

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY FOR MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY*

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Abstract: The phrase “media literacy” is becoming ever more present in daily communication. The importance of media literacy is a significant guide for the orientation of members of the military in contemporary media arena dominated by a pronounced dichotomy in the field of effects of media content. New media have given numerous advantages to the life of a modern man. On the other hand, the hyperproduction of false news, fabricated information and interpretations, which often mix fragments of truth and falsehood, have created information disorder in the public sphere having a powerful potential to adversely affect decision-making process, combat morale, reputation and the system of values of soldiers and military leaders. Every day, mass communication media produce narratives which have become a powerful weapon for the production of meaning and reality construction. Media literacy should not be observed solely as a defensive paradigm and a shield against harmful effects of media content, but as a powerful mechanism to recognise and use all those benefits offered by modern digital technologies. The aim of this work is to point out the need to raise awareness of the importance of media literacy as an important competence of members of 21st century military.

Key words: *the military, media literacy, digital technologies, false news, new media, social media.*

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Introduction

The development of digital technologies, which was strongly encouraged by demands of military-industrial complex, made the life without the use of new media unthinkable. Charlie Gere points out that digital technologies have changed our present world of media, and stresses that their power lies in the fact that they change not only our world but us too, as well as the way in which we understand ourselves (Gere, 2008: 10). “New media is defined as modern information and communication technologies and their associated social contexts, and specifically their infrastructures with three components: the devices used to communicate or convey information; the activities and practices in which people engage to communicate or share information; and the social arrangements or organizational forms that develop around those devices and practices” (Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2006:2). Natalija Trivić agrees with this determination, pointing out that, today, new media are at the same time devices, platform for interactive communication, and a tool for the production of media content for mass communication. “When we say that, we primarily refer to computers, mobile telephones and tablets as devices, the Internet as a platform for two-way communication and use of applications for the production of photo and video content, which are, again, distributed to mass audience via the Internet and their forms of communication” (Trivić, 2019: 118).

New media have brought numerous possibilities that permeated all segments of our daily life making it easier and more efficient, but they also enabled us to do something that we could not imagine before. However, it is also required to underline all those harmful aspects of our omnipresent information disorder in the public sphere caused by new technologies, which can have devastating consequences for members of the military. It has been a long-known fact that the language of media is not neutral possessing a great power to construe reality. Critically observing the dominant role of contemporary media discourse, Stanojević notes that “being an intermediary in presenting the reality by introducing new communication practices, and selectively offering certain content and notions, the media interpret the reality in accordance with their standards, whether they are ideological or commercial, thus creating a new version that is presented to the audience as representative one (Stanojević, 2019: 9). Military profession is particularly sensitive to information that is not timely, complete and accurate. Media intermediated and intentionally fabricated twisted reality, woven from a highly *explosive cocktail of truth and lies*, possesses a potential to negatively reflect on the decision-making process, combat morale, reputation and the system of values of members of the military, and undermine the confidence of citizens in the system of defence.

Cultivating and developing media culture and continuous advancement of knowledge and skills of media literacy represent a powerful shield for members of the military against false news and all other associated manipulative occurrences of modern media industry. In addition, it should be stressed that media literacy should not be perceived solely as a defensive paradigm, but as a powerful tool in the fight for reputa-

tion, image, acquisition of new knowledge and enlargement of capital of citizens' confidence in their military. In that regard, the ability to recognise this highly pronounced dichotomy in the field of effects of media content, and permanent development of the competence for the appropriate use of the media represent the essence of medial literacy.

Determination of the notion and essence of medial literacy

The concept of media literacy has existed since '70s of 20th century. Even then, in the era of traditional media, UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) was pointing out the significance of media in daily life of people, and initiated ideas on raising the media competence of mass communication participants to a considerably higher level. In that regard, in 1982 this organisation passed a Declaration on media literacy that underlined the necessity of its introduction in education.

