

# INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS FUNCTIONS IN MILITARY ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS

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Internal communications functions in military organizational systems are multidisciplinary, polyvalent and interconnected. The paper deals with the identification and definition of the most important functions of internal communications in military organizational systems. The paper gives an overview of each function individually and highlights their importance, respecting the complexity and all the specifics of military organizational systems. Cherishing and developing internal communications in military organizational systems is a strategic task of military leaders at all levels of command and control. Effective internal communications is a valuable investment in human resources and long-term business results. It is also a powerful shield for soldiers against rumours, numerous problems and dilemmas. Effective internal communications arms all actors in the chain of command and control with the most powerful weapons, and that is information and knowledge. Its ontological component is particularly emphasized in the paper because internal communications motivates, strengthens the soul of soldiers and is a necessary substance in developing a sense of duty and responsibility. To command and control means to communicate. Investing in internal communications is investing in the efficient functioning of military organizational systems.

*Key words: military organizational systems, internal communications, Serbian Armed Forces, Serbian Armed Forces missions, command and control*

## Introduction

Successful companies and business conglomerates allocate great budget funds to create a communication strategy as a pillar of a positive image, reputation and rating of companies in the external public. However, it is often

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forgotten that the definitive proof of the success of every organization is the business reality created by “the beauty of a company that is in the eye of its employees”. Effective internal communications is a measure of the success of each organization. Internal communications in military organizational systems represents a fundamental premise and platform on which the results and successes of units and institutions both in peacetime and wartime conditions mature. “One of the basic processes by which reality is constructed/built is communication”.<sup>1</sup> Effective internal communications is not an ephemeral process, but is permanently one of the important factors in the process of making timely and rational decisions. Mistakes and noise in communication in military organization are the most expensive and directly affect the most valuable and non-renewable resource - human life.

In this paper, we will identify the most important functions of internal communications and analyse their role in the life and work of military organizational systems, as well as the significance of the proactive role of military leaders in developing, implementing and evaluating all its layers. The importance of human factor is particularly emphasized through the paper, as well as the fact that members of military organizational systems represent its most valuable resource. Effective internal communications is a rather important process in the architecture of coherent and cohesive military collectives and an important pillar of effective command and control, as well as the successful execution of all assigned missions and tasks of the Serbian Armed Forces.

## The definition of the concept and functions of internal communications in military organizational systems

Internal communications is a concept of short history, but it is therefore a phenomenon of long existence. In relevant professional literature,<sup>2</sup> in addition to the concept of *internal communications*, the syntagms *business communication*, *organizational communication*, *communication in organization*, etc. are also found. The common characteristic of all the mentioned definitions of the concept of internal communications is the fact that it takes place within organization among employees and that the success of both employees and organization as a whole depends on its efficiency. As a frame of reference for understanding internal communications and its interdisciplinary field of study, we can take the definition given by Bovee and Thill that internal communications is “the exchange of information and ideas within an

<sup>1</sup> Snježana Milivojević, *Mediji, ideologija i kultura*, Edicija reč, Beograd, 2015, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Džerald Grinberg, Robert A. Baron, *Ponašanje u organizacijama*, p. 301.; Stjuart Tabs, *Komunikacija*, Klio, Beograd, 2013, p. 54.; Tenk Ralf, Liz Jomans, *Otkrivanje odnosa s javnošću*, Hrvatska udruga za odnose sa javnošću, Zagreb, 2006, p. 359, Zorica Tomić, *Komunikologija (drugo izdanje)*, Čigoja štampa, Beograd, 2003, p. 72.

organization.”<sup>3</sup> Miller reports that “communication in an organization represents a flow of messages through the network of interdependent relations.”<sup>4</sup>

Greenberg and Baron note that in internal communications, in addition to the exchange of facts and its informative role, its function of building good interpersonal relationships is important and emphasize that internal communications includes “developing friendships, as well as building trust and acceptance.”<sup>5</sup> Tomić also emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relations in organization, as well as its correspondence with internal communications. In this regard, she concludes that “the ability to deal with conflicts in a healthy way is directly dependent on the ability to communicate and the character of the connections and relationships we establish with other people.”<sup>6</sup>

