and combat aggressiveness. Hence, actions must be taken at the unit level to manage the flow of information effectively especially during peace time. Unit commanders at all levels must scrutinise information properly so that incidents such as the "siege of Kg. Mortem" will not take place again.

Limitations of the Study

Although attempts were made to minimise weaknesses in the study, it was inevitable that some limitations did occur: The survey, which was conducted in four different camps, may have resulted in some biasness due to the different circumstances the soldiers in the four camps are faced with. For example the opinions of a group of soldiers undergoing a period of combat training in one camp might be influenced by the training that they undergo at that point of time as compared to another group of soldiers undergoing administration period.

Results of this survey can only provide a basic guide on the profile of the paratroopers. Survey of this nature cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the actual readiness of soldiers and paratroopers for combat. The fact remains that only in real battles can one really assess their combat readiness. Thus, results from this survey do provide a general profile of the soldiers we have today and thus prompt decision makers to take measures to improve them.

Recommendations for Future Research

In future similar surveys could be conducted by including a larger sample size so as to make generalisation of the results better. It is also recommended that future survey should cover technical aspects such as weapons and vehicles.

Conclusion

This study is the first of its kind to be conducted in the Malaysian Army. It only addresses the mental combat readiness of paratroopers as compared to their technical proficiency and preparedness. It is hoped that in the future, efforts through subsequent surveys be conducted to look into the continuous improvement of the combat readiness of soldiers in general and the paratroopers in particular.