

UREJENOST PODPORE VOJAŠKIM DRUŽINAM V ZDRUŽENEM KRALJESTVU, NEMČIJI IN SLOVENIJI

STRUCTURE OF THE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR MILITARY FAMILIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, GERMANY AND SLOVENIA

Povzetek V prispevku obravnavamo antropološke in sociološke lastnosti vojakov ter vojaških družin. Predstavljamo urejenost podpore vojaškim družinam v Združenem kraljestvu, Nemčiji in Sloveniji. Natančneje preučujemo pravne podlage v Sloveniji, ki so temelj urejenosti podpore tem družinam, ter dejavnosti oddelka Celostne skrbi pripadnikov Slovenske vojske in Vojaškega vikariata, ki se v Slovenski vojski edina ukvarjata z njihovo podporo. V sklepnem delu opozarjamo na razhajanje med sistemsko organiziranostjo in individualnim pristopom v skrbi za te družine. S člankom se želimo približati odgovoru na vprašanje, kateri način podpore in skrbi za družine slovenskih vojakov je najustreznejši.

Ključne besede *Družina, vojaška družina, Slovenska vojska, Celostna skrb za pripadnike, Vojaški vikariat.*

Abstract The article aims to bring forth the anthropological and sociological characteristics affecting the military personnel and military families. It presents the structure of the support system for military families in the United Kingdom, Germany and Slovenia. For the latter, legal bases are presented regulating the support for military families, and the activities of the Comprehensive Care Section and the Military Chaplaincy, which are the only two bodies in the Slovenian Armed Forces to engage in the support of military families. The aim of the article is to contribute a piece of the answer to the big question: how to find the correct and appropriate path to help the families of Slovenian soldiers.

Key words *Family, military family, Slovenian Armed Forces, comprehensive care, Military Chaplaincy.*

Introduction Families of military personnel are a “special category of people” (Plut, 2002, p 265) which require support in every society. That support is provided by different institutions.

The conclusions we aim to reach by the end of the article are based on a comparison of the different systematic regulations of three countries: the United Kingdom, Germany and Slovenia. With this methodological approach, we take into the highest account the empirical and experimental dimensions that explicitly show the divide between the statutory abilities and the actual state.

We are writing this article to influence military families in the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF); of course, only if they wish it. The purpose of comparing three countries is to find the appropriate way to help families of Slovenian soldiers and to uncover the power of systematic solutions in support of the human element in this endeavour.

“In marriage and family a variety of mutual relationships are formed – marital, fatherly, maternal, with children or siblings; all of which initiate every human being into a ‘human family’...” (Janez Pavel II., 1982, p 15). Soldiers always ask themselves which their first and second home is, between the army and family (Plut, 2010). It is clear from practice and life experience that a person strives towards unity and belonging. As a priest is devoted to the church, so is the soldier devoted to the army. Of course, there is a fundamental difference between the two: one lives a lonely life and can fully devote himself to the church, but soldiers also wish to devote themselves to their families, whatever their shape or form. Hence the aforementioned question arises. A military profession demands willingness to serve from each member. It is their job to ensure and protect anything from human dignity to the fundamental morals of humanity. This key stance of members of the SAF is also defined in the Rules of Service in the Slovenian Armed Forces: “Respecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and people, as well as protecting human dignity, are key principles of each SAF member when performing their duties. Any action that violates these principles is dishonourable and in contrast with the interests of the SAF” (Rules of Service in the SAF, 2009). The Armed Forces are designed to protect the dignity of each SAF member, which can sometimes prove to be more difficult than protecting dignity and peace. There is a division in the relationships and roles between home and work; to be a husband/wife; a father/mother; a commander/subordinate/superior; a soldier/junior officer/officer. “Switching between these roles can lead to living a double life and cause big conflicts inside the individual and their partner/family relationships” (Sadar, 2010, p 115). Coser defined military organizations and families as two greedy institutions (Coser, 1974). There has been a great deal of research carried out on military families in Slovenia leading to comparisons with foreign militaries, yet they are not comparable. This is because of the well-known “base” lifestyle of soldiers and their families here. Other than when a Slovenian soldier is participating in field training at home or abroad or in international operations and missions, they return home to a civil environment every day, where they have a good social network.

