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ANNUAL REPORT 2019

AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION FOR THE
FEDERAL ARMED FORCES



**AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENTARY
COMMISSION FOR THE FEDERAL
ARMED FORCES**

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Preface by the Presidium

On the occasion of the presentation of the report *Unser Heer 2030 (Our Forces 2030)* on 17 September 2019, Federal Minister of Defence Mag. Thomas Starlinger stated the following:

“The shortfall of investment in the last three decades and the loss of capabilities of the Armed Forces linked to it have massive consequences for Austria: The Austrian population can only be protected in a very limited manner. In addition, due to the shortage of equipment, the lives and limbs of our soldiers are increasingly threatened in their deployments.

Should insufficient investment in the Austrian Armed Forces continue, we will be helpless against hybrid threats, cyberattacks and systemic terrorism in the future. Our services rendered so far in the course of disaster relief and law enforcement assistance operations will have to be severely curtailed. We will not be able any longer to ensure the sovereignty of the Austrian airspace. Our participation in international peace support and stabilisation operations will have to be reduced significantly.”

In the course of a meeting held in Hofburg Palace on 07 November 2019, the Federal President and supreme commander of the Austrian Armed Forces Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen and the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces agreed that sufficient assets are to be provided for the regular budget of the Ministry of Defence, so that the Armed Forces can fulfil their role in protecting the population as a strategic reserve of the republic.

On the occasion of her inauguration on 07 January 2020, Federal Minister of Defence Mag. Klaudia Tanner remarked:

“The Austrian Armed Forces are and remain our security guarantee. Therefore, we must continue to develop their core competences and, in so doing, carefully analyse the probability of future scenarios. This includes cyber defence, international peace support operations and assistance operations, to name only a few examples. The Armed Forces require resources and structures that are viable long-term, plus modern equipment and new assets.”

At the beginning of January 2020, the federal government presented its roadmap for 2020 to 2024, stating in the chapter on “National Defence” that the financial situation and the state of the Armed Forces call for new concepts to ensure the Armed Forces are modern and fit for the future. Therefore, the tasks, structures and assets of national defence need to be developed further and adjusted to the present. A structure that is fit for the future requires that the Armed Forces are equipped with the resources required for task accomplishment.



The fact that the Armed Forces successfully fulfilled all tasks faced in the year under review is to a large extent owed to the dedication and the excellent motivation of the service personnel. The soldiers deserve special thanks for this.

In 2018, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces initiated 287 complaints proceedings. In the previous year, there were 267. The causes of the complaints were directed principally at personnel matters and such ones pertaining to training and routine duty, inadequate infrastructure and deficiencies in the equipment. In close cooperation with those responsible in the Federal Ministry of Defence, problems connected with complaints were often already resolved during the investigation stage in a manner satisfactory to the complainant. Therefore, sincere thanks are given to the following persons, offices and institutions for their cooperation: the Presidium of the National Council, the National Defence Committee, the highest officials of the Federal Ministry of Defence, the commanding officers, the soldiers' representatives, the personnel representatives, military pastoral services, and internationally comparable parliamentary institutions for the supervision of armed forces, including those within the framework of the International Conference of Ombudsman Institutions for the Armed Forces.

Vienna, on 31 January 2020

Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Former MP
Otto Pendl
Chairman

MP
Dr. Reinhard Bösch
Executive Chairman

MP
Mag. Michael Hammer
Chairman

I. Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces 2019

Term of office from 01 January 2015 to 31 December 2020



Chairman Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP

Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces since 01 January 2019

Chairman from 21 January 2015 to 31 December 2018



Chairman Otto Pendl, former MP

Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 21 January 2015 to 31 December 2016

Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 01 January 2017



Chairman Mag. Michael Hammer, MP

Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 01 January 2017 to 31 December 2018

Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces from 21 January 2015 to 31 December 2016 and since 01 January 2019



II. Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces 2019

Presidium:

Dr. Reinhard Bösch, MP, Executive Chairman	FPÖ
Otto Pendl, former MP, Chairman.....	SPÖ
Mag. Michael Hammer, MP, Chairman	ÖVP

Commission members:

Mag. Gisela Wurm, former MP	SPÖ
Club Secretary Christian Schiesser	SPÖ
Mag. Bernd Schönegger, former MP	ÖVP
Oswald Klikovits, former MP	ÖVP
Manfred Haidinger, MP (Burgenland Provincial Parliament)	FPÖ
Nikolaus Kunrath, MP (Vienna Provincial Parliament)	GRÜNE
Sonja Stiller, MA MA.....	former TEAM STRONACH
Dr. Friedhelm Frischenschlager, former Minister of Defence	NEOS

Substitute members:

Rudolf Plessl, former MP	SPÖ
Hannes Weninger, MP (Lower Austria Provincial Parliament)	SPÖ
Mag Marcus Schober, MP (Vienna Provincial Parliament).....	SPÖ
Norbert Sieber, MP.....	ÖVP
Dr. Franz Pietsch.....	ÖVP
Asdin El Habbassi, BA, former MP	ÖVP
Dipl.-Ing. Christian Schandor, former MP	FPÖ
Mag. Gerhard Kaniak, former MP	FPÖ
Tanja Windbüchler-Souschill, MSc, former MP	GRÜNE
Christoph Hagen, former MP	former TEAM STRONACH
Mag. Erwin Gartler.....	NEOS

Advisors:

General Mag. Robert Brieger, Chief of Defence Staff
Mag. Christian Kemperle, Head of Directorate General I at the Federal Ministry of Defence
Brigadier General Dr. Dr. Sylvia Sperandio, MBA, Head of Military Healthcare at the Federal Ministry of Defence

Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces:

Mag. Karl Schneemann, Head
Siegfried Zörnpfennig
Mag. Petra Neuhauser
Sabine Gsaxner
Larissa Pollak
Ernst Kiesel
Master Sergeant Jasmin Puchwein (seconded until 31 March 2019)



III. Tasks

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was set up in 1955 upon establishment of the Austrian Armed Forces to serve as a democratic supervising body of the National Council. The Commission is legally based on sections 4 and 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act, and sections 20a, 29 para 2 (k) and 87, para 4, National Council Rules of Procedure Act.

For further information on the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces see the Parliament's homepage:

www.parlament.gv.at/Parlamentarische-Bundesheerkommission

III. 1. Terms of office

Under section 4, 2001 Defence Act, a term of office of the Parliamentary Austrian Armed Forces Commission is six years. The current term of office commenced on 01 January 2015 with the Commission composed of three members of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), three members of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), two members of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), one member of The Greens (GRÜNE), one member of TEAM STRONACH and one member of the NEOS, and it will end on 31 December 2020.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is made up of three (alternating) executive chairpersons, as well as eight further members. The chairpersons are elected by the National Council, the other members are nominated by the political parties, in proportion to their number of seats on the Main Committee of the National Council. Every political party represented on the Main Committee of the National Council at the time when the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces holds its constitutive sitting has the right to be represented on this Commission.

In the 59th session of the National Council/25th legislative term, on 21 January 2015, MP Otto Pendl (SPÖ), MP Mag. Michael Hammer (ÖVP), and MP Dr. Reinhard Bösch (FPÖ) were appointed as chairmen of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for the term of office lasting until 31 December 2020.

In the year under review, MP Dr. Reinhard Bösch assumed the function of Executive Chairman as of 01 January 2019 until the end of the term of office at the end of 2020.

Advice to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is also rendered at its sittings by most senior officials of the Federal Ministry of Defence, so that



there is a permanent exchange of opinions with those bearing responsibility in the Ministry.

On the international level, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may be compared to the Defence Representative of the German Bundestag and other parliamentary ombuds institutions for armed forces, e.g. in Ireland, Norway or Bosnia and Herzegovina, as far as their tasks are concerned.

III. 2. Who can file a complaint?

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces accepts complaints that are filed either directly or indirectly

- by persons who have volunteered for induction or voluntary national service,
- by persons liable to induction,
- by soldiers of either sex,
- by soldiers' representatives,
- by conscripts in the ready reserve or reserve,
- by persons having undergone voluntary national service,

and – unless the Commission finds the alleged reason for the complaint negligible – to examine it and decide upon recommendations pertaining to its settlement.

The respective group can lodge complaints concerning shortcomings or deficiencies within the military, especially regarding personal injustices or encroachments upon professional competencies.

The right to lodge a complaint expires one year after the issue giving rise to the complaint has become known to the complainant, in any case two years after the issue giving rise to the complaint has become void.

In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to investigate *ex officio* shortcomings or grievances within the military, suspected by the Commission.

A complaint to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is completely independent of official channels and ensures that an independent third party, i.e. the Commission, charges a grievance.



III. 3. How to contact the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces?

In person:

1090 Vienna
Rossauer Lände 1

By telephone:

- +43 50201 10 21050
- +43 1 3198089
- 90 12 30100 (IFMIN)

In writing:

- 1090 Vienna, Rossauer Lände 1
- Fax: +43 50201 10 17142
- bundesheer.beschwerden@parlament.gv.at

III. 4. Annual report

The annual report of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is published once a year, as per section 11 para 4, Rules of Procedure, and in conjunction with section 4, para 5, 2001 Defence Act, and is to be forwarded immediately by the Federal Minister of Defence, together with a statement, to the National Council. The Chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall have the right to take part in the hearings concerning these reports in the committees of the National Council, and to be heard whenever they so request.

The federal ministers responsible for military affairs in the period under review were until 22 May 2019 Minister of Defence Mario Kunasek, followed until 03 June 2019 by Minister of Defence Mag. Johann Luif, and lastly followed until 07 January 2020 by Minister of Defence Mag. Thomas Starlinger. On 07 January 2020, Minister of Defence Mag. Klaudia Tanner was inaugurated.

IV. Activities

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces dealt with the enquiries brought forward during the year under review, investigated complaints, arranged for ex officio investigations, carried out (unannounced) on-site inspections, put an end to shortcomings and deficiencies within the military in close cooperation with the Federal Minister of Defence and the



advisors, and presented suggestions for improvements in routine duty and in carrying out training.

The Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces prepared the Commission's plenary meetings to facilitate decisions concerning complaints and ex officio investigations, and to give recommendations to the Federal Minister of Defence.