The notion of media literacy was for the first time officially defined at a conference on media literacy held in 1992 in USA (the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy), as the "ability to critically access, analyse, evaluate and deliver messages by means of the media" (Rašević, 2014: 149). A contemporary media theoretician and Communication Professor at University of California, James Potter, defines media literacy as "the set of perspectives from which we expose ourselves to the media and interpret the meaning of the messages we encounter" (Potter, 2008: 47). By analysing the effects of mass communication media and recognising the need for the acquisition of knowledge and skills of media literacy, Rančić points out that "a media literate person has to possess sufficient knowledge and skills to recognise potential manipulation, analyse media messages, decode them and recognise fake news" (Rančić, 2022: 250). In the context of modern social media features and predictions for their further development, to this deliberation we should add the fact that, apart from appropriate reading, it is extremely important for today's media literacy to possess knowledge and skills on the production and distribution of media content that users of Internet platforms daily create, send, share thus actively participating in the public sphere.

Exploring the significance of media literacy, Potter indicates that "in a present situation where the media shower us with thousands of messages on any topic, it is the most important to make a good choice" (Potter, 2011: 28). He vividly compares his position on the importance of developing the ability to make a right choice with going to a supermarket and the necessity to choose what is needed and sufficient in a multitude of the offered: "If we imagine our reality as one big supermarket, and we need 25 articles that we intend to buy in a pile of some 40,000 products, we turn the autopilot on and decide not to take 39975 articles thus selecting 25 decisions about the choice of the products that we are buying" (Potter, 2011: 28).

Numerous authors of scientific and professional literature have highlighted the plurality of media literacy. According to Kellner and Share “media literacy is the ability of people to use media intelligently, assess media content, critically differentiate between media forms, explore media effects and the use, and construe alternative media” (Kellner & Share, 2005: 372). Reljić separates out five elements of media literacy: “understanding of how media influence society, what media content is, how media industry makes its products, *level-headed* and critical understanding of the society we live in, good assessment of personal power and knowledge, and being able to continuously advance them” (Reljić, 2018: 11). Art Silverblatt, Professor of Communications and Journalism at Webster University in St Louis, highlights seven elements of media literacy: „media literacy as the promotion of the skill of critical thinking that enables people to make independent choice, understand mass communication process, the awareness of the influence of media on individuals and society, developing strategy to analyse and scrutinise media messages, the awareness of media content as a text that enables insight into our present culture and ourselves, the acknowledgement and gratitude for the thing in media content that increases pleasure and understanding, the possibility to create effective and accountable media messages” (Reljić, 2018: 232-233).

What is new in New Media?

Back in '60s of 20th century, a media theorist Marshall McLuhan had a visionary conception of media as a message and the world as a global village in which media have become the extensions of our senses, body and mind. However, not even the predictions of that time, which were neo-vanguard for that time and belonged to the domain of science fiction, could anticipate the reach of new media effects that have opened one completely new media horizon, the boundaries of which cannot be delineated. The emergence of the Internet has brought about a media metamorphosis, so today, we live in a dramatically changed world of communications in comparison to the time of traditional media.

McLuhan claims that “we live with a rearview mirror view of own world, because of the invisibility of any environment during the period of its innovation, man is only consciously aware of the environment that has proceeded it” (McLuhan, 2012: 19). In that regard, Charlie Gere in his book *Digital Culture* notes: “If we were capable of understanding the changes around us, then they would not truly be changes, but merely developments of the present situation.” Gere pessimistically concludes that “all we can do therefore is to map the changes we see in the hope of maintaining our grasp on our rapidly changing situation” (Gere, 2008: 11). Snježana Milivojević notices that the changes in media that took place before and that are taking place now are beyond comparison. She founds this claim on that fact that it took more than 150 years from the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press in the middle of 15th century to

the emergence of the first contours of modern printing media, but on the other hand, in less than thirty years, the Internet traversed the path from its creation, when people believed in its Enlightenment role, to the present coordinates where false news and unverifiable information clutter the public sphere (Milivojević, 2021).

Eric Schmidt, former President of Google's Board of Directors, testifies to this omnipresent media infodemia pointing out that in 2003 it took 5 exabytes to digitally record all surviving human cultural legacies and information created between the dawn of time to 2003. In 2010, people created as much information every two days, and in 2012 the quantity of information generated on You Tube doubled with respect to 2010, reaching the quantity equal to the format of 180,000 feature-length films per week. In other words, according to the data from 2012, in less than seven days You Tube generated more content than all the films and television programmes that Hollywood has created throughout its entire existence" (McChesney, 1995: 37).