Petrović also writes about the important properties of efficient internal communications and emphasizes that in addition to timely detection of problems and their faster solution, efficient internal communications leads to greater employee engagement, greater job satisfaction and less frequent absence from work or quitting a job.<sup>7</sup> Building and nurturing good interpersonal relationships means communication in organization is two-way, as well as that there are communication channels in order to hear opinions, difficulties and problems of its employees. Tench Ralph and Liz Yeomans point out that the strategic purpose of internal communications is “the worry to build two-way relationships and trust with internal publics to improve the organization’s effectiveness.”<sup>8</sup> Greenberg and Baron report on the integrative function as a capital layer of effective internal communications and note that “modern scientists often describe organizational communication as social glue that holds all parts of an organization together.”<sup>9</sup>

Cvetković gives a general definition of internal communications in military organizational systems and states that “internal communications in military organizational systems represents communication within military organization, and implies communication between leaders (commanders, chiefs, directors, etc.) and employees, as well as between employees at all levels in organization.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, we can conclude that “communication in itself is not a purpose, but aims to establish certain relations between the subjects of the communication process. Relations are based on interpretation and commitment to messages”.<sup>11</sup> These defini-

<sup>3</sup> Sreten Cvetković, *Utjecaj vrednosti na odnos autentičnog liderstva i interne komunikacije u vojno-organizacijskim sistemima*, (doktorska disertacija), Univerzitet u Novom Sadu, Fakultet tehničkih nauka, 2018, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Tabs, *Komunikacija*, Klio, Beograd, 2013, p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> Džerald Grinberg, Robert A. Baron, *Ponašanje u organizacijama*, Želnid, Beograd, 1998, p. 304.

<sup>6</sup> Zorica Tomić, *Komunikologija (drugo izdanje)*, Čigoja štampa, Beograd, 2003, pp. 72–73.

<sup>7</sup> Danijela S. Petrović, *Umešnost komuniciranja*, Klio, Beograd, 2019, p. 217.

<sup>8</sup> Tenk Ralf, Liz Jomans, *Otkrivanje odnosa s javnošću*, Hrvatska udruga za odnose sa javnošću, Zagreb, 2006, p. 359.

<sup>9</sup> Džerald Grinberg, Robert A. Baron, *Ponašanje u organizacijama*, gen. quote, p. 301.

<sup>10</sup> Sreten Cvetković, *Utjecaj vrednosti na odnos autentičnog liderstva i interne komunikacije u vojno-organizacijskim sistemima*, (doktorska disertacija), gen. quote, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> Miroslav Mitrović, “Strateška komunikacija u funkciji nacionalne bezbednosti”, *Vojno delo*, vol. 71, br. 1, 2019, p. 46.

tions of the concept of internal communications unequivocally indicate the existence of a wide range of its functions.

“According to Berlogar, many authors approach the definition of internal communications functions differently, but basically all agree that the function of internal communications is to create stability within organization and reduce uncertainty and insecurity among employees. Berlogar believes that the following four specific functions of internal communications in organizations are the key ones: “strengthening and expanding communication goals, coordinating the activities of employees in organization, providing superiors with feedback, socialization of employees through organizational culture”.<sup>12</sup>

Greenberg and Baron believe that the most important functions of communication in organizations are: directing actions, coordinating actions, informing, as well as the interpersonal part of organizational relations with the focus on social relations that prevail among people.<sup>13</sup>

Recognizing the contribution of many authors in reference scientific sources, we identify the four most important functions of internal communications in military organizational systems: *informing, motivating, efficient command and control and building efficient military collectives*.

It is important to point out that in every communication in military organizational systems, the ethics and moral values of military leaders and all its members occupy a central place. In his textbook “*Rhetoric*”, Nušić emphasizes the importance of ethical values among those who speak and notes: “when rhetoric also uses the one that does not have an ethical value as a precondition, he abuses rhetoric, and the abuse of rhetoric can cause a great and incalculable damage to society and state.”<sup>14</sup> The lack of ethics and the abuse of internal communications in military organizational systems is the most serious mistake and it has a negative impact on the execution of all missions of the Serbian Armed Forces. Such mistakes are intolerable for military organizational systems.