Information events of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces within the sphere of the Federal Ministry of Defence, but also in the international field, as well as work meetings with representatives of the political scene, the church, religious denominations and the economy fulfilled the purpose by strengthening the understanding of independent, objective and comprehensive control of the military.

In cooperation with the Federal Minister of Defence and the advisors, problems connected with complaints lodged were often already resolved in the course of the investigation in a manner that was satisfactory to the complainant. The intervention by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces often quickly remedied aired grievances and thus in many cases contributed to an improvement of the work climate.

Concerning justified complaints, the Minister of Defence took the supervisory measures deemed necessary (ranging from instructions, rebukes and disciplinary measures to bringing forward charges).

IV. 1. Fundamental data

In 2019 the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces initiated 287 complaints proceedings.

The causes of the complaints were directed principally at matters pertaining to training and routine duty, personnel matters and deficiencies in the equipment as well as inadequate accommodation.

IV. 2. Ex officio investigations

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces decided on 15 ex officio investigations. Shortcomings and grievances in the scope of military service were investigated.

IV. 3. Actions pursuant to section 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act

In the year under review there was no request for issuing a statement regarding an appeal against an administrative selection decision concerning the obligation to serve reserve recalls.



V. Examples of complaints/ex officio investigations

V. 1. Inappropriate language

The head of a regeneration kitchen rejected a national serviceman's faulty task fulfilment by saying: "Are you stupid or what, do you want an after-duty disciplinary measure today?" In a different situation, the NCO cook of this facility commented: "You certainly don't believe that I, an NCO, am going to work my ass off?" (GZ10/095-2019)

During a rehearsal of an oath-swearing ceremony, a corporal threatened the assembled national servicemen for the event that a mobile phone would disrupt the activity with the following measure: "If someone's mobile rings, I am going to beat that guy up in front of everyone!" The same corporal made fun of a soldier's name by spoofing it to "...wanker." (GZ 10/119-2019)

One warrant officer denoted another NCO in the latter's absence and the presence of other soldiers as "asshole", and demanded that the others present did say so as well. (GZ 10/128-2019)

During a military driving instruction, the transport NCO massively deteriorated the work climate with remarks regarding the student drivers from Hörsching by commenting, among other things: "That's so clear, the Hörsching guys ...", "You are going to get a real surprise!", "You will be surprised how fast I am going to send you back to Hörsching!"; "Get your foot off the coupling or I will break your feet!" (GZ 10/142-2019)

A national serviceman, who was about to get a glass of water from a water dispenser located in the area of the company building, was harshly sent to the toilet with the words: "You must not take your water from here, at the loo you will get the same thing!" (GZ10/2019)

Following a recruit's insufficiently fulfilled order to clean, the superior NCO said as follows: "Are you stoned?", "You are a recruit and have to follow any order!" (GZ10/182-2019)

V. 2. Unnecessary harassment

During a march one recruit answered a superior corporal's question, whether anyone was thirsty, in the affirmative. Thereupon, he was ordered to carry a pack containing six 1.5 litre-bottles of mineral water, together with the order not to drink any. (GZ 10/132-2019)



A squad leader ordered all recruits to do push-ups whenever a national serviceman displayed unwanted behaviour while standing in formation, such as blowing his nose without “prior permission”. (GZ 10/132-2019)

V. 3. Defects of accommodations and constructional shortcomings

Female soldiers encountered massive infrastructural deficiencies with showers and toilets in several barracks.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces states that new buildings and complete refurbishments are absolutely necessary for adequate accommodation. (GZ 10/003-2019)

V. 4. Organisational shortcomings

One soldier who was redeployed ahead of schedule had problems concerning customs clearance. (GZ 10/102-2019)

Deficient internal military administrative procedures caused a backlog in the payment of extra hours. (GZ 10/147-2019)

V. 5. Military-medical support and restrictions

One corporal was unjustifiably redeployed from a law enforcement assistance operation, because his THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) value was slightly exceeded. The investigations revealed that the urine sample was not sent for further analysis to the respective chemical laboratory of a forensic institution. (GZ 10/118-2019)

The military physician, who conducted the initial treatment of a national serviceman in an outpatient department and recommended that he should be transferred to the inpatient department, was neither involved nor informed about the subsequently changed military medical assessment and respective actions (no transfer to the inpatient department, the national serviceman had to use public transport to return to his barracks). (GZ 10/203-2019)

V. 6. Incomprehensible measures

One lance corporal was denied participation in key personnel training two weeks before his training course started, because the course was overbooked and there were insufficient training capacities. (GZ 10/011-2019)

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces supports the fast introduction of a central personnel report system, which is to record all key personnel



candidates in one data pool and provide an overview of the training slots offered. This is to prevent overbooking of training slots.

Rightly, some national servicemen complained about excessive service hours and promised, but not granted, leaves. (GZ10/014-2019)

Although instructors of the pilot project *Fit for the Forces* qualified for gratification, they did not receive any extra payment. (GZ10/103-2019)

One line officer did not understand his temporary transfer to another unit, and when he requested a reassessment, it was forwarded to the competent office with delay. (GZ10/122-2019)

Rude treatment of a recruit in connection with an order to do a painting and wallpaper job and the supervision by one NCO as well as a shortfall in providing adequate protection and cleaning supplies. (GZ10/141-2019)

Since 2017, a sergeant of the ready reserve had not been issued the missing parts to complete his class A uniform. (GZ 10/151-2019)

Only after lodging a complaint with the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces concerning the excessive duration of the administrative procedure of one and a half years for a request to the respective office was the procedure concluded within a few days and the decision of the service authority sent in writing. (GZ10/157-2019)

An insufficient assessment matrix was used for the replacement procedure of a position, and the Parliamentary Commission suggested that a final decision should be taken only after the documents are comprehensively re-evaluated. (GZ 10/174-2019)

V. 7. Disregarding regulations/laws

Data protection regulations were violated in processing personal data (sick call). (GZ 10/113-2019)

Because one national serviceman was assigned at short notice as duty corporal, he could participate in the 2019 National Council election only after lodging an extraordinary complaint. (GZ 10/212-2019)

V. 8. Evaluation of regulations

In connection with the fatal dog attack while attending military service dogs in Flugfeld Barracks in Wr. Neustadt, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces asserted that all regulations concerning military working dogs need to be



reviewed, especially with a view to safety concerns when dealing with service dogs. In so doing, the following aspects need to be obeyed:

- A regulation for the general assignment of dogs to training, including the drawing up of an alert plan for military dog handlers outside normal service hours.
- The locking of dog kennels must be clearly regulated.
- The service members need to be briefed on what to do in the event of loose dogs in barracks.
- The work situation of military dog handlers need to be improved. (A place where they can stay, with sanitary facilities and storage space for equipment in the vicinity of the kennels).
- Exact regulations concerning the behaviour vis-à-vis service dogs according to their training status, e. g. in specific dangerous situations handlers should approach dogs only in pairs for increased safety or in the event of an alert. (GZ 10/268/4-2019)
- Exact regulations for bringing private dogs into military compounds.

VI. Inspection visits of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

VI. 1. Inspection of the Armed Forces Strategic Intelligence Agency

On 29 January 2019, the Parliamentary Commission paid an inspection visit to the Armed Forces Strategic Intelligence Agency and remarked as follows:

- There is a serious personnel shortage in the Armed Forces Strategic Intelligence Agency.
- The uncertainty concerning the Table of Organisation and Development considerably affects work climate.
- The reimbursement of travel expenses for national servicemen in connection with the reimbursement of travels with the Wiener Linien public transport system are not up to date.

VI. 2. Inspection of the Armed Forces Security Agency

On 13 March 2019, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces inspected the Armed Forces Security Agency in Vienna and stated as follows:



- The shortage of qualified IT personnel in Austria also affects the Austrian Armed Forces; the lack of financial incentives in the public sector also contributes to this situation.
- The competition with job offers in the private sector is immense, and MoD employees also transfer within the MoD and also to other ministries.
- Active advertisement- and recruitment measures on the part of the Security Agency are not possible, since a reliable job perspective cannot be assured.
- Criticism was voiced that, according to the current state of information, the new Table of Organisation and Development will not be implemented before the beginning of 2021.
- The Armed Forces Security Agency is based at a federal office building rented at high costs by the Federal Real Estate Agency. The building is old and requires refurbishment. Yet, the resources required for development and refurbishment were not assured.
- The scarce financial resources allocated to the operational organisation Security Agency result in the loss of quality in terms of personnel, material, and infrastructural endowment.
- It was suggested that employees of the Security Agency should have the same regulations concerning firearms licences as those of the Military Police.

VI. 3. Inspection of the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command

On 07 to 08 March 2019, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces inspected the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command. The military commander intends to set up a second engineer platoon to be better able to help in the event of disaster relief operations.

Personnel

Both national servicemen and regular soldiers appreciate the possibility to serve in the Forces in their own province. National servicemen, in particular, can do so only in a very restricted manner. Approximately 60 percent of the national servicemen of Vorarlberg Province do their service in the provinces of Salzburg and Tirol, resulting in increased registration for alternative service.



Both serving with the Vorarlberg Military Band and the assignment to an assistance operation for the purpose of disaster relief (heavy snowfalls) are widely accepted. There are, however, complaints concerning the occasional utilisation of recruits of the Vorarlberg Military Band for guard duty in the Headquarters Building Oberst Bilgeri. Some uniform parts, such as aiguillette straps, lanyards and musical corps insignia, are partially unavailable. The soldiers' representative had received no instructions.

Every year, the autumn contingent is very important for disaster relief. Fears were raised that the autumn call-up could be changed to a call-up in summer, which would markedly weaken the operational capability in the winter season.

Currently, the personnel influx adequately makes up for the personnel losses caused by retirement. 86 percent of the available work places are filled. With officers and higher ranking non-commissioned officers, the number is over 95 percent. With civilian employees, the shortage is 54 percent, resulting from the decree that only one out of three vacant workplaces are to be replaced.

Key personnel training courses are considered as an important element of recruitment in Vorarlberg.

Soldiers of the ready reserve criticize the duration of the modular training, lasting up to six months, and which in practice is not compatible with a civilian occupation.

The Chief of Staff of the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command is responsible for other vacant staff functions. Criticism has been voiced also that the staff functions in Vorarlberg are one level lower as compared to the military commands of other provinces.

