Building Integrity and Reducing Corruption in Defence

A Compendium of Best Practices

CONTENTS

Chapter 5
Personnel Policies

For the general public, corruption in personnel issues—including but not limited to the personnel management system—are neither the most visible nor the most sensational forms of corruption. They are, however, often the most pervasive and arguably the most corrosive to the defence system as a whole since they undermine the effective use of its most vital resource—its people. This chapter will examine the sources and impact of corrupt practices in the area of personnel, and will present the principles of successful anticorruption measures, as well as some examples of how these principles have been successfully applied in practice.

The goal of the defence personnel management system is to ensure that the right numbers of people with the right mix of skills and experience are in the right positions to provide for defence outputs—current operations, future capabilities, command and control, etc. If the personnel management system is to function effectively, it must perform two complementary functions (see Figure 5.1):

1. Determine human resource requirements, based on current and future defence requirements and force plans. These include short-term requirements to meet the needs of the current force, mid-term (5-6 year) requirements for the evolving force, and long-term (15+ year) requirements for meeting long-term development goals.

2. Manage and develop people—as individuals and in aggregate—to maximize the human resources available to meet requirements. This requires systematic efforts to attract, train, motivate, assign, promote and retain personnel to ensure an available pool of personnel with needed professional competencies (knowledge, skills and experience).

For corrupt officials, it is the second function that is the most interesting; personnel management decisions that have a direct impact on people's lives provide substantial opportunities for corruption. The first function is of less (illicit) interest, as the decisions involved are not easily translated into individual benefit. Yet from the perspective of building integrity, the existence of an effective requirements system is essential, since this creates a clear standard measure, linked to defence policy and plans, against which to measure the effectiveness of personnel decisions.
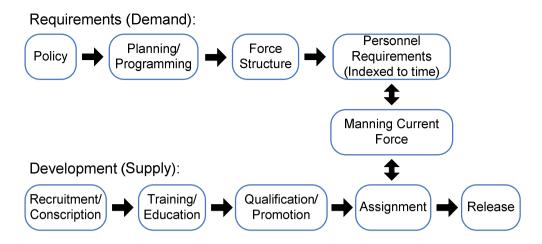
Requirements (Demand):

Figure 5.1: Personnel Management Functions (Simplified).[1]

Forms of Corruption Related to Personnel Issues

Officials with responsibility for personnel decisions have tremendous scope for corruption, whether they be in a serviceman's chain of command or in specialized personnel administrations. Any decision that has an impact on a serviceman can be a vehicle: favourable assignments, financial or professional awards, or distribution of scarce benefits (for example, housing). So are issues of a more mundane nature, such as daily work assignment or authorization of time off. In addition, the tremendous authority that superiors have over subordinates—by law or custom—also provides opportunities for corruption, either through bribery by subordinates to avoid difficult or dangerous work, or though extortion by superiors or older soldiers. In general, however, corruption in the personnel area falls into three principle forms: theft/extortion, bribery and influence networks.

Theft/Extortion

Officials charged with providing a benefit, such as serviceman's pay or material allowances like food, uniforms, or housing, divert a share of these assets to personal use. This is sometimes done by blatantly not delivering the goods but more frequently uses deceptive techniques like "ghost soldiers" or cash kickbacks. Another sort of corruption is when superiors—whether officers or other soldiers—abuse their authority to steal personal property or extort payment or personal services, based on direct threats to

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1   Adapted from Jack Treddenick, "Manpower Management," in *Defence Management: An Introduction* (Geneva: DCAF, 2009), 127.

career or safety. Soviet-style "nomenklatura" systems, with their strong commanders' prerogatives and embedded hazing systems, provide considerable opportunities for such abuse of authority.