## Internal communications in the information service

All members of military organizational systems in the chain of command and control must have timely and accurate information, which is crucial both in the decision-making process and during their implementation and evaluation. Timely and accurate information is very important both for soldiers and military leaders in peacetime and wartime conditions.

The success of the training process, tactical actions, marching, occupying the elements of firing with weapons and firearms, starting and lasting of fire preparation, performance of units, all types of combat operations, in fact all combat and non-

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<sup>12</sup> Sreten Cvetković, *Uticaj vrednosti na odnos autentičnog liderstva i interne komunikacije u vojno-organizacijskim sistemima*, (doktorska disertacija), gen. quote, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Džerald Grinberg, Robert A. Baron, *Ponašanje u organizacijama*, gen. quote, pp. 303–304.

<sup>14</sup> Branislav Nušić, *Retorika*, Izdavačko i knjižarsko preduzeće Geca Kon A.D., Beograd, 1938, p. 133.

combat operations and their outcomes directly depend on timely and accurate information. Communication provides the required information that is necessary in the decision-making process, which is very important for organizational efficiency. "The communications system is directly related to the decision-making process. Each individual makes a decision after receiving a smaller or greater amount of information through the communications system."<sup>15</sup> Randelović points out that the main features of information are that it has to be objective, accurate, complete, timely and understandable, i.e. presented in a form and scope that is acceptable to recipient.<sup>16</sup>

It is rather important that informing members of military organizational systems is conducted from official sources – formal communication channels, which prevents rumours and misinformation. Rumours are extremely destructive for all units in military organizational systems, especially during the preparation and execution of combat operations. Rumours can instil fear, cause panic and completely disable units for combat operations. Rumours are a very complex phenomenon and have very destructive effects in weakening the morale of members of military collectives. Throughout history, there have been many cases where rumours have been more devastating to combat military units than bullets. "For example, the rumour about the harmful effect of antimalarial drugs in New Guinea caused the neutralization of almost 80 percent of the US soldiers in that area, which Japanese forces could not succeed by using only conventional weapons."<sup>17</sup>

Uncertainty, contradictory, ambiguous, late and incomplete information demotivate members of military units and destroy collectives. Hayase points out that "a silent organization can experience the worst outcomes because it forces employees to speculate."<sup>18</sup> Sias notes that "the amount and quality of information that employees receive from managers is directly related to the quality of task execution and relations between the superior and the subordinate."<sup>19</sup>

Properly planned, conducted and properly evaluated internal informing at all levels of command and control provides time ergonomics and is directly related to the decision-making process, the quality of achieved results and the efficiency of military organizational systems in peacetime and wartime conditions. Information has to be timely and accurate, understandable and unambiguous for all members of military organizational systems. The analysis and improvement of the informative value of the sentence of military leaders is rather important and special emphasis should be placed on it. The culture of expression and presentation literacy has to be permanently developed and improved among young officers.

<sup>15</sup> Ranko Lojić, *Liderstvo*, Medija centar "Odbrana", Beograd, 2019, p. 310.

<sup>16</sup> Slavoljub Randelović, *Efektivno komuniciranje*, Vojnoizdavački zavod, 2009, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> Marko Rupčić, "Uloga glasina u ratu", *Polemos*, Zagreb, vol. X, br. 19, 2007, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> Lynn Kalani, Terumi Hayase, *Internal communication in organizations and employee engagement*, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia M. Sias, "Workplace relationship quality and employee information experiences", *Communication studies*, vol. 56, no. 4, 2005, p. 380.