The said indicators confirm that social media have become highly fertile ground for the production and dissemination of fake news. Hunt & Gentzkow define fake news as "different forms of manipulation and deceptions, misinformation, as well as poor journalism based on journalists' mistakes (Hunt & Gentzkow, 2017: 223). Considering the fake news phenomena, Bulatovićs state that "the span of fake news is wide, moving from parodic and satirical memes (which perhaps are not intended to cause damage, but can potentially deceive), through sharing content with completely fake contextualisation of tabloid headlines and editing which have nothing to do with the text they accompany, the content intended to deceive - the most often with fake source, incorrect and incomplete use of information, diverse manipulative content such as conspiracy theories, and finally utterly false content" (Bulatović & Bulatović, 2022: 3472).

Conceptualising this phenomena, scientific and professional literature identify three most significant groups of fake news: disinformation, misinformation and malinformation (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017: 5). "Disinformation is created and distributed with the intention to deceive the public for the benefit of a person that created them. On the other hand, misinformation is also harmful content since they contain false or misleading information, but the people who create and share them do not recognise them as such and have no conscious intention to cause damage. Malinformation is information rooted in reality, but used to inflict damage to a certain person, organisation or state" (Nenadić & Vučković, 2021: 5).

Modern media considerably impact people's views, habits, beliefs and the system of values. In his book *Communication Power*, Manuel Castells notes that today's society, which he calls *the network society*, enables media content to shape - frame the mind of media consumers. Castells introduces the notion of time narrowing which he designates by the phrase *timeless time*, where time is not a cycle, interval or a change gradually notices, but is reduced to a moment measured by seconds, which is actually the time required to access virtual reality with *one click* (Castells, 2014: 77). Social media have brought about one very alarming paradox of the network society. Namely, research results show that "the emergence of Facebook and other social

networks coincides with the increased feeling of loneliness and alienation in society” (McChesney, 2013: 32).

In her article *What is new in the New Media*, Snježana Milojević singles out fundamental features of new media: convergence, concurrence, mobility and interactivity. Convergence means that one medium sublimates the content of different media sources. Today, we can use mobile telephones to read the print, watch television and exchange messages; in fact, all services are integrated in this gadget. Concurrence is the feature of social media which enables the production of media content with momentary livestreaming, which does not imply the employment of the equipment and technology of television production. Mobility means that users no longer need to go to an editorial office or a television station, but they have the opportunity to actively participate in the public sphere, instantaneously at their very location. Interactivity is the ability of all social media users to actually participate in the public sphere with their responses, comments and production of media content, thus being the first to transmit news and inform the public (Milivojević, 2017).

A public opinion research conducted in 2021 by the Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) supported the fact regarding the measure to which today's new media are omnipresent and all-pervading in modern society, and the measure to which the audience of traditional media in fact emigrated to the world of social media without developing sufficient knowledge and awareness of their negative effects. “The results show that the citizens of Serbia, besides personal contacts, inform themselves predominantly through social networks - 67 per cent, and then via Internet portals and sites - 64 per cent. In total, as much as 97 per cent of the citizens stated that they used the Internet. The most popular social media are Instagram, You Tube and Facebook, while Tik Tok network records a permanent growth. The highest percentage of the citizens of Serbia does not pay attention to sources of media information (news authors and media-agency that released them). Collectively, 51 per cent of the citizens of Serbia never or hardly ever pays attention of information source. Asked where they see negative media content, even 47 per cent of them did not know to name the concrete media. Particularly concerning is the fact that among the citizens who knew to nominate the media where they recognised negative content, only 8 per cent recognised negative content on social networks, while 4 per cent of the citizens saw them on Internet portals and sites” (CeSID, 2021).

Media literacy and military profession

Ever since the emergence of mass communication, the media have become a devoted companion of armed conflicts, and quite actively partook in the production of fake news and unverified information. “The media are not merely critics, or passive observers of events, but their creators and interpreters, particularly in case of wars” (Omaljev, 2001: 109). In fact, before every fired bullet, there is always the firing of

words, and this practice is applied unabated event during combat actions. As early as in 19th century, Carl von Clausewitz stated that “great part of information obtained in War is contradictory, a still greater part is false, and by far the greatest part is of a doubtful character” (Popović, 2006: 8-9). “The most obvious beginnings of large media deceptions were visible in the so-called *Hearst War*, a conflict that started on the wings of media propaganda of the magnate Randolph Hearst. Owing to media manipulation forged in Hearst’s newspapers, false texts facilitated the Spanish American War in Cuba in 1898” (Milojević & Kulić, 2020: 180). This practice paved the way for fake news in media discourse and it continued to exist in the present. Mitrović and Perić note that the development of the media followed the development of war, and they point out that each phase in the development of the media maintained and enhanced the level achieved in the previous phase (Mitrović & Perić, 2021: 98).

