

## MENTAL LOAD CAUSED MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

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#### Abstract

People are far different personalities, different characteristics, so of course they have different ways to live a stress situation or in an emergency situation. By calling experience, in terms of my study I was classified into three groups of people. The first group is the set of persons who do not have experience in the armed forces, in other words, it is the range of ordinary occupations, civil persons. The second group represents those individuals who have experience in the armed forces, with training, but they were not in real danger or in battle conditions. The third group includes those who served in a special forces, with experience gained from the deployment in combat conditions.

**Keywords:** physiological effects, mental load, stress, behavioral changes, danger, emergency situation

#### Absztrakt

Az emberek amennyire különböző személyiségek, más-más tulajdonságokkal rendelkeznek, így természetesen különféleképpen élik meg a stresszhelyzetet, a vészhelyzetet is.

Tapasztalataim előhívásával, vizsgálatom szempontjából három csoportba soroltam az embereket. Az első csoport azoknak a személyeknek a halmazát jelenti, akik nem rendelkeznek fegyveres erőknél eltöltött tapasztalatokkal, más szóval a köznapi foglalkozást űző, civil személyek körét jelenti. A második csoport azokat a személyeket öleli fel, akik rendelkeznek fegyveres erőknél eltöltött tapasztalatokkal, kiképzéssel, de valós életveszélyben, illetve harci körülmények között nem voltak. A harmadik csoportba azok tartoznak, akik valamilyen speciális alakulatnál szolgáltak, rendelkeznek bevetési, harci körülmények során szerzett tapasztalatokkal.

**Kulcsszavak:** pszichológiai hatások, mentális teher, stressz, viselkedésbeli változások, veszély, vészhelyzeti szituáció

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## INTRODUCTION

Some of the people believes they can handle stress situations with adequate behavior, others thinks they would fail during a serious stress event. The real situation can be different or moreover opposite of their believes. Someone thinks he/she would able to direct people during an emergency situation, other ones would need direction from someone. According to some opinion we can predict the likelihood how the people will cope with extreme stress situations. According to my observations and experiences it is not completely possible to modelling the real life threatening situations in advance so it is not possible to forecast who will act and how, who will win who will fail. That measurement can work in the real life threatening situation only.

People are far different personalities, different characteristics, so of course they have different ways to live a stress situation or in an emergency situation. By calling experience, in terms of my study I was classified into three groups of people. The first group is the set of persons who do not have experience in the armed forces, in other words, it is the range of ordinary occupations, civil persons. The second group represents those individuals who have experience in the armed forces, with training, but they were not in real danger or in battle conditions. The third group includes those who served in a special forces, with experience gained from the deployment in combat conditions.

## MENTAL LOAD CAUSED MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

The first group, that is, with no experience in the military or police forces, are civilians. Fortunately there is not any or only very rarely nowadays a crisis situation where their lives may be in danger. Most of them may experience that feature in traffic accidents only. The smaller bumper to bumper accidents are stressful, but very fast therefore, psychological and behavioral changes in this kind of crisis situations does not occur. People get a little scared, then calm down after the event, they are glad that escaped the incident relatively easy. The more serious potential deaths or more deaths ending accidents also take place very quickly, if good-pass solution has been chosen by the driver, and he was lucky, then he/she could survive the accident if the wrong solution has been chosen and had no luck, then he/she may lose his/her life unfortunately. In these cases, the physiological effects of an emergency situation has developed over tenths of seconds, by loss of consciousness or death to an end immediately. [1]

The same characteristic of this group, if they become a subject of threat or violence, most of them are getting in panic, unable to think and act normally, the fear and dread completely overwhelmed their personality. They can not act and the received instructions are not able to grasp and execute. Accordint to my experience, their proportion is around 70% of the entire population.

During the raid of dangerous, armed criminals often happened that the arrested person was in so deep panick to urinate and / or defecate as he was not able to control himself, they were unable to hold back.