## Internal communications in the service of motivation

Hypothetically, if we had had military technology that represents the planetary avant-garde, the results of this sophisticated technique and technology would have been equal to the range of “bow and arrow” if there are no personnel that will effectively exploit its maximum effects. “Understanding what motivates people means having the most powerful tools for working with people.”<sup>20</sup> Officers have to know their people and have the knowledge to recognize indicators that say there are problems. Subordinates must not be afraid to present problems they have. Members of military organizational systems must have full trust in their superiors, and trust is built on the foundations of honest and permanent internal communications. One of the important communicative competencies of military leaders is to be good listeners to the problems and demands that their subordinates have.

Military leaders often lead soldiers through extremely difficult and risky situations, especially in combat operations. The methods of stimulation characteristic of civil workforce – such as the promise to pay bonus or the other negative extreme - threats of dismissal are not long-term effective in military organizational systems. Money does not encourage troops that may not survive combat operations to spend it, and the possibility of losing a job is not a great danger for someone facing the possibility of injury or death. Military organizational systems have to know that a different approach is necessary. Officer and professor, Jovan Dragašević notes that “it is no longer enough for a soldier to be skilled only at weapons, but that warfare has changed and that the military profession is involved in many sciences, so soldiers are required to have an appropriate and dignified syllable both in speech and writing.”<sup>21</sup> Sarcastic and cynical comments from the superiors demotivate members of military organizational systems and stifle self-initiative. Thus, in addition to what is said in terms of content, it is also very important how it is said. In order for the superiors to motivate their subordinates, it is necessary for them to be motivated and to firstly show everything they demand by their personal example. Roganović emphasizes that “behind every message of an officer, it is necessary to have a personal example as a source of inspiration and admiration for everyone who feeds his spirit with his speech”.<sup>22</sup>

Motivational speeches written with heart, human and professional qualities have always been identified by true leaders and have had a strong effect on members of military units, especially before important tasks and crucial battles. In these speeches, emotional emphases in language, style and a literally shaped expression in contrast to dull speech, can often more convincingly express the content and motivate members of military units.

<sup>20</sup> Slobodan Panić, Marko D. Andrejić, Vitomir Stanković, “Uloga interne komunikacije u motivisanju zaposlenih”, *Vojno delo*, vol. 67, br. 5, 2015, p. 386.

<sup>21</sup> Jovan Dragašević, *Vojnička stilistika*, Državna pečatnica, Beograd, 1871, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Božidar M. Roganović, *Retorika*, Vojnoizdavački zavod, Beograd, 2001, p. 162.

Commanding officers and commanders are in different roles. It is necessary to use different styles of internal communications and to develop various manners of using language material in the service of motivating members of military organizational systems at all levels of command and control. Military leaders have to show empathy, listen, understand, respect and properly evaluate the work of their employees. Building trust is done by honest and well-designed communication between the superiors and the subordinates. Military leaders should place special emphasis on the development of this function of internal communications, which greatly creates the environment in which members of military organizational systems work and affects their satisfaction, contribution and working results.

## Internal communications in the service of efficient command and control

Effective internal communications enables a continuous process of command and control. To command and control means to communicate. Internal communications enables orders to be executed into concrete and effective action.

In the language of command, words that have a single meaning, not several meanings, should be used. The proper execution of military orders depends on the proper understanding of messages. Each differently understood nuance of meaning can lead to a misunderstanding of message and command then becomes unusable. The order executor does not have time to guess the meaning of an expression or sentence. In order to make the language of command functional, it is necessary for the logical meaning of a word to be equally known to both the sender of information and the recipient. In that sense, it is not desirable to use foreign words and expressions of imprecise meaning. Moreover, the logical way of expressing military orders is an important condition for each order to be executed, as well as a strict selection of facts according to importance. In the training process commanding officers should not “assume” that the meanings of some professional expressions are clear. During training special emphasis has to be placed on each professional expression and its meaning explained.<sup>23</sup> All commands that are issued by voice require correct pronunciation and a proper posture. The correct posture as one of the layers of non-verbal communication is very important and has to be harmonized with the correct pronunciation of command. The composition of orders is defined by the essence, and the order of presenting facts should be logical, concise and understandable. The use of abbreviations in command should help the economy of expression, but it should be reduced to a reasonable level and make sure that all members in line understand them.