Bribery

Officials with the power to provide a positive personnel decision accept—or expect—compensation from the individual who benefits by that decision. This can range from minor gifts (e.g. a bottle of wine or vodka) to major cash bribes. In otherwise functioning systems, this is most often used to bend or break rules so that the individual gains a benefit (i.e. favourable assignment, selection for education, extended time off) that would not be granted through a strict application of regulations or policy. Where corruption is endemic, bribe expectations are systemic; without one, the system will not deliver the desired results, regardless of the merits of the case. Where the benefit to the individual of a personnel decision is monetary (for example, an assignment with additional pay), the expected bribe is frequently proportionate to that expected benefit. While on the surface such systemic corruption may seem merely transactional, with prices well-known and evenly applied, it is at its core coercive – based on the denial of rights legitimately due to servicemen by those in positions of trust or responsibility.

Influence Networks

This is a variation on bribery and frequently co-exists with it. Rather than money alone, the currency of corruption is information, favours and influence. In authoritarian, stove-piped bureaucracies information is at a premium and informal exchange of information outside official channels can provide substantial benefits in terms of influence (or corruption opportunities). In addition, where formal coordination systems are cumbersome, mutual exchange of favours can become the norm for achieving results. This can develop into complex networks of mutual exchange of influence and favours, like the "blat" system in Soviet times, resulting in the development of informal "clans" and patron-client relationships. Favours inside the defence system may be linked via clan or family relations to quid-pro-quo and patron-client relations in wider society.

Risks and Remedies in Specific Personnel Management Areas

Every phase of the personnel management cycle (see Figure 5.1) has specific corruption risks, established schemes and possible remedies. This section will identify some risks and schemes and provide a few specific examples of best practices to limit corruption risk. However, it should not be seen as exhaustive; corruption schemes are limited only by opportunity and imagination.

Recruitment/Conscription

Conscription. Avoiding conscription has been a major source of corruption since Napoleon first introduced the modern conscription system in France. Today, it is a major industry in some countries; in Russia, where conscription is paired with brutal conditions of service, a single draft deferment costs just under $7000 and conscription-related bribes nationwide are estimated at $350 million annually.[2] The method for avoiding conscription is usually the procurement of a document falsely showing that the prospective conscript is medically disqualified or subject to an educational deferment. It is also possible to obtain a forged certificate indicating that a prospective conscript has already served. Producing these documents can involve a network of corrupt officials in conscription centres, together with doctors and educators. In addition to outright draft avoidance, conscription officials may provide preferential assignment to non-combat or less demanding assignments in return for bribes. They may also use the threat of dangerous duty to extort bribes. Conscription-avoidance schemes are usually systemic and pyramidal, with a percentage of funds brought in at the bottom paid in "tribute" to senior officials at the defence ministry and/or armed forces staff under whose protection and patronage the scheme operates. Control of this lucrative operation can be a key, unspoken issue in MOD restructuring efforts and can create a secret lobby against efforts to move to a volunteer force.

Training/Education

Initial officer training

In countries where the prestige of military service is high, selection to initial officer training programs can be highly competitive – it is not unusual for less than 10% of applicants to be accepted.[3] Social pressure on admission boards to accept candidates from elite families can be considerable, in addition to illegal financial incentives by those who see military service as a ticket to joining the social elite. Common methods of corrupt influence include inflated ratings at personal interviews (often a major part of the application process) and provision of questions ahead of time for written or oral exams. Exceptional candidates without connections are on rare occasion given the opportunity to gain a well-connected patron.

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[2] Estimate by Moscow-based NGO Indem, from: Alastair Gee, "In Russia, the Favorite Pastime of Draft Dodging," *US News & World Report* (29 December 2008).

[3] For example, for the Class of 2013 at the US Naval Academy (Annapolis), only 8.1% of applicants were admitted: www.usna.edu/Admissions/documents/Class%20Portrait%202013.pdf.

