

CZECH ARMED FORCES
NATIONAL REPORT FOR CWINF
Year 2003

Representation of female soldiers

Women account for 10.7% of military professionals. Almost three quarters of female soldiers are chief warrant officers (approximately 20%). In contrast, women are scarce among warrant officers and even rarer among officers (only 1%, the highest-ranking female soldier is a lieutenant colonel). Women account for 9% of lower officers.

Age

Over the long term, female soldiers are generally somewhat younger than their male counterparts (30 vs. 33 years) due to two basic reasons. Firstly, the number of women in the Czech Armed Forces has been increasing gradually, and for that reason, the percentage of the youngest soldiers is higher among women. A third of all female soldiers are 25 years old or younger. Secondly, women leave active duty much earlier than men. As a result, there are almost no women among soldiers 40 years and older (there are about 150).

Appurtenance to individual forces

Women and men do not have equal representation in all military forces. Only one in five women is a member of the ground forces (19%). In contrast, the highest number of female soldiers can be found in the air force (about 30%). Approximately 15% of women in the army are with territorial defense and logistics and 34% of women soldiers work in other branches of the armed forces.

Rapidity of career advance

In general, female soldiers in the Czech Armed Forces have lower ranks than their male counterparts. The fastest promotion rate exists among lower ranks (the shortest period of holding a rank is 1-2 years). Throughout their career, women often go on a maternity and parental leave, which is one of the reasons for holding a rank for a longer period of time.

Military specialization

There are no specializations in the Czech Armed Forces from which women would be barred. That being said, most women hold economic, administrative, legal, personnel, and technical positions at the lower management level. They much more often than their male counterparts work as staff employees, flight control operators, flight control assistants, nurses, and doctors.

Representation of female soldiers according to education

Most women in the Czech Armed Forces have secondary school education. They are followed by those who have higher and lower education. Almost no Czech female soldiers have primary school education.

Study

Limits restricting access of women to military schools were eliminated in 1999. The number of accepted applicants depends on current army needs, academic capacity, and women's interest in individual study programs. All programs are open to both women and men. The period a person must remain on active duty after graduation from a military school equals a double of the duration of the study program.

Study programs that attract the highest number of women include such fields as logistics (supply of equipment, foods, provisions, fuel), archiving and administration, medical care, military economics, human resources development, ecology, provision of equipment, hygiene and chemistry, meteorology, military robotics and cybernetics, aviation, flight control, and homing and control systems of rockets and weapons.

Requirements for physical capability of female soldiers

Physical capability (strength and endurance) of male and female soldiers (since 2002 measured once a year) is one of the prescribed components of their personal evaluation. The standards of physical capability have been set by specialists and adapted to the physique and age of soldiers. There are no weight requirements. In 2002, women's performance was rated based on the following criteria:

strength: sit-ups (minimum of 35 per minute in the first age category, i.e., up to 25 years of age) or pull-up endurance on a horizontal bar (minimum of 5 seconds in the first age category); women over 45 years of age were not tested for strength;

endurance: 12-minute run (a maximum distance of 2,000 meters in the first age category) or 300-meter freestyle swim (maximum time = 8 minutes in the first age category).

Performance in each discipline is rated. Female soldiers must attain a minimum of 20 points and more in either discipline. To pass the test, women must attain more than 20 points in one of the disciplines.

Education and qualification requirements

Education requirements are met by 97% of female soldiers in the Czech Armed Forces. At the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff, education requirements are met by 100% of women. Qualification requirements (training courses) are met by 71% of women in the Czech Armed Forces and 59% of women at the Ministry of Defense and General Staff. The high number of soldiers who meet the education requirements among both men and women stems from Ministry of Defence Regulation No. 270/1999 Coll. which defines education

requirements for professional soldiers. The regulation allows professional soldiers who do not have the required education to serve until November 30, 2004 only. When assigned to a new position, every male and female soldier must meet the applicable qualification requirements.