Accommodation

The living costs are high in Vorarlberg. The Austrian Armed Forces do not have sufficient flats for military employees in Vorarlberg (43 in Bludesch, one is currently not awarded). The municipality of Bludenz has awarded soldiers an option to acquire a home in civilian housing projects at an economic price.

An information letter of the Ministry of Defence to users of flats owned by the Republic sparked outrage, when it announced additional costs amounting to up to several thousand euros in individual cases due to tax-related supplementary claims for the period of usage.

Accommodations

The Headquarters Building Oberst Bilgeri dates from the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and has been refurbished and modernised in parts. The sanitary facilities and



the accommodations for national servicemen are worn out, there is an urgent need for refurbishment.

There is a ramshackle former horse stable in the area of the barracks. The Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command and the association of the Friends of Military Music of Vorarlberg suggested, and there are concrete plans, that a centre for orchestra rehearsals and performances for military and civilian music is to be built. This project is also supported by the province government of Vorarlberg. So far, there is no adequate place where the military band can practice or perform.

Instruction

A particular feature is that the military training centres are quite far off. Since the military training areas Lizum and Seetal are extensively used by international forces, the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command may use them only in a limited manner.

Motor vehicles

There is a striking shortage of military motor vehicles. A gleam of hope is the assignment of the all-protected general-purpose all-terrain vehicles Hägglund for the mountain troops.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces summarises the situation as follows:

- 60 percent of the national servicemen cannot do their basic national service in their own province, therefore many young men rather choose alternative service.
- 86 percent of military workplaces are occupied. The shortage of civilian employees amounts to 54 percent, because only one out of three vacancies is allowed to be filled.
- Soldiers of the ready reserve criticize the duration of the modular training, which is up to six months, and which in practice is not compatible with a civilian occupation.
- Staff functions in Vorarlberg are listed one level lower as compared to the military commands of other provinces.
- The sanitary facilities and the accommodations for national servicemen are worn out in the Headquarters Building Oberst Bilgeri, there is an urgent need for refurbishment.



So far, there is no adequate place where the Vorarlberg military band can practice and perform. Setting up a new building or refurbishing the horse stable in the compound of the barracks for military and civilian musical usage is deemed practical.

- Some uniform parts, such as aiguillette straps, lanyards and musical corps insignia, are partially unavailable.
- An information letter of the Ministry of Defence to users of flats owned by the Republic sparked outrage, when it announced additional costs due to tax-related supplementary claims for the period of usage.

There is a striking shortage of military motor vehicles.

- When national servicemen become contractual employees, they have to return the VORTEILScard Österreichisches Bundesheer, with which they can use the public railway system free of charge, and thus lose the advantage of using the train card as a VORTEILScard<26 or as a VORTEILScard classic for the remainder of one year.

VI. 4. Inspection of the 23rd Infantry Battalion

On 08 March 2019, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces inspected the 23rd Infantry Battalion in the Walgau Barracks in Bludesch. The 23rd Infantry Battalion is the only battalion-size unit in Vorarlberg and an element of the 6th Mountain Brigade.

Law Enforcement Assistance Operation/Migration in Tyrol

For some time, the 23rd Infantry Battalion has been supporting the assistance operation/Migration in Tirol, and not any more that in Burgenland province. In view of the long trip into the east of Austria and the areas of operation there, the service personnel is happy to serve in a more proximate assistance operation.

The personnel is accommodated in the Standschützen Barracks in quarters with 10 beds. Due to different duty rosters, the sleeping and rest periods are disrupted.

Since hardly any refugees are seized, soldiers start to question the usefulness of the operation. Due to instructions of the security agencies and in coordination with the Austrian Railways, only semi-trailer trains were controlled, with which it was clear from the onset that no person could be hiding on it.

National servicemen are trained for assistance operation/Migration for three months and subsequently serve on that operation until the end of their national service. When called



up, the recruits expect to receive combat training in a high-mountain environment. Consequently, the originally positive attitude gives way to a negative one according to a questionnaire that is to be filled out at the end of national service.

The result of the questionnaire is published only after the national servicemen have been discharged from military service, so that a final review cannot take place.

Motor vehicles/armament/equipment

There is a striking shortage of military motor vehicles. The battalion does not have any anti-tank guided missiles.

Criticism was voiced over the shortage of adequate protective equipment, since there is only a small number of stab protection vests for soldiers of stand-by battalions. Private acquisitions of protective inserts amount to up to 1,000,- euros, which is done because the inserts are not provided by the Forces.

A positive aspect is the assignment of the all-protected general-purpose all-terrain vehicles Hägglund to the mountain troops.

Accommodation

The rooms have old furnishings, especially the beds. Age-old pillows and wooden boards instead of slatted frames are not up-to-date anymore. The length of the beds, either 190 cm or 200 cm, is too short for some recruits. There are rooms either with 6 or 8 beds available.

The metal lockers are not spacious enough to contain the complete individual equipment of the recruits. Only some accommodations are fitted with lockable wooden cabinets big enough for safe storage.

The Walgau Barracks is a cross-shaped building erected in 1989 that is fundamentally still okay. The sanitary facilities are worn out. There is need for refurbishment concerning the tubes in the cellar.

VI. 5. Inspection of the Law Enforcement Assistance Operation/Migration

Following numerous complaints due to gross deficiencies in the accommodations (mould, pungent odours from the sanitary facilities, etc.), on 10 October 2019 the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces conducted an inspection in Nickelsdorf.

At any time, approximately 900 soldiers participate in law-enforcement assistance operation/Migration all over Austria. The Burgenland Provincial Military Command with



approx. 450 soldiers and three companies is in charge of the law enforcement assistance operation requested by the police directorates of the Burgenland and Lower Austria with the goal to prevent illegal border crossings. In 2019, the number of seizures rose as compared to that of the previous year (2019: 1,260 and 2018: 906). Human traffickers usually guide groups of 5 to 15 persons, primarily from Afghanistan, across the border.

The duration of the operation is three months in general. The accommodation building has been rented since 2017 and was adjusted at that time. It accommodates approx. 40 persons. The rental agreement is subject to a period of notice of three months. Profound and cost-intensive refurbishments were not made since the assistance operation is scheduled for a limited time. Housing soldiers close to the border allows for quick reaction and short driving routes. The nearest barracks located in Bruckneudorf is one hour driving away.

One assistance platoon is accommodated in containers in Nickelsdorf. The Federal Ministry of the Interior has one container accommodation facility in Nickelsdorf, which is used according to the number of refugees.

In the course of the supervision of the commander of the Provincial Military Command on 28 September 2019, the acting company commander of the 1st Assistance Company reported various deficiencies concerning the accommodations.

In the course of the corrective actions, until 4 October 2019 an engineer construction team initiated the repair of the flushing tanks of the toilets, the fixing of a toilet bowl, and the elimination of the clogging of a urinal. A private plumber checked the heating system and the damage caused by water, and identified the necessary further measures.

On 01 October 2019, the Burgenland Provincial Military Command ordered that the room with the water damage and mould was not to be used as an accommodation any more.

On 04 October 2019, the operational staff was briefed on a respective complaint, and on 05 October 2019 the military commander found out in the course of his supervision that three persons were still accommodated in the mouldy room, against the order of the military command.

Moreover, on 09 October 2019, inventory items (pillows, mattresses, tables) were changed and on 10 October 2019 the shower drain was repaired. On 16 October 2019, the repair of the water damage at the wall between the mouldy room and the shower room was started.



In summary, the following has to be noted:

- After the refurbishment measures, the lounge area, the eating area and a large part of the accommodation building were in a useful condition.
- The mould is on a wall in a room with an open shower. Due to a lack of curtains, the windows have been covered with paper. This room will only be habitable again when the mould has been removed.
- The odour of faeces can be noticed from one drain that has been taped shut in the accommodation area.
- The pillows and mattresses that were changed previously are stained. The covers of some pillows are torn.

VI. 6. Inspection of AUTCON/EUFOR ALTHEA

From 29 to 30 October 2019, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces conducted an inspection visit to the AUTCON/EUFOR ALTHEA soldiers at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo.

In September 2019, it was Hungary's turn to contribute one infantry company, so the strength of Austria's contingent was only 193 soldiers at the time of the inspection. 3 out of 17 Liaison and Observation Teams (LOT houses) are provided by Austria.

EUFOR ALTHEA's mission is, in essence, to stabilise the military aspects of the peace agreements of Dayton and Paris, and to ensure a military presence in order to prevent a renewed threat to peace. The further development of the federation has come to a standstill due to a lack of political consensus. The daily routine of the cohabitation of the different ethnic groups is pragmatic. The political stand-off along with the lack of perspectives and high unemployment leads to an increased exodus of young people. EUFOR ALTHEA is a stabilising factor and respected due to its neutral stance and approach.

The pay level for deployments in law enforcement assistance operations in Austria is similar to that for international deployments. The relatively low difference in pay between deployments in Austria and abroad lowers the incentive to enlist in international deployments. The possibility to go home every few days, as is the case with law enforcement assistance operations, contrasts with longer absences from home, which is the case with international deployments.



What is more, there is a personnel shortage of approx. 10 percent, which in individual cases amounts to increased strain.

Since the infantry company was not contributed by Austria at the moment of inspection, the lower ranks by and large comprised vehicle drivers and medical personnel, including several soldiers with a migration background. They complained about how superiors referred to soldiers with a Turkish background, saying things like: “Our Turks”.

In summary, the following has to be stated:

- The 10 percent shortfall in personnel leads to increased strain in special functions.
- Domestic operations preparation is too long for non-commissioned officers who have long-standing experience in international operations. In general, operations preparation is to be tailored to individual needs.
- The diverging duration of validity of the psychological aptitude for career soldiers and ready reserve personnel is questioned.
- Degrading remarks vis-à-vis soldiers with an, especially, Turkish background are not permissible.
- The catering and the accommodations at Camp Butmir are very good.
- The internet connection is good.
- The assigned vehicles are old and liable to defects. The modernisation of the fleet and an increase in the number of vehicles is urgently called for.

VI. 7. Inspection at the Military Representation Brussels

From 4 to 5 November 2019, the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces inspected the Military Representation Brussels.

The assignment to the Military Representation Brussels is effected as a transfer with a 5-year contract. Due to a shortfall of applications for vacant positions, chances for an extension of the deployment are good, which is aimed at especially by those who have only few years left until retirement.