Unlike the familiar world of traditional media, social media enabled every mobile telephone user to momentarily broadcast events in real time so it is no longer necessary to employ complex television equipment and production. Therefore, today, all social media users are in fact the producers of media content. In such environment, new media have created an information disorder which allows of huge porousness for fake news and unverified information.

Analysing effects of media content on social networks and their repercussions for contemporary wars, Savković and Terzić state that “owing to the great porousness of information on the Internet, the usage of social networks has made impact on all security aspects of a country dangerously threatening them: diplomatic activities, intelligence and counter-intelligence measures, the exchange of information and cooperation in the field of security and defence at regional and international level, psychological-propaganda and reconnaissance activities, certain cyber space actions and protection against cyber space attacks, strategic information protection, information and strategic communication, protection of economic and energy capacities, strengthening of national and common values (the development of primary cells of the society through education, cultural growth and promotion of common values), critical infrastructure protection, civil-to-military cooperation at a local, regional and national level, conventional combat activities (from infantry to counter-terrorist actions), special operations and other activities” (Savković & Terzić, 2018: 328). The authors also illustrate their considerations with the analysis of the conflict in Syria which, as they state, represents a flagrant example of a dominant use of social networks during the conflict preparation, as a powerful instrument in provoking the growing international tensions and launching false information. In the preparatory phase of the conflict, western countries’ intelligence services played a decisive role in the field of technical and technological achievements, primarily by instigating spying activities at key decision-making positions, establishment of intelligence- operative work, and setting-up target groups on social networks (Savković & Terzić, 2018: 330). By implementing the method of gradual people’s mindset burnout, western countries’ intelligence services managed to inspire nationalism by means of social networks, not only with leading politicians, but on a mass scale among the population, reminding them of previous

historical conflicts and social contradictions in the Middle East area (Savković & Terzić, 2018: 330).

The war in Ukraine confirms the extent to which today's media have shaped a new world of communication. According to Milojević, "a television camera has been replaced by a mobile telephone, and traditional media reporting by social network posts, if nothing else then in terms of quantity" (Milojević, 2023). This conflict has become a flagrant example of a digital battlefield on social networks. Srbinovski stresses that disinformation and fake news about the war in Ukraine are predominantly disseminated on Tik Tok social network, stating that this war is also dubbed the first Tik Tok War (Srbinovski 2023). When constructing an appearance of reality one manipulates images, photographs, sounds, texts, video-recordings produced through the distortion of facts. "By using intense multimedia content, a viewer is directed to receive a version of a certain dramatic act subjectively, without the opportunity to realise whether the recording indeed represents the said event. Thus, the media, creating a desired response of the public, make a transition from an informative and objective discourse to a domain of public relations management and quite often manipulation (Mitrović & Perić, 2021: 98).

Doing their research of the war in Ukraine, Danilova and Zaolotnaja note that the placement of fake news is additionally enabled by the engagement of all digital resources of the allies - the great powers, and they underline that the advantage in the digital arena determines to a large extent the final winner in modern warfare (Данилова & Заболотная, 2023). Castells also speaks about the importance of predominance in the digital battle field for contemporary military operations. "According to Castells's explanation, technological electronic breakthroughs have facilitated a warfare where new technology provides considerable advantage over the enemy, so well-equipped professional military replaces the wider participation of citizens in war efforts, while media control enables information selection and public opinion manipulation" (Starčević & Milenković, 2023: 4). Timely, complete and correct information are a constant need of soldiers and military leaders. The era of post-truth, a trend that emerged on the wings of development of modern digital technologies, where "objective facts become less important when shaping important public opinion that influences emotions and personal beliefs" (Martinoli, 2017: 43), possesses a strong capacity to create doubt about right choices, which can negatively impact the system of command and management in the military. In that context, Milojević observes that we have gained access to free and easily available information, but we pay this benefit brought by new media by losing confidence and growing uncertainty that are dramatically confirmed in crisis situations (Milivojević, 2021). Omaljev points out that, in the modern world, information and information governing are equal to possessing resources. He also notes that media misuse of information where information is distorted has a huge impact on all spheres of social life and work (Omaljev, 2001: 111).