When talking to soldiers we sense a desire for intimacy. “Work is work” they say, in contrast, family is a personal thing. We will try to figure out why Slovenian soldiers, as well as the majority of Slovenian citizens, have been shown to value family more than anything else in public surveys. They value it more than health, work, money or other goods. A public opinion survey from 2016 about the work-family relationship, the standpoint of Slovenians on the family problem, and the needs of the family¹ delivers a more distinct answer. Personally, I find an answer in the ancient archetypal word for mutual happiness, “longing”.

1 RESEARCHING MILITARY FAMILIES WITH SOME OUTSTANDING SLOVENIAN AUTHORS

Here we aim to mention some key features of military family research that eminent Slovenian authors², including Dr Ljubica Jelušič, Dr Jelena Juvan, and Dr Janja Vuga, have already pointed out. The list includes articles such as “Military Families at the Crossroads of Family and Military Demands” (Juvan and Jelušič, 2007); “The Role of an Individual’s Primary Social Environment in Relation to the Military Organization: A Case Example of the Slovenian Armed Forces” (Vuga and Juvan, 2011); “Harmonizing Work and Family Responsibilities in a Military Organisation” (Juvan, 2009); and “Social, Institutional and Organisational Support in Greedy Institutions: the Contentment of Slovene Military Families” (Vuga et al., 2013). One of the rare works that placed Slovenian research into military families on the international scene is “Work-Family Conflict between two Greedy Institutions: The Family and the Military” (Vuga and Juvan, 2013). Research concerning military families in Slovenia is also discussed in some doctoral theses (Juvan, 2008) and several degree papers (for example Novak, 2015; Krajnc, 2019). We must also mention the most important research paper between 2003 and 2008, written under the leadership of Professor Ljubica Jelušič, entitled “Final Report of a Sociological Analysis of the Slovenian Armed Forces in Missions and Commands on International Duties”.

Before we move on to an overview of the structure of the support system in the Slovenian Armed Forces, we would like to briefly present “Military Family Support” in the United Kingdom and Germany. We chose to discuss these two countries because of the contrast between their systems and cultures: German and Anglo-Saxon. We will leave which of these is closest to the setting of a Slovenian soldier up for question.

¹ Kurdija, S., Hafner Fink, M., Malnar, B. in Podnar, K. (2016). Slovensko javno mnenje 2016/1: Raziskava o odnosu delo-družina, Stališča Slovencev o družinski problematiki in potrebah družin, Stališča o izbranih vidikih zdravja in zdravstva, Ogledalo javnega mnenja. Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov. ADP – IDNo: SJM 161. https://doi.org/10.17898/ADP_SJM_V1.

² Listed are the informative translations of article titles, which have originally been written in Slovene. The original titles of articles can be found in Bibliography.

2 SUPPORT FOR MILITARY FAMILIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Continual support is offered to British soldiers by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Army Welfare Service (AWS), the Army Families Federation (AFF), and the SFA (Service Families Accommodation), among others. These institutions execute tasks in four crucial areas³: offering personal support to members; supporting communities; supporting families at home or abroad; and solving housing problems. Through these institutions, the United Kingdom Armed Forces ensures accessible, independent, confidential and professional social help for the personal and family troubles of forces members. They devote themselves predominantly to the following areas: abuse within the family; protection of children and adults; death in the family; issues with relationships and communication; alcohol addiction; personal debt; solving housing problems; and stress and other unfavourable emotional states. It is important to realise that they perceive the role of the military family and the soldier in the same way: if a soldier serves their homeland, so does their family. When a family is unhappy or has trouble due to serving their homeland it reflects on the soldier's performance, meaning the soldier is unable to carry out their duties well.