Higher military education (staff and war college)

Screening for acceptance into these career-enhancing educational opportunities can offer significant potential for corruption. In some countries, candidates are expected to visit members of the review boards on an individual basis to bring gifts and ensure their participation in patron-client relationships. During the course of studies, teachers

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Box 5.1. Building Integrity in Selection for Initial Officer Training

In the United States, coveted appointments to the four-year service academies have historically been the subject of political pressure. This has been regulated by creating a political "nomination" process separate from the "admissions" process. All US Congressional representatives and senators have the right to have five constituents attend each academy at any one time. For every vacancy, they are authorized up to ten nominations. Many representatives and senators run local competitions to select their nominees, although nominations are also sometimes given out as political favours. In addition, the US president is allowed to appoint up to one hundred candidates per year from those with at least one parent actively serving in the armed forces, and the vice-president is allowed to have five candidates, open for general competition. Additional nominations are available to active (enlisted) service members and children of medal-of-honour winners.

This nomination process creates a legitimate avenue for political influence, while channelling and limiting it. Politicians have a distinct deliverable that they can provide to a constituent. Yet the impact of this influence is limited to the first cut, reducing the pool from some 15,000 applicants (to use the example of the US Naval Academy) to an average of approximately 4,500. The academy then uses a rigorous admissions process, which is completely separate from the nomination process and involves external boards, to identify the 1,250 candidates that will be offered appointments. Since candidates apply for nominations (to political figures) and appointments (to the Naval Academy) in parallel, the academy can work informally with cooperative nominating authorities to ensure that top candidates for admission also receive a nomination. A second benefit of the nomination process is that it ensures geographical diversity of academy students (and thus the officer corps) across the various territorial districts and states represented by nominating representatives and senators.

In a younger democracy, Ukraine, prestige and historical traditions of military service also make positions in initial officer training institutions highly competitive. Until recently, admissions were largely the business of local admissions boards. This was identified as a corruption risk by the new defence ministry leadership that arrived in early 2005. They downsized a bloated educational system, cutting enrolment in half and approved a program to reduce entry-level officers' training institutions from 9 to 5 (with a reduction in overall academic institutions from over 60 to 12) by 2011. Stronger central oversight of testing and admissions were put in place, under the supervision of a deputy defence minister. This substantially reduced corruption opportunities.

Sources: White Book, Defence Policy of Ukraine 2005, www.mil.gov.ua; US Naval Academy Admissions website, www.usna.edu/Admissions/.

may also affect scores and assessments based on bribes or influence, thus affecting assignment and career development after graduation.

Education abroad

The combination of educational, career and financial opportunities inherent in these postings make assignment to education abroad a top corruption risk. Such opportunities are usually offered through international cooperation programs, frequently with full external financing. As a result, frequently neither normal selection procedures (used for national courses) nor normal internal financial oversight procedures apply, leaving officials responsible for international cooperation, education and personnel management with considerable discretion—and little systemic accountability—regarding selection of participants. In addition to promoting the candidacies of particular individuals based on connections or bribes, it is common for the responsible departments to try and keep a certain number of positions to be distributed to internal candidates. Senior-level review, often put in place as a check on corruption, can also provide a vehicle for it when senior leaders lack integrity. Foreign partners are frequently aware of this problem but are put in the dilemma of having to accept the candidates provided or forcing the politically and professionally embarrassing cancellation of courses.

Assignments abroad

Coveted positions abroad include attaché postings, staff assignments to international organizations (like the UN, EU or NATO), liaison positions at international commands and multinational headquarters, as well as direct participation in peacekeeping operations. Like education abroad, such assignments often provide vastly increased pay and substantial career opportunities. Many staff postings also offer a higher quality of life for the individual and family. Yet, while there is considerable corruption risk, there are also two limiting factors. First, many of these positions are nationally funded and therefore selection may be under greater scrutiny. Second, many posts abroad have high political visibility. In these cases, direct bribery to achieve a position is risky and influence becomes the corrupt currency of choice. On the other hand, those seeking lower level positions abroad are much more likely to be forced to make cash payments. And despite political visibility, all but the most senior personnel may still be forced to corruptly "motivate" a substantial number of minor or mid-level officials whose support is needed for required administrative or financials steps.