Furthermore, by means of a construed media reality, one of goals of conflicted parties is to weaken combat morale of the adversary. Thus, the media are becoming a weapon to conquer soldiers' hearts and souls. Mijalkovski and Ajzdeković under-

line potential highly detrimental effect of fake news on combat morale of soldiers, supporting it with a study that explored the effect of this phenomena on the Serbian military at the time of Thessaloniki front. Following quite exhaustive analysis of enemy propaganda, spread as spoken words, leaflets, pamphlets, letters and newspapers, the authors conclude that the success of efficient suppression of enemy propaganda contributed to the largest degree to the preservation of the morale of Serbian military soldiers. (Mijalkovski & Ajzdeković, 2018). As fake news were present even during the Great War with a strong potential to influence the belief in victory and liberation of the fatherland, we can unequivocally conclude that modern mass communication media have incomparably expanded their span and capacity to produce their devastating effect on combat operations. Omaljev stresses that in modern armed conflicts, the media intend to influence people's consciousness and devalue ideas and motives as internal drivers of their activities (Omaljev, 2001). "In a media war, the people are crazed by the whirlwind of truth and lies, the moral and immoral, good and evil" (Omaljev, 2001: 111).

Active participation of social media users in public discourse enables members of the military to produce and distribute media content. That is why media illiteracy can lead to the undermining of the reputation and image of the military, and to a leakage of classified military information. The case of Edward Snowden and his testimony are yet a confirmation as to how easy it is today with just one click to monitor the content that we post on social networks and other Internet platforms. Every record on social media is visible, and it is a permanent trace of our cultural pattern, habits and activities. That is why we should stress the fact that Robert McChesney warns us about in his book *Digital Disconnect*, in which he quotes the data from the Economist magazine according to which "in 2021 Google received at least ten thousand requests from law enforcement and national security bodies for the release of information, and Google owners admitted to having agreed to fulfil 93% of the government's requests" (McChesney, 2013: 112). Hence, media literacy is also in service of the preservation of the reputation and security culture of members of the military.

Today, the media have become a very powerful intermediary in construing the system of values and cultural patterns. Large world companies hold monopoly in the ownership of main communication nodes and channels, and they function according to the principle of political economy of communications, and laws of consumer society that establish the system of values whose core consists of commercial and entertaining content. Postman explores quite critically the political economy of communications underlying that there is a huge industry at the core of technologies that uses all available symbols to promote the interests of trade by devouring consumers' psyche. (McChesney, 2013: 99). Omaljev concurs with such thinking when he states that "in a media war, the media are put at the service of altering people's consciousness and their spiritual subjugation (Omaljev, 2001: 110). That is why media literacy represents an important building material in building soldiers' resilience to enforced media discourse of contemporary business conglomerates in the struggle to foster and develop spiritual capital and system of values upon which soldiers' profession rests. In addi-

tion, it should be emphasised that information circulating the social media by principle of traffic governed by quantity not quality, spectacular and sensational headlines and commercial interests have become the instrument in service of distracting the attention and free time of the young, members of the military certainly being among them. McChesney sharply criticises the influence of the Internet and the intention to influence the manner in which our brains function. He also points out that Google, guided by commercial imperatives, almost literally deals with the business of attention distraction (McChesney, 2013: 99).

On the other hand, one should stress all the benefits of the modern mass communication media. New forms of communication make everyday life easier, and business organisations more efficient. New media have enabled the enhancement of existing knowledge by making appropriate choices. Media literacy is in service of adequate promotion of military profession and creating campaigns for the enrolment on military schools, because there is a question that is raised for a reason today as to how, in a time of dramatically changed system of values, military profession can be made likeable and attractive to young people. This new environment of highly aggressive and trivial communication is not favourable to military profession and entails permanent harmonisation of communication strategy with the tempo of intensive changes in media culture. At the same time, it should be particularly emphasised that the imperative of the military profession is to preserve military professionalism and ethics of the military profession. That is why the public relations policy in the system of defence is extremely important, which, as Blagojević states, “consists of harmonising and guiding different public opinion views, so that the views and activities of the outside factor are integrated and harmonised in a satisfactory manner with internal policy of defence system (Blagojević, et. al., 2015: 144). Randelović confirms the importance of public relations in the military noting that “in the media space such as ours, the military, regardless of undoubtedly being one of the pillars of the state, cannot count on previously obtained support of the majority of the media, so it has to win the support of the public, primarily by promoting true values of the military organisation and its social significance” (Randjelović, 2003:6).