My experience shows within this group with missing military or police background, about 20% of the people, can be made according to the number of people who can be directed and the instructions, with some help enforced. E.g.: sit there, go there, do this or that, etc.

Based on my observations approximetely only 10% of the proportion of people who is in a panic situation did not get panic, but immediately focusing on the search for a solution on how to get out from the crisis situation, assess how can find escape routes, and what kind of opportunities are there. That person can effectively be thinking, making quick decisions, has the ability to weigh and choose the most effective solution, and to achieve this goal is the best strategic and tactical path method to figure out, laid out, and act accordingly.

In a rapid course of emergency situation when a few seconds only available to detect the situation, bypass and getaway, solutions with the least possible damage for reflection and execute the best possible solution then almost any organ emergency mode supports us the greatest possible performance for all mental and physical peak power of order.

In this moment we are a couple of incredible mental and physical efforts are able, when the time changes us, that our perceptions of time. We feel as if little had expanded the time had slowed down the happenings around us and we were given time to think through a lot more things, more things were perceived as normal, non-crisis state of our loads.

The second group is different from the first, that they have some level of training and experience, he spent the armed forces, in compliance with the basic psychological tests and inspections. My assessment point of view, they have already provided selectively on a higher level group, but my observations shows that there is no significant difference between the first and second groups experiencing life-threatening capabilities. [2]

In support to my opinion, I want to present two events. In both cases happened in the United Nations police and military peacekeeping mission, the first in Cambodia, in May 1993, the second in Angola in the spring of 1996.

The first case aimed at police officers who were my colleagues in a nearby Vietnamese border, Cambodian village in the jungle. One was a black African, the other came from a Maghreb country. There were tropical climate with almost 100% humidity, than the local population almost everyone has a weapon, usually AK-47, drugs, smuggling, shootings continuous have been heard and the active presence of the Khmer Rouges was characterized that period at the time.

During the elections in each of us (Police Observers) had to move out to a polling point for six days and there to keep watch over the elections in peace and security. The two colleagues reported sick, one with a neck ache the other one was complaining about general malaise and they traveled to the capital city to Phnom Penh where UN had the German field hospital for examination, so they could not participate in the ensuring of the election unfortunately. [3]

After the election, which would otherwise have taken place without any security issue in our district that two colleagues have arrived back in our village and dressed in bullet-proof vests and helmets, with a cambodian interpreter using one of our off road truck raced up and down the village to boundless relief, and thus raise concerns without any atrocity.

The local residents, has only just jumped away from them, but they confronted by a cambodian military jeep and the cambodian soldiers were forced to pull off the road.

The shouting teenage soldiers jumped off their jeep, captured the cheerful team on the way when they turned backage from the end of the round cheerful team that saw the barricade of armed soldiers, they tried to turn back, but then they saw that the back is caught around them. Then they left behind the car and the interpreter, they jumped into the lush vegetation along the road and fled by running rushing till the first UN-inhabited house, which was 3-400 meters away. Then I arrived with one of my colleauge to the scene by driving our off-road car and I saw the following. They car was standing across of the middle of the road with open doors, beside of it was standing our sobbing and frightened interpreter, a number of armed soldiers in front of us. We could see the soldiers behind in the rearview mirror each other was using the back sides of the trees as a shelter, then a soldier jumped in front of my car who was shouting with us like hell by shaking a machine gun with his finger on the trigger of the gun. While he was shaking the machine gun, my Asian companion slide down on the seat as far as he could to take advantage of the engine cover. By holding my both hands in the air I signaled that I do not have a weapon and after they opened my door and took me out, I called the interpreter by shouting and asked him what happened and what the soldiers want. It was difficult to understand him, because the soldiers were still shouting with us and the interpreter was heavily sobbing, they wanted us to bring the people here, who pushed them out of the way and handing our