Military families move frequently because of the nature of the job. Soldiers are absent for long periods of time when they are carrying out their duties in international operations and missions (IOMs), and with that comes a substantial number of divorces. The saying: "Out of sight, out of mind" marks many military families. As we have already mentioned, migrations of soldiers and their families are also a burden. Spouses not finding a job is a recurring problem, because employers are not keen on a fast turnover of staff. Children also encounter many problems due to changing their school setting. They need to adapt to new teachers and replace their old habits quite often. All of this leaves certain consequences for them: few or no friends, poor grades in school and lack of confidence, to name but a few. On 31 January 2020 the MoD launched a test project called the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) which was initiated in the Aldershot⁴ Garrison. However, support for military families does not end there. It is accompanied by a wide spectrum of other offers⁵:

- Employment: they offer help to the spouse in searching for work;
- Finance: the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) manages financial support. They also offer help with working abroad, arranging passports, taxes, loans, social help for children, and more;
- Legal help: guaranteed to soldiers and their family members. They deal mainly with wills, counselling with regard to abuse within the family, and so on;
- Transitioning: they help with the transition from military to civil life.

³ <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MILITARY-FAMILIES.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.army.mod.uk/personnel-and-welfare/future-accommodation-model/>.

⁵ <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MILITARY-FAMILIES.pdf>.

A great deal of care is also provided by military chaplains⁶. England's armed forces have been involving priests in their operations since 1766, especially in wartime. The profession of army chaplain was officially established in 1796 and has been continuously active since then. According to the traditions of the United Kingdom, they employ Anglican, Catholic and Protestant chaplains, as well as some Jewish rabbis. All are tasked with providing spiritual and sacramental support to soldiers and their families.

3 SUPPORT FOR MILITARY FAMILIES IN GERMANY

Next, we present the structure of the support system for military families in the German Armed Forces on the basis of the Soldatengesetz⁷: the law on the legal status of military personnel. This law regulates the obligations of employers, requiring them to ensure both care and protection. In this sense the country is bound to look after the wellbeing of military employees and their families. Professional soldiers, as well as contractual reservists and their families, enjoy many benefits due to the enactment of this law. The Family Support Organization (FSO) is the institute that carries out this law (Kriem, 2006). The FSO management resides in the United Command of Operations in Schwielowsee. It is divided into 31 regional Family Support Centres (FSCs). They have also established domiciliary units for additional military family support. The principle is that all soldiers and their families must be at most an hour's drive from receiving the assistance of the nearest FSC. The FSO management coordinates and plans the training of support staff, and is the central point of contact between member referrals to international operations and missions (IOMs), the FSC and the domiciliary units. Regional FSCs are responsible for supporting soldiers and their families on a practical level. They aid the conduction of business with other state authorities, government offices and agencies. FSOs are further distributed into Family Support Centres. There are currently 50 active Centres in Germany, dealing exclusively with supporting those soldiers and families that are headed for IOMs. Their main duties are:

- Routinely informing soldiers about events concerning the IOM;
- Routinely informing soldiers about all social matters;
- Being a contact point even outside working hours;
- Connecting family members with soldiers who have been sent on an IOM;
- Hands-on help in tough situations;
- Locating sources of social and psychological help;
- The integration of soldiers into their local environment;
- Transport, support groups, child care;
- Assistance with reintegration after returning from an IOM.

⁶ <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/corps-regiments-and-units/royal-army-chaplains-department/>.

⁷ <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sg/BJNROO1140956.html>. Leto izdaje zakona 19. 3. 1956. Nazadnje dodan člen 64.20 novembra 2019.