Representation of women in command and chief positions

Fourteen percent of women in the armed forces (approximately three times fewer than men) are in command positions (commanders, chiefs) at the Ministry of Defense and General Staff. Their average age is 38.6 years. In the case of the Czech Army, 22% of female soldiers are in such positions (approximately 2.5 times fewer than men). Their average age is 32 years. One of the reasons why women in the Czech Armed Forces are less often promoted to command positions than their male counterparts is the fact that (due to their maternal role) they tend to be interested in professions characterized by regular working hours, lesser time demands, and lesser requirements for physical capabilities, fieldwork, and direct command over a large number of soldiers.

Participation in monitoring and peacekeeping missions

The number of women active in Czech units participating in foreign monitoring and peacekeeping missions is 2-3% on average. Since 1990, approximately 200 female soldiers have taken part in monitoring missions (especially UNGCI and UNPF) and since 1992 in peacekeeping missions (UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR, AFOR, KFOR, and ISAF). Some of them took part in more than one mission. Most of these female soldiers have worked as medical staff, communication and POI workers, squad and platoon commanders, spokeswomen, CIMIC officers, and lawyers. Women taking part in foreign missions are an important social factor and in most cases have a positive effect on the psychological and social climate of units.

Women's motivation to join the armed forces

As to their decision to embark on a military career, most women cite the need for personal satisfaction at work (having interesting and useful work), the pragmatic aspects of military service (social benefits and advantages, education, need to be different than other women), and the formal signs of military institutions (order, discipline, organization, and uniform).

Recruitment

Due to women's high interest in serving in the military, which exceeds the needs of the Czech Armed Forces, no special recruitment programs for women have been necessary. Most women began their career in the armed forces as students of military secondary schools or universities where they complete basic training.

Attitude to the military profession

The vast majority of female soldiers are proud of their profession. Further, women feel that their relatives harbor positive attitudes to a career in the armed forces. Female soldiers enjoy

support from their families and most friends who are professional soldiers. They meet some negative attitudes from civilian friends and neighbors.

Length of military service

Female soldiers more often than their male counterparts have a contract for a longer period of time. Close to 40% of women have a contract until at least 2007. One of the reasons is a high percentage of the youngest female soldiers currently serving in the army; they have completed university education, and the term of their contract is derived from the duration of their study program.

Further professional career

It is apparent that serving in the armed forces is becoming more and more attractive for today's professional soldiers. In 2002, four fifths of military professionals expressed the desire to continue serving in the armed forces if their contract is extended. These attitudes were exhibited more often by women (91%) and men (78%).

Legislation

At the end of 1999, a new Act on Professional Soldiers was adopted, which substantially changed the conditions for professional service in the Czech Armed Forces. The act was last amended on July 1, 2002. The law contains provisions that ensure equal treatment of all soldiers as far as conditions for service are concerned. The law prohibits any form of discrimination due to racial origin, complexion, sexual orientation, language, religious convictions, ethnic or social origin, wealth, ancestry, marital or family status, and family obligations, with the exception of cases when necessary for objective reasons concerning a position in the armed forces. Further, the law prohibits discriminatory actions whose effect is both direct and indirect. The said amendment defines the procedure for dealing with some problematic situations, which the law did not describe previously. This way, the legislation has created conditions for identification and subsequent elimination of potential problems that stem from discrimination against male and female soldiers.

A clearly positive factor is enforcing equal opportunities for men and women serving in the Czech Armed Forces. The law emphasizes family needs in respect of raising children, a task shared by both parents. Protection of pregnant women, women on maternity leave, and mothers with infants is enshrined in the Labor Code, a piece of civil legislation; however, the Act on Professional Soldiers provides commanders with additional possibilities of managing the professional career of female soldiers. This is apparent especially when women return to active duty after maternal or parental leave.

Measures improving the position of women

In August 2002, Ministerial Order No. 29/2002 was issued, charging management workers with eliminating obstacles that prevent access to equal opportunities, especially access to education, professional training, career advance, and equitable remuneration. In this regard,

managers can adopt temporary extraordinary measures, within their powers, aimed at eliminating any inequality concerning men and women in the armed forces.