officers over for them. I still held my hands in the air and tried to calm the soldiers down through the interpreter, I said we fulfill all their wishes, just let us leave the site and I will bring the Africans colleagues back. They partially accepted my term I could leave the site by my car, but only me, alone and they kept back my Asian colleague and the interpreter. I promised to my colleagues I will be back with our UN colleagues for help, I saw the fear in their eyes, but I tried to encourage them. I was afraid that one of the overheated soldiers was losing his self-control and shoot after me, but fortunately it did not happen. I reached the house within two minutes, where our European commander already was there with some of our officers and the two perpetrators too. For the sake of our subject, it was interesting that both of them had lost all their equipment during their escape but even had their boots left, one of them because of comforts aspect never put on his boots adequately, did not ever think his shoestring and the other one was wearing a zippered ankle boots authorized in his own country. They were so frightened that they could not coordinate their movements, their body were twitching, where they moved, especially with their heads rotating right and left, but their eyes were the most talkative, they could not look at anyone and nothing, their eyes glimpsed in the distance, or moved quickly in disorder. They were completely drenched in sweat and had a terrible odor, and their sweat was more pervasive and more unbearable than usual. We have taken several measures, after talking to the commander in private, outlining the possibility of not returning to the scene with the Africans colleagues, we can expect that they will attack us at night. We reported to the UN military observers who arrived at the scene armed and the command of the Cambodian soldiers to disarm their people when they reported this to us, we have been started only after to go to the scene. We did not succeed in convincing our African colleague that he had to go back and reconcile, he was just saying he did not go anywhere, so we managed to get him into the car with high physical efforts. While we were approaching to the scene, we had to hold him back with almost superhuman powers to avoid he do not get rid of it. On reaching the scene, we saw that the Cambodian command arrived and disarmed its men, and the UN armed military observers have already protected the scene. We listened to the complaints, promised that no more similar cases would occur, and then with a handshake they wanted to seal the peaceful closure of the case. The African did not want to get out of the car and shake hands with the insulted soldiers, who was half the size of my nearly two-meter-tall colleague. We could only solve this by holding his hands with two of us, but as if he was shaking like hit by electricity when his hand came to the hands of the Cambodian soldier. Probably because of this peace-making action, we have not been attacked by the Cambodian offended soldiers. Both colleagues had been removed from our duty station/willage on the same day, and they were repatriated to their home countries and the mission ended for them. To sum up, the fact that the two colleagues were members of armed forces, went through some sort of psychological screening, armed training, do not yet say that they were able to withstand the psychic load in a hostile confrontation or in this kind of similar situation. Especially it was the worse as they caused themselves that hostile situation which lead them into panic. Almost the same reaction were demonstrated by them that the majority of the first group had not been able to withstand the psychic load, the life danger. Instead of all sorts of rational solutions, only the rushing escape was carried out, even without thinking or helping each other, individually, separately. The aforementioned physiological changes, powerful sweating, trembling with fear, "like an animal forced in the corner", superficial breathing, and dread decreased just even hours later.

The second case happened a few years later in a remote small village in Angola. Where half a dozen of us were serving half-police, half-military observers, representing all sorts of nations and continents. The country was still opposed by the government, the FAA and the insurgents, UNITA, a cease-fire was in place, in principle there were no major battles, only minor raids, the country was divided into two parts, but these were not contiguous areas but sporadically were located. The willage where our teamsite was located was under the control of the