The staff that work to support soldiers and their families are obliged to prepare for the job by participating in a 14-day course at the Leadership Development and Citizenship Education Centre in Koblenz and Mannheim Academy of Defence Administration and Technology. In each FSC there are four military posts, as well as one civilian post. Their leader is generally a junior officer supported by two subordinates, a superior and a soldier. If required, social workers/counsellors, military chaplains, psychologists, doctors and others may be called for additional help. Volunteer work of spouses or partners of soldiers on IOMs is also allowed. There are currently around 80 active volunteers working with the volunteer base, who offer effective emotional support. During their service, they have established organizations such as the Forum for Families of Soldiers and the initiative Woman to Woman. The German Armed Forces have carried out several longitudinal studies over the years; among other things they closely observed 30 military families over a span of two years. Their findings showed:

- The most stressful phase of the relationship is before the IOM;
- Partners at home carry the heavier burdens;
- Good preparation and regular communication reduces problems during the IOM;
- FSCs must keep constant contact with the families, which enables a quick reaction in time of need.

In Germany even the German Catholic Military Bishopric, German Protestant Military Bishopric and, since January 2020 Jewish Rabbis⁸, offer support to military families.

4 SUPPORT FOR MILITARY FAMILIES IN THE SLOVENIAN ARMED FORCES

Support for military families in the SAF is regulated by a variety of statutory Acts and regulatory provisions. Let us take a look at some of them.

4.1 Slovenian legislation

The Defence Act of the Republic of Slovenia⁹ (ZObr), with all of its amendments¹⁰, mentions military families only once, in part four of Article 20. This states that the SAF has the right to information about a soldier's family such as their uniform ID number, name, last name, date of birth, place of residence and employment, so that they can provide financial support in the event of a war. This

⁸ *Vojaški vikar Matej Jakopič se je med 27. – 31. 1. 2020 udeležil IMCCC (International Military Chiefs Chaplains Conference) v Berlinu, kjer prihaja do izmenjave dobrih izkušenj in praks. Viri trditev so povzeti iz več sporazumov o duhovni oskrbi v nemški vojski kot so: Konkordat med Nemčijo in Vatikanom z dne 20. 7. 1933, Sporazum od duhovni oskrbi protestantov z dne 26. 7. 1957, Sporazum o duhovni oskrbi judov z dne 20.12.2019. Prvega judovskega rabina so v nemško vojsko zaposlili 1.2.2020.*

⁹ *Zakon o obrambi – uradno prečiščeno besedilo – ZObr-UPB1 (Uradni list RS, št. 103/04 z dne 23. 9. 2004).*

¹⁰ *Zakon o dopolnitvi Zakona o obrambi – ZObr-E (Uradni list RS, št. 95/15 z dne 10. 12. 2015).*

clashes with the Personal Data Protection Act¹¹ (ZVOP-1). The Rules of Service in the Slovenian Armed Forces¹² (PS) fails to mention support for military families at all. The most important law when considering the support provided for military families is the Law on Service in the Slovenian Armed Forces¹³ (ZSSloV). Act 11 talks about providing care for subordinates. Superiors must look after their subordinates based on their jurisdiction, and help the families of subordinates, if they accept it. Chapter 12 talks about Comprehensive Care for the Members of the SAF (CSP). Because of the burdens they encounter as a result of serving in the military, members have a right to:

- Healthcare (ZSSloV, Act 77),
- Psychological care (ZSSloV, Act 79),
- Social care (ZSSloV, Act 80),
- Legal help (ZSSloV, Act 81),
- Legal counselling (ZSSloV, Act 82),
- Religious and spiritual care (ZSSloV, Act 83),
- Sporting activities and organized leisure (ZSSloV, Act 77).

The members of the permanent military squad formation, members of the contractual backup squad formation in military service and training, soldiers on voluntary military service, and civilians employed in the SAF are all entitled to the CSP. The third point of Act 76 expands these rights to the family members of the permanent military formation. According to the law, spouses, extramarital partners, partners from registered same-sex partner households and children of SAF members can all reap these benefits. This includes all legal statuses such as minors, adopted children, stepchildren, foster children, and so on.