The workplace situation for returnees from international assignment has clearly improved since a personnel pool was installed at the National Defence Academy. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Defence is generous when it comes to requests for extension. There are concrete individual cases with persons having been continuously assigned abroad between 10 and 13 years.



As of 2020, the employees will have sufficient office space in the EU Quarter of Brussels. The central location proximate to the Austrian Embassy and the merging of several sections hold the prospect of optimisation of procedures.

The soldiers and civilian employees of the Military Representation Brussels carry out their work linked with the EU and NATO with great dedication, and they are recognised for it. Austria's ambassadors to the EU, NATO and Belgium praise the excellent task accomplishment of the soldiers and civilian employees.

VI. 8. Inspection of AUTCON EUTM MLI

From 25 to 28 November 2019, the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces inspected the soldiers of the Austrian Contingent of the European Union Training Mission Mali (EUTM MLI). 730 soldiers from 26 different European states (22 EU member states) participate in the operation.

From June to December 2019, Austria contributed the Mission Force Commander at EUTM MLI. Portugal will be next to provide the MFC and take over the Headquarters of EUTM. Spain, which was scheduled to assume the command after that, had to cancel its commitment due to the domestic political situation in Spain. AUTCON comprises 47 soldiers (one HQ element in Bamako and one training element in Koulikoro).

Miscellaneous

Fighting, crises, climate change and high population growth have led to gigantic migration movements throughout West Africa. There are frequent attacks by radical Islamist groups. Illegal transportation of migrants into Europe is getting increasingly profitable.

Mali is approx. 1.24 mn km² large and home of 18.7 mn people (comparison: 1950: 4.1 mn, forecast for 2050: 60.3 mn). When Tuareg rebels and Islamist terror groups revolted in 2012 and destroyed the city of Timbuktu, among others, the Malian government lost effective control of the entire state.

Since March 2013, the Austrian Armed Forces have participated in the European Union Training Mission Mali. The main task of the operation includes assessing, supporting and training the Malian Armed Forces with the goal to re-establish the country's territorial unity and resume control of the state, thereby respecting human rights. This is a major precondition for a stable and functioning state.



The goal is to reduce the negative effects on Austria's and Europe's external and internal security (including, among others, terrorist attacks, organised crime and illegal immigration), resulting from the instability prevailing on site.

Economic growth is hampered by ever-present corruption.

Security situation

Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad form the Group G5 Sahel, which combats terrorism in the Sahel region.

The former colonial power France intervened militarily in 2013 and pushed the Islamists back. France stationed 4,500 soldiers in the course of Operation Barkhane. The United Nations mandated operation MINUSMA comprises 12,000 soldiers, while EUTM MLI includes 750. The G5 Sahel provides 5,000 soldiers, whereas Mali itself commands approx. 18,000 soldiers.

Despite the presence of thousands of international service personnel, the security situation in the West African state has deteriorated rapidly.

In the last month, several attacks were perpetrated, among them one on a Malian military camp resulting in 50 dead Malian soldiers. In the course of an operation in Gao, 13 French soldiers lost their lives in a helicopter collision.

Force protection

Training of the Malian troops is conducted by EUTM instructors in all parts of the country – with the focus being placed on the Koulikoro Training Centre. The current situation requires that field training is conducted with a force protection with a ratio of 1:6 (one instructor and six soldiers providing force protection).

The following topics were addressed during discussions with the AUTCON soldiers:

Operations preparation in Austria

In general, operations preparation is to be tailored to individual needs and conducted in Austria.

Duty

Individual soldiers complain that they have to assume further tasks and task areas in addition to their normal work, and that the increased work load is not recompensed accordingly.



Accommodation

Some accommodations of the HQ EUTM MLI in Bamako and the Koulikoro Training Centre need to be closed down time and again due to mould growing after rainfalls. A private company is responsible for reinstating these quarters, and repairs take long. Refurbishments with a view to the long term are not effected.

Most soldiers are accommodated in rooms with two to three persons. Single rooms are the exception. This accommodation situation is accepted by everyone despite the partly difficult conditions.

The accommodation capacity is limited in both the HQ in Bamako and the Malian Barracks in Koulikoro.

Container accommodations might improve the situation.

Uniform

Each soldier has been issued five sets of Hot Weather Clothing, which are suited to the climatic conditions on site. Criticism is voiced over the low wear- and tear resistance, because the fabric rips already under low strain. There have been complaints that in the event of a deployment below 30 days combat shirts and other important equipment parts (e. g. protective goggles) are not issued.

The standard equipment includes canvas boots, which are comfortable to wear. Since they are not waterproof and since the sole does not protect against pointed items, they are not suited for field training.

Overshoes or other field boots are required for such training events.

Military vehicles

AUTCON has ten motor vehicles available. The engine power of the Austrian HQ vehicle/Mitsubishi Pajero lags clearly behind that of the standard vehicles of the EU fleet (approx. 100 hp short). When driving in convoy, the vehicles are constantly strained in excess, which renders them extremely liable to repairs. The supply with spare parts is quite infrequent.

The administrative procedures and the bureaucratic efforts of interchange with services and agencies in Austria is tedious for the troops on site. Not every damage or request for repair can be conducted in accordance with the Austrian regulations due to the adversities in the area of operations (deep, muddy potholes, dirt roads, rocks).



Health care

Since diarrhoeal disorders, the dengue haemorrhagic fever or malaria occur again and again, an extension of the medical checks after an international operation should include a follow-up examination covering tropical diseases.

Rotation

Rotation flights are conducted with civilian airlines. A reliable and problem-free flight (luggage handling and passenger checks) is not possible with Turkish Airlines when transferring to another plane in Istanbul, according to various soldiers. Passengers are frisked in an excessive and tedious manner, the luggage including the equipment arrives in the area of operations two weeks later. Despite the repeatedly voiced reservations, rotation flights are still predominantly booked through Turkish Airlines.

The flight variant with Air France via Paris functions fine.

Financial transactions

Austria regularly needs to transport several hundred thousand euros for AUTCON to Mali and then back again when, for example, the Austrian command of EUTM MLI ended in December 2019. In view of the consistently unstable security situation and an up-to-date financial management, a non-cash transfer of finances by way of an account in a local bank is suggested.

Entry

A travel order or visa is required to enter Mali. The travel order for soldiers is issued by EUTM MLI and transmitted to Austria. In individual cases, Austria transmits data on personnel to be deployed into the area of operations at short notice, so that the respective deployment can only be effected when the prescribed security standards, such as, for example, encoding of data, are not followed.

Internet/telephone

The connection with Austria via the internet or by way of social telephone is good.

In summary, the following has to be stated:

- Operations preparation should be tailored as much as possible to the individual soldier, deal with specialist issues, and be conducted in Austria.
- The increased work load from the assumption of further task areas is not recompensed accordingly.



- Some accommodations of the HQ EUTM MLI in Bamako and the Koulikoro Training Centre need to be closed down repeatedly due to mould growing after rainfalls; refurbishments with a view to the long term are not effected.
- The accommodation capacity is limited, container accommodations might improve the situation.
- The wear- and tear resistance of the hot weather uniform's fabric is insufficient.
- The canvas boots are not waterproof and the sole does not protect against pointed items. Overshoes or other field boots are required for such training events.
- When driving in convoy with international partners, the vehicles are constantly strained excessively, which renders them extremely liable to repairs; supply with spare parts is infrequent. The administrative procedures and the bureaucratic efforts of interchange with services and agencies in Austria is tedious for the troops on site.
- The medical check after an international operation is to be expanded and should include also tropical diseases, because diarrhoeal disorders, dengue fever and malaria occur among Austrian soldiers.
- Reliable and problem-free rotation flights (luggage handling and passenger checks in Istanbul) are not possible with Turkish Airlines. The flight variant with Air France via Paris functions fine.
- A non-cash transfer of finances, e.g. by way of an account in a local bank is suggested.
- In individual cases, Austria transmits data on personnel to be deployed into the area of operations at short notice, so that the respective deployment can only be effected when the prescribed security standards, such as, for example, encoding of data, are not followed.

The Austrian peace support contributions are conducted within the context of the European Security and Defence Policy. They are a significant contribution to the stabilisation of this region.

AUTCON soldiers are, despite partly adverse conditions, extremely motivated and accomplish their tasks in an excellent manner.



VII. Particularities

VII. 1. Conference of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

In the context of the spring meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces held in Vorarlberg from 07 to 08 March 2019, the 552nd meeting of the Commission was held, in the course of which the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command in Bregenz (see item VI. 3.) and the 23rd Infantry Battalion in Bludesch (see item VI. 4.) were inspected.

In addition, the Head of Project Health Service 2020 presented the state of the plans and ideas concerning the reorganisation of the medical service.

VII. 1.1. Project Health Service 2020

The Medical Organisation 2013 does not function in large parts. There is a significant shortage of military physicians, also as far as the all-arms medical service is concerned. There is a shortfall of medical specialists, general practitioners and emergency doctors in den military medical centres both in peacetime and, especially, during operations.

Goals of Project Health Service 2020

All-arms medical service

The all-arms medical service, which includes also the induction centres, is responsible for health care in the Forces and the MoD. In the context of its national fundamental mission, it currently also works on a new recruitment and incentives system.

The aim is, among other things, to obtain a sufficient number of operational specialist and emergency doctors and to implement regulations concerning the maintenance of capacities.

Battalion medical element

In order to counteract the shortage of doctors in rural regions both in the military and the civilian sector, standardised consulting rooms for general practitioners/physicians are to be provided in barracks free of charge. The respective doctor will be contracted as a unit's physician and will simultaneously also attend to the civilian population as a general practitioner.

The advantage lies in the inclusive patient structure (age groups, clinical pictures) and flexible opportunities, both as a unit's physician and a general practitioner.



Operational organisation

The future medical structure will include three field hospitals (main dressing stations). Each field hospital is made up of five teams and 10 emergency doctor teams.

The duration of contract of these military physicians is planned to be 20 years (training as a doctor and employment in this function). After training as a doctor or specialist doctor has been completed, a physician is expected to undergo a specific routine every year: One quarter of the time should be employment in Austria, one quarter operations abroad, one quarter further training, and one quarter further training/holiday/overtime compensation.

This clearly defined annual structure is intended to increase the attractiveness of a career as a military doctor.