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<sup>23</sup> Radomir Životić, Božidar Jovović, *Jezik i stil ratne veštine*, Centar visokih vojnih škola OS “Maršal Tito”, Beograd, 1990, pp. 294–303.

Every mistake in communication can have the most serious consequences, and that is the loss of human lives. Therefore, in military organizational systems, it is necessary to fully adhere to the defined standard operating procedures, which have been developed with special care in order to be clear and unambiguous to everyone in the military hierarchy.

The emergencies, particularly the floods that hit Serbia in 2014, confirm how important the role of the Serbian Armed Forces and all functions of internal communications are in the service of an efficient military organization. The key to success in flood defence in 2014 was effective command and control based on the principles of single seniority and subordination, trained and organized military teams consisting of motivated members, as well as clear and unambiguous standard operating procedures and timely information that were crucial in the decision-making process and their execution. This event has only confirmed the importance of internal communications in the service of efficient command and control.

## Internal communications in the service of building efficient military collectives

Building coherent and cohesive military collectives is of special importance for military organizational systems. Motivated, competent and trained individuals are a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for building effective military collectives. Kasagić and Kostić emphasize that an efficient military collective is not a simple sum of successful individuals capable of combining their knowledge and skills in order to accomplish common goals.<sup>24</sup> In addition to motivation, knowledge, skills and virtues of individuals, the sense of collective spirit, belonging to unit and putting personal interests in the service of the unit's task are decisive factors that are crucial in building military collectives.

The tool without which one cannot build a collective of the highest performance is planning, implementing and evaluating efficient internal communications. For military organizational systems, it is inadmissible that military collectives are weak. Military units get prepared to take part in combat operations in war, and that is enough to say that they have to always be a paradigm of the highest values and performance, with the aim of permanently improving the scale of operational and functional capabilities. Building effective military collectives is an ongoing process.

Gavet also speaks about the importance of the strength of military collective and advises commanding officers and commanders: "Your unit should really be a whole, not mechanical, but organic one. If it is only capable of receiving and mechanically transmitting your will, like a rifle that is triggered and fired by the pressure of your finger, then it is still only a dead thing; it needs to be inspired by its diligence and life.

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<sup>24</sup> Ljubomir Kasagić, Petar Kostić, *Psihologija za vojnog starešinu*, Vojna akademija KoV, Beograd, 1992, p. 82.



Preparing for war with a stationary unit, which is used to always wait for side thrust to start working, would be just as smart as thinking of replacing a hunting dog with some mechanical device."<sup>25</sup>

Military leaders have the task of uniting all professional and human qualities that their unit has at its disposal, and this is achieved on the basis of good horizontal and vertical communication. It is very important that there are communication channels in military organizational systems, where the problems and difficulties of employees are discussed. Moreover, these are opportunities to get feedback from unit members on what needs to be improved in the life and work of military collective. The internal connections, those invisible threads that develop over time, are one of the most important features of military collective. "There is no internal connection in a unit that is composed of people gathered in a hurry, who do not know each other, and who cannot rely on each other. A unit established in this way, in a hurry, is a weak entity, which officers maintain with great difficulty, and which tends to dissociate because everyone in it thinks only of themselves."<sup>26</sup> Thus, building successful military collectives is a process that requires both time and permanent communication.

Effective internal communications is a connective tissue that allows commanding officers and commanders to know their people well, so that all members in military collective are appreciated in the right way and in positions where they will be most productive. It is an important building block that makes military collective not a simple sum of individuals, but a living, harmonious and organic whole that has common goals, a sense of belonging and responsibility. This task is not easy and is one of the most important priorities of military leaders.

## Conclusion

The Serbian Armed Forces is an institution in which the citizens of Serbia traditionally have the greatest trust. Trust is difficult to gain and easy to lose, and maintaining the highest level of trust among its citizens and developing its further potential is the imperative. The successful execution of the assigned missions and tasks of the Serbian Armed Forces, as an institution that represents one of the most important pillars of our society, is impossible without efficient internal communications in peacetime and wartime conditions. All identified functions of internal communications are in the service of building efficient military organizational systems. Internal communications in military organizational systems is a continuous process and it must not have a break or "an idle stroke" because the destructive potential of the non-existence of effective internal communications is huge and inadmissible for military organizational systems.