On top of this, the ZSSloV mentions clubs and centres for comprehensive care, the rights of family members in the event of death or injury of a SAF member, and continued use of military housing after an SAF member has died. It also mentions the execution of special rights arranged by international organizations for the families of deceased SAF members. The legislation talks about help with the employment of a spouse, providing appropriate education for children abroad, and free three-month visits, among other forms of support.

It can therefore be seen that the legislation offers a great deal, but sadly, this is not the case in practice. We all ask ourselves when the words that were written will be upheld. For example, the regulation of the relationship between an SAF member and their parents with whom they live in a shared household or otherwise care for. Since the enforcements of the ZSSloV in 2007, no rule book for the CSP or regulatory provision has seen the light of day. We face the fundamental challenge of harmonizing

¹¹ *Zakon o varstvu osebnih podatkov – ZVOP-1, Uradni list RS, št. 86/04 z dne 5. 8. 2004.*

¹² *Pravila službe, 1996, Ljubljana, Ministrstvo za obrambo RS.*

¹³ *Zakon o službi v Slovenski vojski – ZSSloV, Uradni list RS, št. 68/2007 z dne 30. 7. 2007.*

rights from the ZSSloV with the Personal Data Protection Act (ZVOP-1) and the Income Tax Act (ZDoh-2, Article 39), among others. We see a solution in political activity and a new Defence Act which will take into account the circumstances that a profession in the SAF has created.

4.2 What the Comprehensive care for the members does

Comprehensive Care for the Members of SAF (CSP) is an activity of the SAF that is supported by people from all walks of life. The first representative of the CSP is the commanding officer or the chief of an individual unit. We present below the various agencies that support the commanding officer in carrying out their tasks¹⁴.

Healthcare

Healthcare for SAF members is implemented in the context of emergency medical aid, which is ensured during battle and other military defence tasks. Healthcare is also provided when carrying out duties at the international level. Emergency medical aid during firing and other dangerous tasks that are carried out during training are also covered. In the event of infectious diseases (such as COVID-19), preventive medical precautions following the healthcare guidelines will be taken. Healthcare professionals (the Military Medical Unit) are very active in spreading awareness about key medical resuscitation procedures. In addition, family members have the right to participate in these health awareness programmes.

Psychological Care

Psychological care is provided to SAF members and their families, if necessary. Psychologists are very active in various fields and undeniably deserve a special presentation in a separate article. However, we will only point out the four basic services offered. These are therapy, clinical psychological counselling, psychotherapy work, and implementing preventive programmes for managing all kinds of psychological burdens. All of these are available to SAF members and their families 24/7.

Social Care

This is intended for SAF members and their family members. The main service provided is counselling and assistance with personal social problems, problems encountered during employment, helping with the employment of a spouse, problems with childcare, solving housing problems, and relocation due to a work transfer. They also offer expert advice to commanding officers and other organizational leaders within the military system to improve the work environment for members.

Legal Help and Legal Counselling

In accordance with the ZSSloV, the SAF provides legal assistance to a member against whom criminal or compensation proceedings have been instituted for the

¹⁴ Prim.: <http://intra.mors.si/index.php?id=343>

performance of military or other services, provided that they have conformed to the Rules of Service and other regulations. Legal advice to SAF members and their family members, if they wish, is intended to clarify the legal situation in matters related to military service. It is also intended to provide clarifications on procedures pending in other state bodies, procedural rules and more. All this also applies to contractual reserve members.

Sporting Activities and Organized Leisure

Sports activities and organized leisure for SAF members and their family members are provided primarily at SAF sports facilities such as gyms in Vipava, Kranj and Ljubljana. Hikes and various similar events are also organized.