Summary

- The fundamental mission of the military health service comprises implementing the required training and the needed national and international cooperation.
- A significant factor is the ready reserve with its possibilities of international networking in setting up the medical branch (operational specialist doctors and operational medical personnel).
- Training of personnel pertaining to the medical field.
- Temporary career advancement schemes for the employment of physicians and specialists.
- Digitisation of the medical administration.

The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces supports the efforts of the Ministry to realign, i.e. optimise the organisation of the medical service.

VII. 1.2. Interactive scenario training

In the context of the meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces at the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command, interactive scenario training was presented.

In the course of this training, live simulations are used to check and improve all required capacities, capabilities and skills of soldiers to cope with a critical operational situation. In so doing, the legal, operational-tactical and psychological fundamentals and the audio-visually supported analysis going with it are taken into account.



Since there are not enough instructors and adequate equipment available, this type of training is not conducted sufficiently. Interactive scenario training is essential for possible operational scenarios.

VII. 2. Submission and presentation of the Annual Report

In March 2019, the 2018 Annual Report of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was submitted to the President of the National Council Wolfgang Sobotka and the then Federal Minister of Defence Mario Kunasek.

The Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces MP Reinhard Bösch and his two co-chairmen former MP Otto Pendl and MP Michael Hammer stated in a press conference on 27 March 2019 that the Armed Forces are unable to accomplish their mission pursuant to the Federal Constitution with the current financial resources. Steps towards procurement and equipment made so far are a long way from being sufficient. The political leaders are responsible for securing the needed resources.

VII. 3. Theresan Military Academy

Following the informative lecture of the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces on 19 November 2019 before cadets and participants of a Command Course at the Theresan Military Academy, the following items were raised during discussions:

Personnel

There is a shortage of both administrative and instruction personnel. The Academy's employees state that they are overloaded because they constantly receive additional tasks and the number of course participants increases.

The interested personnel/non-commissioned officers in the quartermaster and administrative area are currently not offered a career advancement scheme/quartermaster NCO (career advancement courses, continuation training).

The settlement of temporary duty assignments, duty trips and overtime of cadets is effected with a delay of several months. Criticism is voiced that it takes hours to jointly fill out duty trip forms under guidance in the classroom. Massive delays occur during the input of the digital data into the accounting system.



Information policy

There were individual suggestions that, already during the preparatory semester or even key personnel training, information events should not be held only by instructors but also by advanced cadets, so that every student himself or herself can make a picture of the pathway of the University of Applied Sciences Bachelor Course.

Payment

Incomprehension has been voiced that the University of Applied Sciences Bachelor Degree Programme "Military Command" is not paid so far in the same way as a comparable civilian bachelor's degree.

There have been complaints about the small difference between a squad leader's and a company commander's salary. The salary of a company commander is rated as too low in view of the relatively high responsibility involved.

Information technology

Distance learning programmes and continuation training programmes are offered on the internet. Individual specialist examinations are offered online. In the process, the technical equipment is overloaded, resulting in connection losses. One exam could only be conducted without any problems, because private WLAN routers were used.

It has been suggested that the employees themselves enter their duty trips, temporary duty assignments, etc. into a management system and that, thus, the settlement can be effected in an automated and regular manner. The trend towards a reduction of bureaucracy would be offset in this way.

Infrastructure

The construction of a central multi-purpose building (central mess hall building, offices, meeting rooms, archives) is called for in order to enable an up-to-date and requirement-oriented administration as well as a centralised campus management.

The current situation with several mess hall locations requires a higher number of personnel and resources. Merging the various mess halls into one new multi-purpose service building would allow for better service.

The accommodation capacities for cadets are stretched. The rooms are not fitted adequately (showers outside the accommodations, scarce equipment and insufficient number of study spaces). In addition, for the coming years the number of graduates is to be increased because of the heightened demand for officers in the Armed Forces.

Since September 2019, 60 pupils have been attending the first year of the reinstated Federal Commercial College for Command and Security on the premises of the



Theresan Military Academy. Therefore, and also because international cooperation will result in an increase in guest students, improved standards and additional accommodations are necessary.

Summary

- The increasing number of students at the Academy's bachelor degree programme requires more administration, and there is a shortfall of trained personnel for administration and instruction.
- The settlement of temporary duty assignments, duty trips and overtime of cadets causes a great amount of administrative work and is frequently effected with a delay of several months. It has been suggested that – in the era of progressing digitisation – the employees themselves enter their duty trips, temporary duty assignments, etc. into a management system and that, thus, the settlement can be effected in an automated and regular manner.
- Individual technical exams held online on the computer can be conducted only by means of private WLAN routers in a trouble-free manner.
- Graduates of the University of Applied Sciences Bachelor Degree Programme “Military Command” do not get the same salary as those with a comparable civilian bachelor's degree.
- The construction of a central multi-purpose building as well as centralised campus management are called for.
- The accommodation capacities at the Theresan Military Academy are stretched. The growing number of cadets attending the Academy' bachelor programme and of pupils attending the Federal Commercial College for Command and Security as well as of international students require the number of accommodations to be increased.

VII. 4. Ready reserve

With his annual report, the Ready Reserve Commissioner of the Austrian Armed Forces informed the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces on the situation of the ready reserve.



Financial resources

In 2019, the major part of the 48 million euros of the ready reserve package “Special Investments 2015” will be used for the rising personnel costs of the forces present and not for planned procurements of the ready reserve.

Personnel

The yearly requirement for key personnel functions (180 ready reserve officers and 500 ready reserve non-commissioned officers) can only be covered to 15 percent, as the 2016 to 2018 figures show.

The operational readiness in terms of personnel of a “ready reserve-type structured army” as prescribed by the Constitution requires that obligatory reserve recalls are re-introduced pursuant to section 21, para 3, Defence Act.

The planned increase from presently 26,000 to 31,500 assigned soldiers in the ready reserve makes it necessary to raise personnel expenditures to 31.2 million euros in order to cover the stepped-up exercise activities, including the activation of ready reserve units for regular operations.

Equipment

The volume of investments for the entire equipment needed for the ready reserve amounts to approx. 700 million euros. There are massive deficiencies in the provision of military vehicles, night vision devices, communication systems (radios), NBC self-defence sets, and pistols. The expectations of ready reserve units are high that the personal equipment may be kept in the future and not – like now – has to be issued and returned every single time.

Only four out of ten infantry battalions and four out of nine engineer companies can simultaneously be fitted fully at the moment.

Ready reserve and enterprises

In cooperation with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, an initiative was launched in 2019 to raise awareness among employers concerning the benefits of their employees’ military training. Understanding is to be created that the activities of the ready reserve and the military know-how thus acquired have significant advantages for the civilian work environment.

When the “citizen in uniform” becomes a matter of course in everyday life and gains in acceptance in business life, this will have a positive impact on civil society.



Retirement-related, social and defence-legal aspects

Ready reserve soldiers with higher incomes are disadvantaged while doing their military service to the extent that only the flat salary of currently 1,864.78 euros is registered in their pension account instead of their regular higher income.

Since the amendment of service legislation in 2016, only six months of basic national service, voluntary national service or trainee service are credited as prior service periods in the event of subsequent employment in the federal service. Ready reserve soldiers, who rendered voluntary national service and relied on the legal situation valid at that time, now suffer a massive disadvantage when they are contracted in the federal service. This has the effect that employment periods pertaining to a territorial or regional authority of an EEA member state, the Republic of Turkey and Switzerland are credited in their entirety in the event of posterior employment in the federal service, while periods derived from basic national service and voluntary national service with the Austrian Armed Forces are credited only for up to six months.

Pursuant to the Childcare Benefit Act and the Family Time Bonus Act, there is only an entitlement to the salary-dependent childcare benefit and the family time bonus if the person submitting the request was in continuous gainful employment subject to social insurance in the past six months before the child's birth. Periods relating to basic national service and voluntary national service are not counted as gainful employment. An intermission of no more than 14 calendar days is permissible, although there are, however, soldiers in the ready reserve who lose their entitlement to the salary-dependent childcare benefit and the family time bonus as a consequence of recalls exceeding 14 days. This is completely incomprehensible to those concerned, since ready reserve recalls were legally prescribed.

In some instances of the General Pensions Act, periods derived from basic national service and voluntary national service are not considered as gainful employment subject to social insurance, which has repercussions on the entitlement to pension-related claims and the respective amount.

VII. 5. Female soldiers

Female soldiers remain at just over four percent in the Austrian Armed Forces.

VII. 6. Work meeting with the Federal President

On 07 November 2018, Federal President Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen welcomed the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces to a work meeting, in



the course of which the Commission submitted its 2018 Annual Report highlighting deficiencies affecting the troops in the field of personnel, equipment, assets and infrastructure.

The Federal President and the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces agreed that sufficient assets are to be provided for the regular budget of the Ministry of Defence, so that the Armed Forces can fulfil their role in protecting the population as a strategic reserve of the Republic.

VII. 7. Annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

The traditional annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces was held on 18 November 2019.

The then Federal Minister of Defence Mag. Thomas Starlinger thanked the Commission for their diligent and enlightening inspections.

VIII. International cooperation

VIII. 1. Exchange of opinions and experiences

In addition to the constitutionally prescribed inspection and control tasks, over time the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces enhanced its cooperation at the international level, because the diverse task settings of a democratic control body require a regular exchange of opinion with comparable institutions. The Commission's expertise and experience is much sought after in a multitude of bilateral and multilateral meetings. To be highlighted in particular in this context is the cooperation with ICOAF, the International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces, promoting and protecting the human rights of soldiers in peacetime and during operations as well as their welfare after an operation.

On 10 July 2019, the Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces MP Dr. Reinhard Bösch met with the Defence Representative of the German Bundestag Dr. Hans-Peter Bartels for a work meeting in Berlin.

On behalf of the Presidium of the Commission, from 21st to 22nd May 2019, Mag. Karl Schneemann, Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces attended the symposium celebrated on the occasion of 60 Years Defence Representative of the German Bundestag at Schloss & Gut Liebenberg. The



invited guests debated the past, the present and the future of the “citizen in uniform” and the principles of “internal leadership” and “parliamentary army” as compared to other international states.

VIII. 2. International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF)

11 ICOAF

The 11th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces (ICOAF) was held in Sarajevo from 27 to 29 October 2019 on the topic “Building Resilient and Sustainable Ombuds Institutions”.

