

Annex E – NATO RTG/HFM-203 (MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING) WHITE PAPER 001

19 May 2010

SUBJECT: *Benefits of Mental Health Training for the Military Organization*

1) **Purpose:** The purpose of this paper is to show the added value of mental health training for military organisations and operational leaders.

2) **The Challenge:** Combat and military service places tremendous demands on the mental health of service members. Military organisations are challenged with establishing conditions to ameliorate the negative impact of these demands on service members as well as enhance the adaptation and performance of service members. One method for establishing these conditions is to integrate targeted mental health training across a range of military training.

3) **Targeted Mental Health Training:** Traditional military training provides service members the opportunity to develop many fundamental resilience skills. Current training practices must be supplemented with mental health training targeted to different operational and training contexts. Mental health training complements traditional training by increasing knowledge and awareness of physiological and cognitive processes, normalizing stress responses, ensuring effective coping responses and flexibility, developing and supporting leaders in their efforts to sustain and enhance unit mental health, and stimulating them to learn and grow from their military experiences.

4) **Possible Outcomes and Metrics of Mental Health Training:**

- a) Mental health training has tremendous potential for military effectiveness. Initial research has shown that mental health training can have a positive impact on service member functioning, and there is also emerging evidence that training can have an even greater impact on the organisation.
- b) Additional benefits of mental health training may include increased retention, improved morale, sustained health and performance under high demand conditions at home, during training/exercises, and on operations, improved relationships with unit members, friends, and family, and enhanced personal growth.

5) **Way Ahead:** The goal of the RTG/HFM-203 Task Group is to build on the existing science and national approaches to mental health training and to develop a NATO mental health training package to enhance the overall mental fitness of NATO forces.

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