5 ENSURING RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAF

Religious and spiritual support (RDOV in Slovenian) for members of the SAF and their families is provided by the Military Chaplaincy (VVIK), which is an independent organizational unit at the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces (GSSV). RDOV provides care for everyone, regardless of their religious affiliation. VVIK is run by a military vicar¹⁵ who has two deputies for churches of different faiths, an assistant military vicar, a Catholic and an Evangelical military chaplain, a pastoral assistant and an administrator. The regulations and normative acts regulating the operation of the VVIK are:

- Agreement between the Slovenian Bishops' Conference and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on spiritual care for military personnel in the SAF¹⁶;
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Evangelical Church¹⁷;
- The Defence Act¹⁸;
- The Rules of Service in the SAF¹⁹;
- The rule book of the organization of religious and spiritual care²⁰;
- Directive on the operation of the Military Chaplaincy in the Commands, Units and Institutes of the SAF²¹.

¹⁵ *A military vicar is a commander of military chaplains and pastoral assistants.*

¹⁶ *Sporazum med Slovensko škofovsko konferenco in vlado RS o duhovni oskrbi vojaških oseb v SV z dne 21. 9. 2000.*

¹⁷ *Sporazum vlade RS z Evangeličansko cerkvijo z dne 20. 10. 2000.*

¹⁸ *Prim. Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah zakona o obrambi, Uradni list RS, št. 47/2002, z dne 29. 5. 2002, čl. 52.*

¹⁹ *Prim. Pravila službe v SV, z dne 15. 10. 2009, Uradni list RS št. 84/2009. Glej točke 42, 64, 78, 80, 170, 362, 363, 371, 378.*

²⁰ *Prim. Pravilnik o organizaciji religiozno duhovne oskrbe z dne 18. 6. 2003, Uradni list RS št. 58/2003. Z dnem ko je začel veljati ta pravilnik, je prenehalo veljati Navodilo o uresničevanju pravic vojaških obveznikov med opravljanjem vojaške službe do izpovedovanja vere.*

²¹ *Direktiva o delovanju Vojaškega vikariata v poveljstvih, enotah in zavodih SV, št. 804-36/2010-10, z dne 18. 1. 2011.*

The Agreements, Laws, Regulations and Directives²² listed highlight the main tasks of the VVIK, which are:

- Providing regular spiritual care to SAF members and their families in accordance with the GSSV annual plans;
- Participating in the training of SAF members by including spirituality, ethics, morals, patriotism and military traditions;
- Working with the barracks commander to provide appropriate timing, material and spatial opportunities for spiritual care, which is in accordance with Article 170 of the Rules of Service in the SAF;
- The use of chapels, which are arranged as special premises in barracks and personal offices for the regular provision of spiritual care;
- Providing routine day-long professional training to VVIK members each month;
- Training annually in longer professional seminars;
- Participating in celebrations and ceremonies on national and religious holidays by giving short spiritual speeches;
- Preparing thematic weekends and camps for SAF members and their families;
- Providing spiritual care to SAF members in multi-day field training both at home and abroad;
- Participating in the training of SAF members before departure to IOMs;
- Providing spiritual care to SAF members on IOMs;
- Ensuring the preservation and protection of each member's dignity;
- Maintaining deceased SAF members in memory;
- Cooperating with other CSP carriers in the preparation and implementation of worship services and other commemorations of national and religious holidays and unit days;
- Participating in commemorative and mourning ceremonies;
- Participating in the reintegration of SAF members on their return from IOMs;
- Humanitarian activities and cooperation with KVIK (Karitas of the Military Chaplaincy);
- Participating in events organized by veterans' associations and events for relatives of those killed in the war for Slovenia;
- Participating in MORS retirement association events;
- Ministering to sick members of the SAF.