12 ICOAF

From 07 to 09 June 2020, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, in cooperation with the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), organised the 12th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces in Vienna on the topic of “International Missions: Contributing to Security and Development”. Every year, international institutions comparable to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces convene for three days on the occasion of the conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces for talks and exchange of experiences. In a work meeting, Federal President Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen congratulated the Commission on its successful, 10-year international cooperation.

In preparation of the 12th International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces, the Executive Chairman of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and the Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces met with representatives of DCAF in Vienna, Geneva and Sarajevo.



Annex

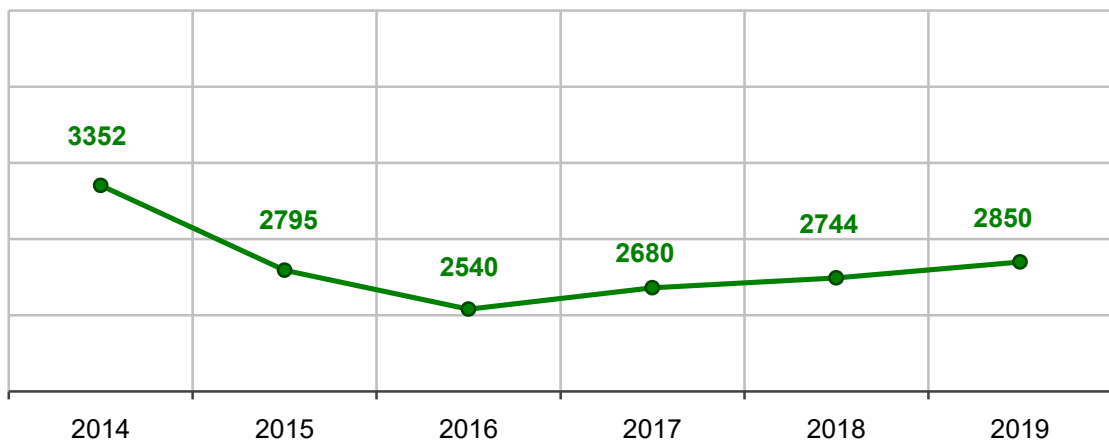
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Statistical Overview on Complaints

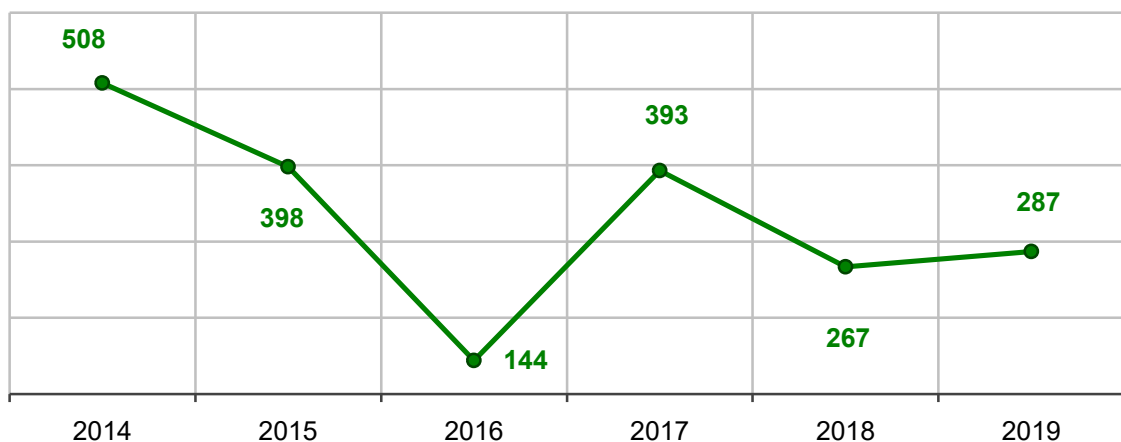
In the reporting period, 2,850 persons resorted to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for help. In numerous cases help was rendered fast and in an efficient manner by way of providing advice and legal counsel or by mediating solutions.

In 287 cases complaints proceedings had to be initiated as per the stipulations of section 4, 2001 Defence Act.

Requests for information and legal advice 2014 – 2019

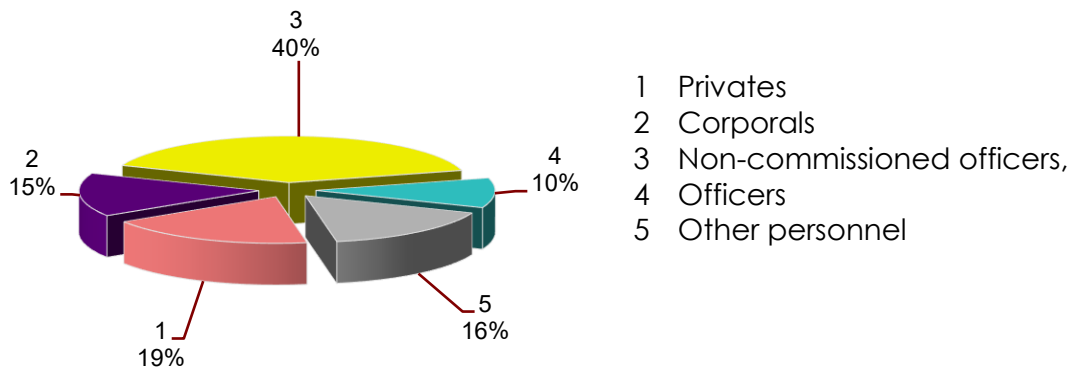


Number of complaints 2014 – 202019

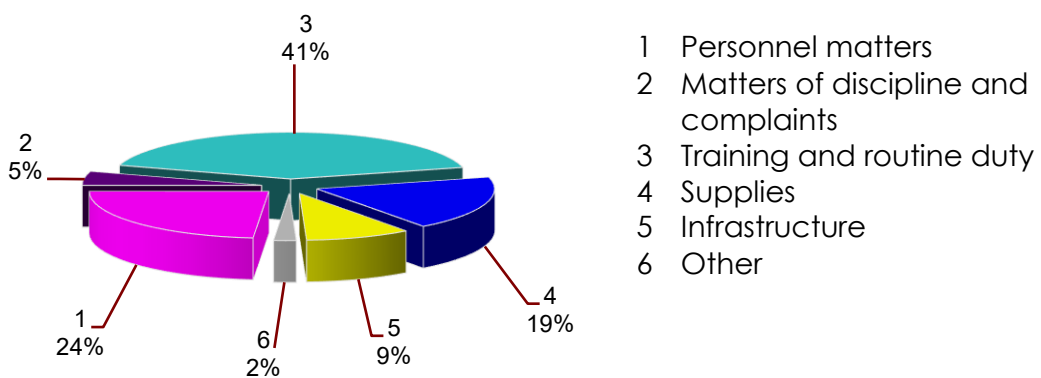




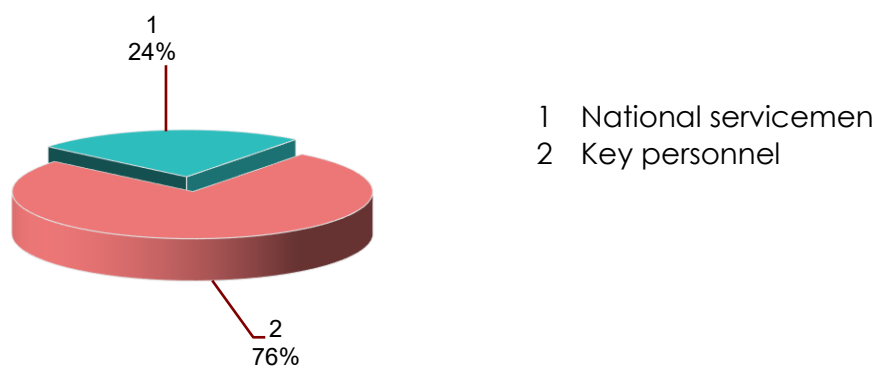
Who were the complainants



Causes for complaints



Complaints lodged by national servicemen and key personnel





Legal references

2001 Defence Act	41
National Council Rules of Procedure Act	44
Rules of Procedure of the Parliamentary Commission on the Austrian Armed Forces	45



Extract from the 2001 Defence Act

2001 Defence Act

Federal Law Gazette I No. 146, last amended by Federal Act, Federal Law Gazette I No. 102/2019

Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Section 4 (1) (Constitutional stipulation) A complaints commission for military matters (Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces) shall be collocated with the Federal Minister of Defence. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall consist of three chairpersons, each of whom, pursuant to para 10, shall become the executive chairperson by rotation, as well as initially of six further members. The chairpersons shall be appointed by the National Council pursuant to para 9, the other six members shall be nominated by the political parties in accordance with d'Hondt in proportion to their numbers of seats on the Main Committee of the National Council. Every party represented on the Main Committee of the National Council shall have the right to be represented in the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. Should, by way of this calculation, not every such party be able to provide a member, this party shall be entitled to appoint an additional member. The political parties shall nominate a substitute member for each member and each Chairperson proposed by them. The chairpersons shall jointly constitute the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The term of office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be six years. Only members of the National Council shall be eligible to be nominated as chairpersons, and experts from the sphere of national defence and human rights shall be eligible to be nominated as members and substitute members.

(2) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall have the quorum if at least two Chairpersons and three further members are present. Decisions shall be taken by majority. In the event of a tie, the chairperson shall have the casting vote.

(3) The Chief of Defence Staff and a suitable member of the Ministry, nominated by the Federal Minister of Defence and Sports, serve as advisors to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(4) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall accept complaints lodged, directly or indirectly, by persons who have volunteered for a pre-enlistment fitness examination or trainee service, by persons liable to attend a pre-enlistment fitness examination, by soldiers, by conscripts in the militia or reserve who have completed national service, by persons that have performed trainee service, and – unless the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces finds the alleged grounds for the complaint negligible – examine them and decide upon recommendations pertaining to their resolution. The above also applies to complaints lodged by soldiers' representatives. If such a complaint is lodged on behalf of a single soldier only, his/her consent is required. The right to lodge a complaint expires one year after the issue that gave rise to the complaint became known to the complainant. However, the right expires at the latest two years after the cause of the complaint has ceased. In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to conduct ex officio investigations into suspected shortcomings or grievances in the scope of military service. If necessary, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may carry out the investigations necessary for its work on site, and obtain all necessary information from those concerned.

