

The Military Unit as Part of the Armed Forces' Economic System.

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The Armed Forces constitute a complex militarily oriented socio-economic system, operating as part of the national economy. It is impossible to enhance the effectiveness of this system without identifying its internal mechanisms. The article "Economic Aspects of Military Activity" [1] analyzes the place of society's military organization in the country's economic system, showing that, first, the military sphere is a specific area of employment for a certain part of society's able-bodied population; second, the military's contribution to the commodity market comes in the form of military service; and third, a reasonably organized military-professional activity is well in line with the general aim of economic activity: increasing the volume of GDP and enhancing the efficiency of social labor.

This is, in effect, the first step in the search for the scientific truth: identification of internal processes occurring within the economic system of the country's Armed Forces. It is essential to analyze the economic fabric of the aggregate economic system of the army and navy, going deep into the nature of the army and navy's economic activity in order to acquire new knowledge, enriching military practice with an adequate understanding of present-day reality. We believe that it would be quite productive in this context to study the economic nature of an organizationally independent combat and administrative/logistic element of the Armed forces--the military unit, which is a permanent place of employment for military and associated civilian personnel (for civilians, it will be the enterprise: plant, company, farm, and so forth).

What are the economic specifics of the military unit as a structural element of the general system of the Armed Forces?

The military unit is a basic form of military labor cooperation. Analysis of labor cooperation--a basic distinguishing feature of its organization--is key to understanding the essence of the military unit.

Military labor in the army and navy is joint, collective activity, based on cooperation. It is organized by combining the efforts of various specialists in the military sphere. This integration of workers into a single whole produces the basic systemic effect (benefit). The sum total of military servicemen working together, not in isolation from each other, considerably exceeds the sum total of their individual, separate efforts. According to K. Marx, cooperation encourages competition between individuals, stimulating their life energy; [2] social contact per se galvanizes competition, increasing individual labor productivity. [3]

Thanks to cooperation, military sub-units, units, and combined units can produce a kind of an "aggregate soldier," who, just like an "aggregate worker," has eyes and hands, both front and back, and is, to a certain extent, omnipresent. [4] These qualities are critical to military activity. It is also important that cooperation, according to K. Marx, helps expand the spatial scope of labor. It enables large amounts of labor to be applied in a limited space. This property of cooperation in fact underlies amassing (concentration of efforts) as a principle of combined-arms operation, discovered by Epaminondas, a Greek Theban general, in 371 B.C.

Another important advantage of cooperation is that it enables troops to intensify their efforts at critical moments of military activity (combat action), arising from the intrinsically conflict-based nature of war. In such instances, large amounts of military force are brought into action within a short time span. Finally, cooperative labor means not only interaction between human work force in a certain area (space) within the same time span, but also joint use of military-technical means, which are an object of application of effort by military servicemen. Weapons materialize a great amount of labor, which is saved thanks to the collective use of military hardware and equipment in the interest of performing shared combat missions.

The aforementioned specifics of military labor lead to the conclusion that military activity is characterized by firm and stable patterns and regularities, which in terms of economic theory are known as the law of division and cooperation of labor. So every military commander, who in some way or other is also the organizer of a military unit's activity, should have a clear understanding of the essence of this law as well as the principles of its application in the interest of enhancing the effectiveness of action by personnel in performing tasks assigned to them, both in peacetime and in wartime.

Why is the military unit the basic, primary cell of labor cooperation in the Armed Forces? As noted earlier, labor, properly integrated and organized, emerges as a mass productive force and effective collective labor. Another reason is that the military unit provides a combination of labor organization conditions that are characteristic of a basic element of a particular sphere of human activity.

The military unit can ensure normal daily routine activities of a military formation, effective personnel training, and performance of combat tasks. It is fairly well adapted to conducting independent combat action: It has the required contingent of military personnel and an appropriate mix of military occupational specialties to perform a wide range of technical tasks; it has an appropriate logistical base and weapon systems; it is well equipped and relies on an efficient command and control staff in organizing daily routine activities and conduct of combat operations. It is fully covered and regulated by field manuals, regulations, and combat training and instruction programs for the army (navy), organizing personnel's daily routine activities, public relations, and cultural and spiritual activities. In theoretical terms, this means that the military unit ensures the full and comprehensive realization of a military serviceman as a personality, also ensuring expanded reproduction of military workforce--the key element of military activity.

Involuntary selection by military leadership of the military unit as the primary cell of military organization should be seen as a response by human practice to the objective requirement of the labor cooperation law in the Armed Forces.

The military unit as a military-economic system has both "input" and "output." Being at the same time a producing and consuming structure of the army and navy, it needs a continuous inflow of economic resources (forces and assets). The use of a considerable amount of human labor and various military-technical means eventually creates a product of military activity. The military unit contributes to producing a special type of commodity: military service. Its personnel performs its constitutional duty--viz., provides a service that is vital for society--constantly ensuring the security of citizens and the country as a whole.

Productive forces of a military unit and associated production (economic) relations interact along the "content-form" lines. Economic relations, corresponding to the character and level of development of the aggregate of productive forces of military units, allow for successful military activity, helping achieve effective results. On the other hand, unbalanced economic relations impede development of military collectives, hindering performance of their combat tasks. Thus, standards of conduct and lifestyle characteristic of "consumer society" (individualism, aspiration for self-enrichment, and so forth), which penetrated army and navy collectives, had a generally negative impact on the character of relations within military units, which could not but affect their performance.

It needs to be taken into account that sometimes economic relations appear to be just an array of so many random factors. This, however, is not so. It is only the external aspect of economic processes and phenomena underlying which are economic laws, reflecting the most general, deep, stable, and recurring relations and links in people's economic life and activity. Their role consists in regulating all processes of production of material wealth and provision of services, their distribution, exchange and consumption, also defining the movement and progress and society's productive forces.

In the course of daily routine activities, commissioned officers and enlisted men oftentimes are not aware that their work is objectively predetermined by a system of economic laws. When logistic service officers establish commercial relations with trade organizations, they are affected by the law of value. In organizing the daily routine activities of their units and sub-units, commanders, headquarters, and staffs act in conformity with the law of saving of resources (time). In organizing interaction between the aggregate of military formations, commanders and command and control agencies have to reckon with the law of division and cooperation of labor. In determining the amount of individual compensation packages for military personnel, officials proceed from the basic principles of the law of the value of military workforce as a commodity. Finally, in analyzing the interaction of productive forces and production relations within the "military unit" system, we deal with the law of correspondence between production (economic) relations and the level of development of productive forces.

Effective organization of the military unit's economic activity requires the tapping of all levers of enhancing military labor efficiency and saving live and embodied labor. These include upgrading the logistic and technical level of equipment of the military; improving the qualifications of

military and associated civilian personnel; raising economic awareness of personnel; achieving cohesion and teamwork of the unit's and sub-units' collectives by harmonizing personal and public interests; increasing the level of legal support and awareness of personnel; and tapping the national and foreign experience in organizing military collective activities.

Effective use of the entire array of factors that are key to higher efficiency of military labor ultimately hinges on an effective organization of the military unit in the army and navy. The latter is to a very large extent predicated on knowledge of economic laws, forms of their manifestation, the character of action, and the ability to regulate this powerful force. Dilettantism in dealing with the system of economic laws is just as fatal as economic high-handedness.

NOTES:

(1.) Voennaya mysl', No. 5, 2000, pp. 35-38.

(2.) K. Marx, F. Engels, Sochinenia, Vol. 23, Politizdat, Moscow, 1961, p. 340.

(3.) Ibid., p. 337.

(4.) Ibid., p. 338.