6 THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY IN THE SAF AND THEIR SUPPORT OF FAMILIES

The Military Chaplaincy offers spiritual care for members of the SAF and their families, the logic being that happy families translate into a happy military. Only a person happy at home can be happy at work and vice versa. For this reason, the VVIK organizes the following for soldiers and their family members:

²² *Prim. Direktiva, 2011, GŠSV.*

- Family holidays;
- Holidays for wives;
- Meditation courses;
- Spiritual exercises;
- Holidays for the children of SAF members (Religious and Sports Camps);
- A 3-day survival camp for children of SAF members co-organized by the ESD (Special Operations Unit).

We will not describe these programmes and their contents in this article because they are always tailored to the number of participants and their personal needs. In addition to these, the VVIK organizes other gatherings for members who have got married or received other sacraments of conversion to Christianity. Meetings with participants in the annual traditional military pilgrimage of soldiers and their families occur in Lourdes (France) and Mejanès (France).

In all cases, sacramental support is the central activity of the VVIK for the families of SAF members. Military chaplains baptize, distribute communion, carry out confessions, confirm, anoint the sick, and marry SAF members. They also conduct funerals for members of the SAF and their immediate family members, if they wish it. The constitution “*Spirituali militum curae*”²³ enumerates spouses, children and parents as immediate family members. The same applies to everyone living in the same household. From the establishment of the Military Chaplaincy in 2000 up to 2020, about 900 children of members of the SAF were baptized by military chaplains, with over 400 SAF members or their family members confirmed. Nearly 300 members of the SAF were married by military chaplains. If we add all the meetings with soldiers and their families, when preparing for the sacraments and the actual ceremonies, we reach a number higher than 5000. This figure does not include all the meetings for blessings of homes, funerals, visits to the sick, assistance in any personal or family distress, and so on, as well as excluding visits to sick members of the SAF in hospitals and those on long-term sick leave at home.

As part of military family pastoral care, military chaplains must pay attention to the following aspects²⁴:

- Taking into account the difficulties and circumstances of a family (absence of a family member, illness of a spouse, infertility, a child’s upbringing, handicapped or disabled children, etc.);
- Care for the spiritual growth of families as a community, spouses as individuals and family members (catechesis at sacraments, spiritual exercises, etc.);
- Recognizing the mission of the family (position of an evangelist or priest and service personnel);

²³ *Spirituali militum curae*, prevod Plut J. 2005, v Zbornik ob 5. obletnici Vojaškega vikariata, MORS, str. 117.

²⁴ *Direktorij družinske pastorale*, 1997. Cerkveni dokumenti 73. Družina, Ljubljana, str. 92-234.

- The importance of family celebrations (wedding celebrations and wedding anniversaries, family holidays, etc.);
- Meeting other spouses (marital and family communication, family associations and movements).

We can certainly conclude from past experience that working for and supporting military families is the best kind of investment for satisfied members of the SAF. When we mention investment, we are not referring to material or monetary goods, but rather to invisible immaterial goods such as acts of understanding, supporting, and allowing mercy. Legislation must provide for visible, tangible, measurable and weighed measures. Spirituality, however, covers a field one cannot see with bare eyes, where happiness resides. One can buy blood, but not life. One can buy medicine but not health. One can buy sex but not love. One can buy a house but not a home. All these things are free because they are a gift, and reside far beyond the legislative field.

Conclusion To conclude, let us cite the old Jewish story as a reminder that in spite of excellent legislation, much like a role model king, we can easily succumb to abuse and work against the individual and the family.

It was now spring, the time when kings go to war. David sent out the whole Israelite army under the command of Joab and his officers. They destroyed the Ammonite army and surrounded the capital city of Rabbah, but David stayed in Jerusalem.

Late one afternoon, David got up from a nap and was walking around on the flat roof of his palace. A beautiful young woman was down below in her courtyard, bathing as her religion required.

David happened to see her, and he sent one of his servants to find out who she was.

The servant came back and told David, "Her name is Bathsheba. She is the daughter of Eliam, and she is the wife of Uriah the Hittite."