Corruption risk for participation in peacekeeping operations, however, can be considerably greater. Financial benefits for participating in operations abroad can be substantial since many nations have laws setting pay for peacekeepers at levels related to the United Nations' reimbursements (e.g. 50% of the UN reimbursement, coming to about US$700/month). Unlike those in staff positions abroad, who have to cope with higher living expenses, this money is almost entirely disposable income. The amount

of the bribe can thus be 15–20% of the expected financial windfall (e.g. up to US$1000 for a 6-month deployment) or even higher. With dozens or even hundreds of people required for a single operation, and applicants many times this number, corruption risk and potential profit can be very high – particularly in countries where peacekeeping contingents are cobbled together from disparate groups of individual soldiers.

Pay & Benefits

Ghost soldiers

Commanders, often with the acquiescence of administrative officials, keep a number of fictitious soldiers on their roster, receiving pay, food and equipment that can be pocketed or sold. These "ghost soldiers" sometimes account for up to 20–30% of a force. There are also cases of election rigging where such "ghost soldiers" vote—not surprisingly—overwhelmingly for the government candidate.

Bonuses/prizes

Complex systems of bonuses or awards can be used by those in a position to distribute them as a tool for ensuring patron-client relationships and potentially for corruption.

Housing

In post-communist countries, housing entitlements for active and retired armed forces personnel often significantly exceeds supply. Distribution of housing is therefore frequently linked to bribery or influence peddling. One variant is to unequally distribute funds to build apartments of grossly different sizes, pressuring junior personnel to take sub-standard housing while senior personnel get luxury apartments.

Medical

Free medical care is a frequent benefit for servicemen, retirees and their dependents. Nevertheless, quality care is sometimes provided only after bribing doctors or administrators.

Career Management

In systems where promotion is conditional on occupying a post designated for the appropriate rank, assignment is the most crucial issue for career management. In exchange for money or favours, personnel managers may provide advance notice of openings, preference candidates for assignment and seek to influence commanders to accept these candidates. Applicants may also be requested to visit commanders for a personal interview, at which a gift might be expected or a bribe solicited. The same scheme works for those seeking safe, quiet assignments or postings with potential for participating in corruption. In the latter case, substantial "advance bribes" may need to be paid to senior officials on the assumption of future illicit income.

Box 5.2: Building Integrity in Selection for Education or Assignment Abroad

At the end of the 1990s, the Ukrainian system had difficulty making effective use of the many training and education opportunities available through Partnership for Peace (PfP) and bilateral military cooperation programs. Decisions were driven by supply—course availability—rather than a clear set of requirements. Selection of personnel was cosily arranged between the Defence Ministry Personnel Department and International Cooperation Department, with little effective oversight. Corruption and influence peddling were rife in the selection process.

A number of factors helped improve the situation over the next several years. The creation of the General Staff Partnership for Peace and Peacekeeping Operations Directorate (PPOD) in 1999 provided an institutional proponent for requirements-driven international cooperation, focused on building interoperability and preparing for operations. That same year, NATO opened a liaison office, co-located with the PPOD, which added vital real-time information, resources and political support to PPOD's efforts. An important step in this effort was a General Staff decision to link specific activities to specific partnership goals (objectives for reform or increasing interoperability).

By 2002, these efforts had some success: participation in many training and operations-related PfP activities became more consistent and the quality of personnel attending improved. But two problems remained. First, there was little improvement in selection for long-term educational opportunities abroad, which were largely bilateral and therefore outside the NATO and PPOD remit. Secondly, the system for using local "military commissariats" to man special ad hoc units for peacekeeping operations allowed considerable corruption.

The leadership that came to the Defence Ministry in February 2005, after the Orange Revolution, took significant steps to address these corruption problems. The minister ordered the development of an annual plan of all activities abroad, together with the names and positions of personnel designated to attend, and insisted on personally signing orders for all appointments abroad. While cumbersome, this high-level visibility helped discipline the system to clearly link participation in specific activities to actual requirements. To help the minister's assessments, the MOD High Attestation Committee, chaired by the First Deputy Minister, reviewed multiple candidates for key activities like long-term courses abroad, UN observer missions and NATO postings on a competitive basis. The minister also issued guidance that individuals that had previously studied abroad, served on international staffs, or participated in UN missions must typically wait 5 years before they are eligible for similar opportunities a second time.