The wide range of the functions of internal communications implies the implementation of various communication styles of military leaders. The styles of internal

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<sup>25</sup> Andre Gave, *Veština komandovanja*, gen. quote, p. 55.

<sup>26</sup> Andre Gave, *Veština komandovanja*, gen. quote, p.131.

communications imply the implementation of different ways of using language material that will show humanity, expertise, acuity, tolerance and many other different virtues and competencies of military leaders that are in the service of building successful military collectives. Furthermore, the knowledge of the existing standard operating procedures in the decision-making process and their implementation is of particular importance to ensure that decisions are timely, accurate and unambiguous. Special emphasis should be placed on the development and use of all communication channels through which feedback from the subordinates can be obtained as a valuable source of information for military leaders in the service of achieving organizational objectives.

It is necessary to continue studying communication, as an important competence of the 21st century officers, with students in military high schools and cadets of the Military Academy. The monitoring of modern scientific thought in this field and the implementation of scientific achievements in the curricula of military schools is of particular importance. Constantly monitoring and studying the language and style of our strategy is important because language continuously evolves and adapts to modern military needs. The work on the culture of expression and presentation literacy is important for improving internal communications and all its functions. The evaluation of the results of internal communications can be conducted by collecting data by the method of survey, which would include professional military personnel of all branches and services, as well as students of military schools and cadets of the Military Academy.

Recognizing the importance and all benefits of communication in military organizations, it is necessary to plan, nurture and further improve internal communications with special care, as a strategic management function at all levels of command and control. Having in mind this fact, as a necessary axiom of all military organizational systems, military leaders have to constantly work on further development and improvement of communication competencies, language and style of strategy, as an important condition for putting all internal communications functions in the service of building effective military organizational systems.

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## Summary

The functions of internal communications in military organizational systems are multidisciplinary, polyvalent and interconnected. The paper deals with the identification and definition of the most important functions of internal communications in military organizational systems. The paper gives an overview of each function individually and highlights their importance, respecting the complexity and all the specifics of military organizational systems. Nurturing and developing internal communications in military organizational systems is a strategic task of military leaders at all levels of command and control. Effective internal communications represents a valuable investment in human resources and long-term business results. In addition, it is also a powerful shield for soldiers against rumors, numerous problems and dilemmas. Effective internal communications arms all personnel in the chain of command and control with the most powerful weapons, and those are information and knowledge. Its ontological component is particularly emphasized in the paper because internal

communications motivates, strengthens the soul of soldiers and is a necessary substance in developing a sense of duty and responsibility. To command and control means to communicate. Investing in internal communications is investing in the efficient functioning of military organizational systems.

The wide range of internal communications functions implies the use of different communication styles of military leaders. The styles of internal communications involve the use of different ways of using language material that will show humanity, expertise, acuity, tolerance and many other different virtues and competencies of military leaders that serve the realities of successful military organizational systems. Also, the knowledge of the existing standard operating procedures in the decision-making process and their implementation is of particular importance to ensure that decisions are timely, accurate and unambiguous.

It is necessary to continue studying communication with students in military high schools and cadets of the Military Academy because it is an important competence of the 21st century officers. It is of great importance to continue monitoring modern scientific thought in this field and to implement all new scientific achievements in the curricula of military schools. Constant monitoring and study of the language and style of our strategy is necessary because language constantly evolves, adapts to modern military needs and improves as a basic means of expression.

Recognizing the importance and all the benefits of communication in military organizations, it is necessary to plan, nurture and further improve internal communications with special care, as a strategic management function at all levels of command and control. Recognizing this fact, as a necessary axiom of all military organizational systems, military leaders have to constantly work on further development of communication competencies, language and style of strategy, as an important condition for putting all internal communications functions in the service of building efficient military organizational systems.

*Key words: military organizational systems, internal communications, Serbian Armed Forces, Serbian Armed Forces missions, command and control*

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