David sent some messengers to bring her to his palace. She came to him, and he slept with her. Then she returned home. But later, when she found out that she was going to have a baby, she sent someone to David with this message: "I'm pregnant!"

David sent a message to Joab: "Send Uriah the Hittite to me."

Joab sent Uriah to David's palace, and David asked him, "Is Joab well? How is the army doing? And how about the war?" Then David told Uriah, "Go home and clean up."

Uriah left the king's palace, and David had dinner sent to Uriah's house. But Uriah didn't go home. Instead, he slept outside the entrance to the royal palace, where the king's guards slept.

Someone told David that Uriah had not gone home. So the next morning David asked him, "Why didn't you go home? Haven't you been away for a long time?"

Uriah answered, "The sacred chest and the armies of Israel and Judah are camping out somewhere in the fields with our commander Joab and his officers and troops. Do you really think I would go home to eat and drink and sleep with my wife? I swear by your life that I would not!"

Then David said, "Stay here in Jerusalem today, and I will send you back tomorrow."

Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day. Then the next day, David invited him for dinner. Uriah ate with David and drank so much that he got drunk, but he still did not go home. He went out and slept on his mat near the palace guards. Early the next morning, David wrote a letter and told Uriah to deliver it to Joab. The letter said: "Put Uriah on the front line where the fighting is the worst. Then pull the troops back from him, so that he will be wounded and die."

Joab had been carefully watching the city of Rabbah, and he put Uriah in a place where he knew there were some of the enemy's best soldiers. When the men of the city came out, they fought and killed some of David's soldiers – Uriah the Hittite was one of them.

Joab sent a messenger to tell David everything that was happening in the war. He gave the messenger these orders:

When you finish telling the king everything that has happened, he may get angry and ask, "Why did you go so near the city to fight? Didn't you know they would shoot arrows from the wall? Don't you know how Abimelech the son of Gideon was killed at Thebez? Didn't a woman kill him by dropping a large rock from the top of the city wall? Why did you go so close to the city walls?"

Then you tell him, "One of your soldiers who was killed was Uriah the Hittite."

The messenger went to David and reported everything Joab had told him. He added, "The enemy chased us from the wall and out into the open fields. But we pushed them back as far as the city gate. Then they shot arrows at us from the top of the wall. Some of your soldiers were killed, and one of them was Uriah the Hittite."

David replied, "Tell Joab to cheer up and not to be upset about what happened. You never know who will be killed in a war. Tell him to strengthen his attack against the city and break through its walls."

When Bathsheba heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him.

(2.Sam 11:1-26).

When comparing the structure of the support systems of military families in the United Kingdom, Germany and Slovenia, we can see obvious differences. The United Kingdom and Germany have good systemic arrangements. We cannot say the same for the SAF, due to the clear lack of implementation of some Regulations, Directives or Standard Operating Procedures. Otherwise, all three countries have a common point in the comparative analysis: the human factor. When working with military families, trust is crucial. Some institutions may slowly gain trust for a long time, yet may lose it with one reckless move. We find that all three countries we have analyzed offer good systematic solutions. In the end, however, a person is only human and therefore requires an individual approach. Nobody wants their intimacy betrayed, so it is hard to trust systems. Perhaps military chaplains have an advantage in this area thanks to the Catholic sacrament of Confession, which could easily be backed up by research in the near future. It is certainly true that military chaplains enter the intimacy of the family by granting the sacraments of baptism, communion,

confirmation, marriage and funerals. These are powerful turning points in everyone's life. This is why the performers of these tasks must be people of unspoiled trust!

It is an honour to be in a position of power. But in modern times we tend to forget that power is service and not lordship. It is true that the written law is barely upheld. Laws and regulations thus remain the minimum of human conduct. But a person is capable of much more than the bare minimum, right? The rest is, of course, a matter of ethics and morality.

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