Equality of the genders is monitored during inspections of the state of human rights carried out by the Inspection of the Minister of Defense. In addition, the army monitors the incidence of suggestions and inquiries concerning discrimination made by telephone to the Open Army Line. Since 2002, the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Defense organizes a series of seminars entitled “Enforcing Equality between men and Women in the Jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defense” for management employees directly subordinate to the Minister of Defense and workers responsible for drafting concepts.

Gender atmosphere

Surveys have shown that although sexual harassment exists in the Czech Armed Forces, it occurs exceptionally and rarely. If a violation of equal treatment or undesirable sexual comportment occurs on duty, the affected male or female soldier has the right to demand immediate termination of such actions and elimination of their consequences. No military authority may, discipline or disadvantage a male or female soldier who lawfully demands the exercising of the rights he or she has as a member of the armed forces.

Work conditions

In recent years, the Ministry of Defense has tried to create better work conditions for workers in the defense sector. In comparison with the past, there has been a noticeable positive trend reflected especially in a more optimistic image of the Czech Armed Forces and soldiers by the civilian public, a greater stability of the military profession, overall earnings, military legislation, recreation (possibility to receive a voucher for a stay at a military recreational facility), material and technical equipment in the workplace, opportunities to voice one’s opinions, interpersonal relations in the workplace, quality of management work, conditions for improving physical condition, and the distance of military bases where soldiers are stationed from their domicile.

Integration trends

Integration trends are introduced into the armed forces from the “outside,” under the pressure of authorities responsible for harmonizing Czech labor laws with standards and regulations of the European Union. Since 1999, the Ministry of Defense has a representative in the Czech Government’s Human Rights Council. This council has a committee specializing in equal opportunities for men and women in which the Defense Ministry has had a representative for the past three years. In addition, since 2001, the ministry has had a representative in the Czech Government’s Council for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men.

Some changes starting in 2003

For implementation of the Concept of Building a Professional Army of the Czech Republic and Mobilization of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic approved by the Czech Government on November 13, 2002, the Minister of Defense has issued several orders.

Ministerial Order No. 54/2002 decreed the oath taken and code of ethics followed by professional soldiers and voluntary reservists (Military Code of Ethics). By taking an oath, soldiers voluntarily assume the moral obligation contained in the oath. The oath does not replace the military oath and entails no legal consequences. The objective of the Military Code of Ethics is promoting desirable comportment on the part of soldiers, compelling them to serve responsibly according to their best knowledge, abilities, and skills.

Further, military soldiers must possess language skills for assignment to a systematized position. In this regard, preference is given to the English language. Language training will begin on July 1, 2003. By January 1, 2005, soldiers in selected systematized higher-level positions will have to attain at least Level One knowledge of the English language. Recruited soldiers must have a basic knowledge of English by the end of the year following the year of recruitment.

Starting on April 1, 2003, physical capability of soldiers will be demonstrated by passing standardized physical tests at any time during military service. Tests of physical capabilities will be completed according to plans of individual commanders at least twice per training year, including an annual test. Daily training activity will consist of basic physical training in the extent of at least six hours per week.

Summary

The Czech Armed Forces has a relatively high proportion of professional female soldiers. A recent reduction of military personnel has not affected negatively on women's representation among military professionals.

In the armed forces hierarchy, women mostly occupy lower-level positions and perform supporting work. Compared to men, the training, career advance, and career options of women serving in the armed forces are limited, although the Act on Professional Soldiers does not distinguish between the genders, save for pregnant women and mothers of infants. Female soldiers try to eliminate prejudice anchored in the Czech society in respect of the women's role, among others, by their attitudes to fulfilling military duties. Female soldiers are responsible, hardworking, ambitious, modest, and more and more interested in career advance. Women have become an integral part of the Czech Armed Forces, demonstrating their indispensability in some specialized areas, the air force in particular.