(5) **(Constitutional provision)** By 1 March of each year, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall submit a report on its work and the



recommendations it made in the past year. The report shall be submitted without delay by the federal minister in charge of military affairs to the National Council, together with a position statement on the recommendations made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The Chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall have the right to take part in the hearings concerning these reports in the committees of the National Council, and to be heard whenever they so request. Further details are laid down in the National Council Rules of Procedure Act.

(6) Necessary expenditures that arise from the work of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, including necessary travel costs, shall be reimbursed to the Chairpersons and the other members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. These expenditures shall be reimbursed in accordance with the provisions of the 1955 Travel Fees Act, Federal Law Gazette No. 133, as would civil servants at service-grade VIII level in the general administration. For his/her work in the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces the executive chairperson shall be paid an additional compensation of 20% of the salary of a federal civil servant in the general administration at the highest salary-grade level of service-grade IX, the other chairpersons shall be paid this compensation to the extent of 10% of the described salary. The Chairpersons shall not be paid this compensation if they are members of the National Council, the Federal Council or of a provincial parliament, or if they are members of the federal or a provincial government.

(7) **(Constitutional stipulation)** The Federal Minister of Defence shall provide the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces with the necessary personnel and bear the necessary material costs. In the discharge of tasks related to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, the personnel provided shall only follow the instructions of the executive chairperson.

(8) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall lay down its own rules of procedure and vote them into effect by two-thirds majority.

(9) **(Constitutional stipulation)** The Chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be elected by the National Council on the basis of a comprehensive proposal by the Main Committee thereof. In drafting this proposal, each of the three strongest parliamentary parties in the National Council shall have the right to nominate one candidate. In case of an equal number of seats, the number of votes passed in the last National Council election shall decide. Should a chairperson retire early, the party that nominated her or him in the first place shall name a new member. On the basis of this nomination, he/she will be elected by the National Council for the remaining term of office.

(10) The executive chairpersons change by rotation every two years; the sequence of said rotation reflects the number of seats held by their respective nominating party. In case of an equal number of seats, the number of votes passed in the last National Council election shall decide. The Executive Chairperson of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall direct its work, the other Chairpersons shall hold the office of her or his deputy in the sequence previously described.

Reserve recalls and preparatory reserve training

Section 21 (3) Conscripts who have not volunteered for reserve recalls but have successfully completed preparatory reserve training during national service may be rendered liable to reserve recalls, provided the required functions cannot be sufficiently staffed with conscripts having volunteered for reserve recalls. To this end, the conscripts shall be selected by administrative selection decision within two years of their release from national service, according to the prevalent military requirements, all the while taking personal circumstances into consideration. Such a liability may only affect at most 12 % of those conscripts who have completed their national service in the respective calendar year. This percentage shall include those conscripts



who have volunteered for reserve recalls. Should the conscript so demand, prior to passing an administrative selection decision, a statement of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be obtained. On the basis of an effective administrative selection decision conscripts may be inducted for reserve recalls up to their fiftieth birthday.



Extract from the National Council Rules of Procedure Act

1975 Rules of Procedure Act

Federal Law Gazette I No. 410, last amended by Federal Act, Federal Law Gazette I No. 41/2016

Section 20a (1) The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to attend the debates that are conducted about the report pursuant to section 4 (5) of the 2001 Defence Act by the relevant committee of the National Council.

(2) The chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to take the floor, including repeatedly, during the debates referred to in paragraph (1), but without interrupting a speaker.

(3) The relevant committee is entitled to require the presence of the chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces during the debates referred to in paragraph (1).

Section 29 (2) The Main Committee shall especially be responsible for the following matters:

k) Submittal of a comprehensive proposal concerning the election of the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to section 4, para 9, 2001 Defence Act.

Section 87 (4) The President of the Court of Audit, the Members of the Ombudsman Board, and the Chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are elected at the recommendation of the Main Committee, pursuant to section 4, Defence Act.



Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Rules of Procedure

On 16 April 2018 the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, in accordance with sect. 4 para 8 of the 2001 Defence Act, Federal Law Gazette No. 146/2001, last amended by Federal Law Gazette No. 164/2017, adopted the following rules of procedure:

Equal treatment in terms of language

The terms used in the Rules of Procedure of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces referring to persons equally apply, as far as applicable, to men and women.

Composition of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Section 1 (1) Members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are:

the three Chairpersons appointed by the National Council, each of whom shall become the Executive Chairperson by rotation pursuant to section 4, para 9, 2001 Defence Act, as well as six further members nominated by the political parties in proportion to their numbers of seats on the Main Committee of the National Council. Should, by way of this calculation, not every such party be able to provide a member, this party shall be entitled to appoint an additional member. The chairpersons shall jointly constitute the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. The term of office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be six years.

(2) As substitute members:

the substitutes of each member nominated by the political parties for each member and each Chairperson proposed by them, respectively. The substitute members are members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces for the duration of the persons listed in para 1 being prevented from attending.

(3) Advisors to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are:

- the Chief of Defence Staff,
- a qualified official, appointed by the Federal Minister of Defence.

Authorised substitutes acting on behalf of advisors shall be treated on a par with the same. An authorised military medical expert participates in the meetings of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(4) Prior to executing their functions for the first time, the persons listed in para 1 and 2 shall be sworn in by the Executive Chairperson, the Executive Chairperson in turn by the member of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces most senior by age. The oath is:

“I swear that as member (chairperson) of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces I shall discharge of my duties disinterestedly and to the best of my knowledge and belief.”

(5) The Chairpersons, the further members and the substitute members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall, unless law stipulates otherwise, be bound to official secrecy (section 20, para 3, Federal- Constitutional Act).



(6) The Executive Chairperson shall fulfil the tasks wherewith she/he is entrusted under the 2001 Defence Act, especially as regards preparing, convening and chairing meetings, as well as the minutes and the annual reports. If she/he is unable to attend, one of her/his deputies shall act upon her/his behalf. In such a case, the deputy who, pursuant to section 4, para 10, 2001 Defence Act, is to succeed the Executive Chairperson after the end of her/his two-year period in office shall act as Executive Chairperson. If, however, the Executive Chairperson is a member of the third largest party, the Chairperson nominated by the party with the highest number of seats in the National Council shall act as Executive Chairperson in such a case. At the same time the unavailable Chairperson's substitute member is summoned; this substitute member, however, only functions as a member pursuant to section 1, para 1.

Tasks of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Section 2 (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces must accept complaints lodged directly or indirectly

- a) by persons who have volunteered for induction or voluntary national service,
- b) by persons liable to induction,
- c) by soldiers of either sex,
- d) by persons liable to conscription, be they in the ready reserve or the reserve, who have completed basic national service, and by former voluntary national service personnel,
- e) by soldiers' representatives on behalf of the soldiers they represent (if the complaint is lodged on behalf of only a single soldier, that soldier's consent is required),

examine them and decide on recommendations to resolve the complaint.

(2) In addition, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces is entitled to conduct ex officio investigations into suspected shortcomings or grievances in the scope of military service.

(3) If necessary, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may carry out the investigations necessary for its work on site and obtain all necessary information from those concerned.

(4) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall furthermore agree on the statements that it makes at the request of the national serviceperson, pursuant to sect. 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act, prior to taking an administrative decision.

(5) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall conduct information events concerning its tasks and actions within the sphere of the Federal Ministry of Defence.

(6) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall cooperate at the bilateral and the multinational levels with internationally comparable institutions, in particular within the context of the International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces.

Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Section 3 (1) The Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces serves the discharge of the tasks the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces incurs. Pursuant to section 4, para 7, 2001 Defence Act, the Federal Minister of Defence shall provide the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces with the necessary personnel and bear the necessary material costs. Only the Executive Chairperson is entitled to give directives to the personnel. The Executive Chairperson shall



decide on all personnel matters that have a direct and immediate organisational bearing upon the discharge of duties within the office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces (especially direction and authorisation of overtime, regulation of overtime compensation, leaves, taking holidays, training and continuation training). In all other personnel matters, the Federal Minister of Defence shall, prior to taking a decision, approach the Executive Chairperson.

(2) The Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and her/his staff discharge of their duties pursuant to the regulations of these Rules of Procedure. The Head of the Office and her/his staff especially shall

- a) support the Chairpersons and other members and substitute members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces in the discharge of their duties;
- b) take care of the administration and clerical organisation of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- c) liaise with the Presidium of the National Council, the Office of the Parliamentary Director, the Office of the Federal President, the offices of the Federal Ministry of Defence, especially the bodies advisory to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, and to other federal ministries within the competence of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- d) prepare and support the meetings of the Presidium and the plenum of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces as well as on-site hearings, investigations following extraordinary complaints and investigations of suspected deficiencies and grievances in the Armed Forces;
- e) ascertain facts relevant to lodged extraordinary complaints and ex officio procedures;
- f) obtain statements of the Federal Ministry of Defence and other offices in preparation of the settlement of extraordinary complaints and ex officio investigations;
- g) prepare draft proposals for the meetings of the Presidium and the plenum of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- h) implement decisions taken by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- i) process questions directed at the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces or the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- j) receive extraordinary complaints lodged directly with the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and information potentially entailing ex officio investigations;
- k) provide archival work, documentation and evaluation pertaining to lodged extraordinary complaints and ex officio investigations including pertinent statistics for the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- l) prepare the annual report of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and process statements made thereupon by the Federal Minister of Defence;
- m) take care of matters of the Rules of Procedure and the allocation of responsibilities within the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces;
- n) prepare statements to be made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to section 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act;



(3) The Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be entitled to authorise activities serving the accomplishment of the above tasks. She/he shall process (including signature), on the Executive Chairperson's behalf, such other matters as she/he has authorised her/him to process independently. The Executive Chairperson may declare her/himself responsible for any matter, or reserve the right of decision for her/himself.

Passage of decisions of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces

Section 4 (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall have the quorum if at least two Chairpersons and at least half of the further members are present.

(2) Decisions shall be taken by majority. In the event of a tie, the executive chairperson shall have the casting vote.