This strongly pronounced dichotomy in the field of effects of media content in the public sphere is confirmed by Popović as he claims that “in a positive context, the power of modern highly advanced media can be compared to nuclear energy, but in a negative sense, to a nuclear bomb” (Popović, 1996: 11-12). In other words, new media have brought numerous advantages under condition that they are used in the right way, otherwise, they get a negative prefix with rather devastating potential.

Conclusion

Just like in today's society it does not suffice to leave a thumbprint on paper as a signature and be functionally literate, it is required to further raise awareness of members of the military of the fact that, today, a thumbprint on a remote control and mobile

phone is not enough for us to be media literate. Media literacy is not a new kind of literacy anymore, so it is important to incorporate its content in teaching plans and training programmes at all levels of command and management. The spectrum of knowledge and skills of media literacy should enable a soldier to understand elementary logic of digital media functioning, and to gain required critical and interpretative knowledge. We live in times when every man becomes media. Hence, it is important to raise awareness of members of the military, as active participants in the public sphere, of all negative implications that generating media content can have if they do not contain the knowledge and skills of media literacy. Soldiers should, through practical examples, be informed about most significant fake news indicators and techniques to deconstruct hidden messages of multimedia records in the right way. In addition, it is important to rightfully present all the advantages offered by new media that can assist military personnel in their daily lives and professional tasks. That is why, it is important to inform them about relevant media sources that they will use for information and acquisition of diverse and useful knowledge. In development of media literacy particular attention should be paid to experiences from contemporary military operations where new media show all their potential for destructive effects. It is also needed to develop standard operating procedures for the use of mobile telephones during the execution of combat actions, since the present practice shows that only *one click* can be fatal to combat units. It should be stressed that conducting an analysis of the index of media literacy of Serbian Armed Forces members would be highly valuable, and its results should be used to produce plans and programmes for media education. Media education and instruction are vital for making the right choice and getting from the media the best that they have to offer.

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S u m m a r y

The development of digital technologies, which was strongly encouraged by demands of military-industrial complex, made the life without the use of new media unthinkable. New media have given numerous advantages to the life of a modern man. On the other hand, the hyperproduction of false news, fabricated information and interpretations, which often mix fragments of truth and falsehood, have created information disorder in the public sphere having a powerful potential to adversely affect decision-making process, combat morale, reputation and the system of values of soldiers and military leaders. The importance of media literacy is supported by contemporary military operations with which the social media got deeply intertwined thus opening a new digital battlefield. Unlike the familiar world of traditional media, new media have enabled every mobile telephone user to momentarily broadcast events in real time so it is no longer necessary to employ complex television equipment and production. Therefore, today, all social media users are in fact the producers of media content; in such environment, new media have enabled huge porousness for fake news and unverified information.

The changes of modern mass communication media are ever faster, and it is ever more difficult to define the attributes of their future performance. The new media reality is not favourable for military personnel, because exposure to fake news and fabricated narratives in the public sphere is increasingly aggressive and destructive. The essence of media literacy of military personnel is developing the ability to make the right choice when using media and producing media messages. Cultivating and developing media culture and continuous advancement of knowledge and skills of media literacy represent a powerful shield for members of the military against false news and all other associated manipulative occurrences of modern media industry. In addition, it should be stressed that media literacy should not be perceived solely as a defensive paradigm, but as a powerful tool in the fight for reputation, image, acquisition of new knowledge and enlargement of capital of citizens' confidence in their military. In that regard, the ability to recognise this highly pronounced dichotomy in the field of effects of media content, and permanent development of the competence for the appropriate use of the media represent the essence of media literacy. It is no longer a new kind of literacy, so it is important to incorporate its content in teaching plans and training programmes at all levels of command and management. The spectrum of knowledge and skills of media literacy should enable a soldier to understand elementary logic of

mass communication media functioning, and to gain required critical and interpretative knowledge. Media literacy has become an important competence of members of the military of 21st century, while media education and instruction are becoming imperative.

Key words: the military, media literacy, digital technologies, false news, new media, social media.

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