government, but around us about 10 kms UNITA were controlling. Everything was undermining, the roads and the fields, every day we heard more explosions, local residents were starving. The supply can arrived by a small aircraft two-weekly from our UN regional center, but when the weather was unfavorable, it happened several times that the flight had been missed. Sometimes we were suffering missing supply of food, fuel, etc. for weeks or month. Under these circumstances, we were only able to investigate cases, like attacks each other camps, willages in the direction of the others hinterland, when a liaison officer entered our off-road vehicle and he showed the way, he knew where the minefields they were deployed. Those who did not go out for this kind of investigations stayed at home as a duty and emergency officer at the radio. In the evening at six o'clock the darkness comes with malaria mosquitoes, only one sollution was existed real protected place was to go to bed under the mosquito net. The continual emergency, the hardship and the terrible monotony of the months have overturned the nerves of several colleagues, the lucky ones have been relocated or left for leave. Unfortunately, a less fortunate European, middle age military officer could not cope with everyday tension and monotony. First of all, he did not dare to get out of the house, or to go out to patrol, or investigate a minor attack, he was unable to occupy himself by next to the duty radio or in his room, did not read, did not listen music, did not do sport exercises. He became more and more silent, locked inside him, and for days she sat with his face supported by two of his hands at the radio table. We tried to help him, but panic and anxiety were so overwhelming of him that all of our attempts failed and we needed to requested a medical evacuation for him by a helicopter rescue. [4]

Later, I heard that he had been repatriated in his home country and discharged from army on medical reason as he was mentally collapsed. In this case, he had not manage the impacts of a significant, sudden panic, but a small, continuous psychic load over a long period caused the colleague to have been unable to process the tension, he was constantly in fear and panic, and this constant psychological burden had disrupted the mental harmony of him, which made him unable to act and work.

The third group was observed by me from inside during a decade as I was serving for special counter-terrorist unit. To select members of the elite team, a very wide-ranging multi stage filtering system was established, the details of which would not be outlined right now. From my point of view, it is important to have a very strict, psychological screening of candidates for IQ, Rorschach, CPI, attention, etc. tests, and, in the mirror of the results an interview with a qualified psychologist was also carried out. Based on these measuring procedures, a profound, complete psychological picture could be gained from the candidate. Of all the entrance examinations or tests, the psychological examination was the one in which most applicants did not meet their proportions. We can conclude that those tests were carried out with the right rigor, since that was the one among of these examinations as the majority of the staff was afraid the most. But it was not just an access condition to get into the unit, but the quarterly psychological examinations were also part of the screening of the active unit members. So, each physical, sports, strategic, tactical, shooting, and so on exams had to comply and also with psychological examinations. [5]

## SUMMARY

According to my opinion, based on my observations, with a rather in-depth and wide-ranging psychological test, greater deviances or lack of competence could be demonstrated, but it is not completely possible to detect how the individual would bear the psychic burdens in sharp, hostile situations during the deployments. The ability to live a life-threat can only be felt in life-threatening experience situations. We can get approximate information with tests and situational exercises about how the individual is likely to perform and behave but close to reality

can only be obtained if the situation is real, we can get a true picture only in the case of a sharp action, in a life-threatening situation. I have repeatedly observed that colleagues who were performing well on a daily routine shooting trainings could not reach the same result when it was a demonstration shooting where they had to handle the same practiced task for example before an intergovernmental delegations. If the bet has risen, for example, in the quarterly exams, this level of performance has deteriorated further, went under the demonstration level. During the sharp deployment, when they had to undergo extreme psychic stress, some individuals were not able to achieve even their average performance. Of course, in this group, the ratios were just the opposite of the first group studied, so they were in great numbers, thanks to their abilities, continuous trainings, excercises, careful selection and continuous screening, who performed their job perfectly under a considerable psychological load and only had a fraction of them who was unable to stand up to the expectations of their duty.

I would like to add that about the ability to live a life-threat situation I do not think there is a man who would not be afraid to solve a situation where he might be injured or lose his life. If someone claims that he is not afraid of not telling the truth or not the master of his personality. The palm will be damp, the mouth will open a little, the throat will dry out, the breathing will become more prolific, the pulse will pop up, the man's gaze will betray everything, look into his eyes and you can see if he will be able to act as it is expected or he has to remove him from that position and give him an other task. The fear has to be overcome, there are some people who can do this, there are some who can become capable of doing this by a crisis situation, and there are some who can not overcome their fears.

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