Duties of the chairpersons

Section 5 (1) Meetings of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall be prepared by the Executive Chairperson together with her/his two deputies (Presidium) with the support of the Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(2) Any complaint lodged either directly at the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces or through channels shall immediately be submitted to the Executive Chairperson. For any case of complaint, one of the three Chairpersons shall be appointed rapporteur. At the beginning of each calendar year the three chairpersons shall agree on an allocation of duties which clearly sets out the aspects on the basis of which the rapporteurs are assigned their respective cases of complaint.

(3) In case of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces being obviously not competent, in cases already decided on by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and in case of a lack of legitimacy to raise a complaint, the Executive Chairperson shall inform the complainant that the complaint will, in all probability, not be dealt with by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(4) Complaints entered anonymously shall be received by the Executive Chairperson. The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall receive reports thereupon, as well as on reports and statements made by the Federal Minister of Defence concerning those complaints.

(5) If a complaint is directed against a decision, which may be appealed by means of a remedy, the complainant shall immediately be made aware of her/his right to the above remedies.

(6) The Executive Chairperson shall notify the complainant of the receipt and ensuing processing of the complaint.

(7) The Executive Chairperson shall initiate or conduct the ascertainment of facts or an investigation of the complaint by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces on site (section 8, para 9), determine the type of investigation to be carried out and, if need be, order the investigation report, including the statement of the Federal Minister of Defence, to be submitted.



(8) The Executive Chairperson shall ensure that information and documents required for the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces to take a decision on a complaint be available immediately, at least no later than six weeks after the complaint has been received. Should this deadline not be met, reasons as to why shall be reported to the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces at the following meeting.

(9) The request pursuant to section 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act, by the conscript to obtain a statement shall immediately, at least no later than when documents for the following meeting are transmitted, be forwarded to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. Should a member of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces be of the opinion that the evaluation of a case requires further investigations, the Executive Chairperson shall immediately ensure the same.

(10) The Chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are entitled to participate in the negotiations concerning the report pursuant to section 4, para 5, 2001 Defence Act in the respective committee of the National Council. The Chairpersons of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces have the right to speak, also repeatedly, during the debates, but without interrupting a speaker. The respective committee can demand the presence of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces' Chairpersons during debates.

Data Processing

Section 6 In the course of processing complaints and inquiries, personal data may be processed pursuant to section 55a, 2001 Defence Act.

Ex officio investigation of deficiencies and shortcomings as well as complaints on site

Section 7 (1) The ex officio investigation of deficiencies and grievances in the armed forces or of complaints on site shall require a respective decision taken by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(2) In especially pressing cases, when the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces has not convened, the Presidium may take a pertinent decision and investigate ex officio deficiencies and grievances on site. Section 4 and section 5 paras 2, 7 and 8 shall apply analogously.

(3) The members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall immediately be notified of a decision of the Presidium pursuant to para 2. In case of an on-site investigation any member may participate in the same.

(4) In case of a decision of the Presidium pursuant to para 2, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall receive a report on the outcome of the investigation as well as investigations performed and measures taken.

Convening meetings

Section 8 (1) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall, at least once a month as a rule, be convened by the Executive Chairperson following a coordination of the date with the deputy Chairpersons and the members.

(2) At the request of at least two members, the executive chairperson shall convene the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces within 14 days.



(3) The meeting shall be convened in written form, including the agenda, and the invitation delivered to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, as well as its advisors, by registered post, if possible eight days prior to the meeting.

(4) The notice shall include the documents necessary for a decision, any measures that have already been taken, as well as a proposal by the rapporteur to be decided on by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces.

(5) Requests pursuant to section 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act, by the conscript to obtain a statement require a separate item on the agenda. The Executive Chairperson's proposed statement for the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall include the respective documents.

(6) If a member's inability to attend is already established at the time the meeting is convened, the respective substitute member shall be sent the necessary documents by the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. Should an inability to attend develop at a later date, the respective member shall be required to forward the invitation and documents to the substitute member and to inform the Executive Chairperson or the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces of her/his inability to attend.

Meetings

Section 9 (1) The Executive Chairperson shall open, chair and close the meeting after the agenda has been worked through. She/he may suspend the meeting for a short time, or adjourn it; the new date shall be fixed immediately, or communicated to the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces by the Office separately.

(2) In case she/he is prevented from attending at short notice, the Executive Chairperson may entrust the deputy stipulated in section 1, para 6 with the tasks listed in para 1.

(3) The Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces may agree on changing or amending the agenda.

(4) In the following cases a complaint – except for an ex officio investigation – shall not be dealt with and the procedure shall be ceased:

- a) If a person ineligible for a complaint (section 2, para 1) has lodged a complaint,
- b) if personal involvement (section 12, para 1, General Duty Regulations) cannot be proved,
- c) if no military, work-related grievances are alleged. This is also the case if the complaint exclusively concerns civil service law-related matters of tenured or contractual civil servants (and no other military work-related grievances are alleged).
- d) if the complaint is retracted of the complainant's free will,
- e) if a recommendation has already been made with respect to a complaint and there is no reason for reopening the complaint,
- f) if the alleged grounds for complaint are negligible (section 4, para 4, first sentence, 2001 Defence Act),
- g) if the limitation period has been exceeded (section 4, para 4, fourth sentence, 2001 Defence Act).

(5) In all other cases the complaint must be dealt with materially. This includes the following cases:

- a) in which there is the formal possibility of appealing to the Supreme Courts or the Federal Administrative Court, which, however, do not have material decision-making authority;



- b) in which a deadline has expired so that further disciplinary or court procedures are not permissible.

If in a case of complaint there is also a disciplinary or court case pending, the complaint shall not be dealt with until the case is settled.

(6) If it falls within the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces' competence, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall deal with the complaint or the result of an ex officio investigation (examination, hearing, etc.). As regards the settlement thereof, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall agree on recommendations, or, on the basis of a concrete case, a particular recommendation.

(7) In case of complaints or of ex officio investigations, in which measures have already been taken by the Federal Minister of Defence or offices within her/his purview, an agreement shall be reached as to whether these measures are to be deemed adequate.

(8) All members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces are authorised to submit motions to be agreed on. The advisors shall be given the floor just as the other members, whenever they so wish. The advisors shall furthermore be obliged to provide information if members so wish.

(9) If the respective rapporteur or a member deems necessary an on-site investigation, the hearing of complainants or complainees or the summoning of witnesses or experts, they shall submit a pertinent request to the Presidium or during the meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. In case of such a request having been granted, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall determine a deadline for implementing the decision.

(10) The decisions taken by the members of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to para 6 shall be signed by the members present at the meeting and subsequently forwarded to the Federal Minister of Defence.

(11) The stipulations of paras 7, 8 and 10 shall analogously apply to the procedure of agreeing upon a statement to be made by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces pursuant to section 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act. The meetings of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces shall not be public.

Minutes of meetings

Section 10 (1) Minutes shall be taken for every meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, containing the names of those present and all decisions taken at the meeting and including, attached thereto, a copy of the agenda.

(2) If decisions are not taken unanimously, ays and nays shall be included in the minutes. Any member may have a detailed description of pros and cons brought forward by her/him for/against a motion entered into the minutes.

(3) The correctness of the minutes shall be examined and signed by the Executive Chairperson, as well as by the Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces. It shall be available for inspection at the following meeting.

Annual report

Section 11 (1) By the end of January of every year, the Executive Chairperson shall have sent a draft version of the report on the previous year's activities and recommendations of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces (section 4, para 5, 2001 Defence Act) to the members of the same.



(2) If the processing of complaints results in recommendations or observations with an importance extending beyond the individual case, then these, so as to prepare the annual report, shall be included in a note by the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces following a directive by the Executive Chairperson.

(3) The activities of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces concerning statements pursuant to section 21, para 3, 2001 Defence Act shall be reported in a separate section.

(4) The final version of the annual report, which takes members' suggestions into consideration, shall, after it has been agreed upon by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, be submitted to the Federal Minister of Defence no later than 1 March.



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Presentation of the Annual Report



Presentation of the Annual Report 2018 to the President of the National Council Mag. Wolfgang Sobotka (centre of picture) on 27 March 2019.



Presentation of the Annual Report 2018 to the then Federal Minister of Defence Mario Kunasek (second to the left) on 19 March 2019.

Press conference/activities report



At a press conference on 27 March 2019, the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces presented its 2019 Annual Report to the public.



The Executive Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission answering questions to the press.

Conference/Informative presentations



Meeting of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces at the Vorarlberg Provincial Military Command on 07 to 08 March 2019.



The Executive Chairman at an informative presentation before students of the Theresan Military Academy on 19 November 2019.

Visits of troops/events



Federal Minister Mario Kunasek and the Executive Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission inspecting the guard of honour in the course of a ceremony at the Joint Forces Command on 05 April 2019.





Grand opening of the new Federal Commercial College for Command and Security in Wiener Neustadt on 02 September 2019

Inspection visits



On 10 October 2019, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces inspected the Law Enforcement Assistance Operation/Migration in Nickelsdorf, Burgenland Province.



Inspection by the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces of AUTCON/EUFOR ALTHEA in Camp Butmir in Sarajevo from 29 to 30 October 2019.

Inspection visits



Inspection by the Presidium of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces at the Military Representation Brussels from 04 to 05 November 2019. LTG Mag. Franz Leitgeb (centre of picture) and the Presidium at the NATO Headquarters.



Inspection of AUTCON EUTM MLI from 25 to 28 November 2019 by Executive Chairman MP Dr. Reinhard Bösch and the Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces MinR Mag. Karl Schneemann.

International networking



From 27 to 30 October 2019, Executive Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission MP Dr. Reinhard Bösch attended the 11th ICOAF in Sarajevo (front row, fourth to the left).



Mag. Karl Schneemann, Head of the Office of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces, attending the symposium celebrated on the occasion of 60 Years Defence Representative of the German Bundestag at Schloss & Gut Liebenberg on 21 May 2019.

Annual reception of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces on 18 November 2019



On 18 November 2019, the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces invited to its annual reception held in the ceremonial hall of the Ministry of Defence.



The chairmen of the Austrian Parliamentary Commission for the Federal Armed Forces and Minister of Defence Mag. Thomas Starlinger delivering their speeches.

Work meeting with the Federal President Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen



Meeting of the Presidium of the Parliamentary Commission and the Head of the Office of the Parliamentary Commission with the Federal President Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen at Hofburg Palace on 3 October 2017.