Regarding peacekeeping operations, the MOD, supported by advice from NATO, changed the method for generating forces away from creating "ad hoc" units and toward deployment of standing units. This eliminated the need for reservists to be recalled via the "commissariats," which considerably reduced corruption risk.

Finally, Ukraine's Ministry of Defence worked closely with NATO's Professional Development Program for civilian personnel in order to establish a requirements-based, competitive system to drive appointments (see Chapter 22 for more detail on the PDP).

In some systems, candidates for assignment or promotion need to appear personally for questioning before review boards, adding a considerable element of subjectivity

to the board's decision. Where board membership is constant, candidates may also be expected to first visit key members in order to gain their support – a process that provides ample corruption opportunities. It also has the effect of ensuring that candidates are well-embedded in patron-client relationships.

Box 5.3. Building Integrity in Promotion Selection Boards

In order to ensure that selection of officers for promotion is as objective as possible, the United States operates a highly regulated system of selection boards. A similar process is used to screen for major career milestones.

Convening & Guidance. Boards are convened as needed (usually annually) by the secretary (senior political appointee) responsible for the relevant military service. Each rank and competitive category (e.g. combat arms officers, engineering officers, medical officers, etc.) has a separate board but they often meet at the same time and place. The secretary provides a Memorandum of Instruction that sets out selection methods, factors to be considered, the maximum numbers of officers to be selected and reports to be made.

Membership. Boards consist of at least five active duty officers, selected randomly from lists of nominees provided by commanders as meeting the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. They must be of a higher rank than the officers under consideration. Often, board members are unaware of the specific board on which they will serve prior to arriving at its location. No officer may serve on two successive selection boards for the same rank and competitive category. Boards are assigned recorders for taking minutes and administrative support. These are often personnel managers but must not be direct managers of any candidate.

Board members are prohibited from divulging their involvement in an ongoing selection board to anyone outside their immediate chain of command. Informal office calls or social visits in the area of the board deliberations are prohibited. No board member may divulge details of the deliberative process to outside parties, including seniors and subordinates, nor divulge any results before the official release of the selection list. Board members serve under oath to not engage in or give the appearance of preferential treatment to any individual or group of officers under consideration. Board members are obligated to report any suspected impropriety.

Integrity of Process. Information to be provided to the board is strictly regulated and comes from the officer's personnel record and correspondence. Boards are announced at least 30 days ahead of time, along with the names of all officers to be considered by the board, to provide candidates time to review, correct and update their official records. Officers may write a letter to the board providing additional information or clarification. No memoranda, good or bad, may be forwarded from third parties, except where attached to correspondence provided by the officer. Some information, like spouse employment, is forbidden for consideration.

No board member may introduce into deliberation any information, good or bad, other than that allowed by regulation. Board members' personal knowledge or evaluation of a candidate's professional qualifications can only be considered by boards selecting for promotion to general officer. No one has the right to represent themselves or anyone else in person in front of the board or the secretary; efforts to communicate with board members to influence decisions are

an infraction of military regulations. The secretary has the right to appear before the board; however, all comments made will be recorded, written and distributed to all board members.

The secretary or designee will conduct random interviews of board presidents, members, recorders and administrative staff to ensure that boards are conducted according to applicable law, regulation and guidelines.

Integrity of Decisions. Recommendations are made by a majority vote of board members; the president of the board is not permitted to use his authority to prevent a vote on any given candidate. No official, civilian or military, may direct that a particular individual be recommended or not recommended by the board. The Board Report is submitted to the secretary, who may forward it to the US president for approval, or return it to the board with a request to review certain matters. If the secretary requests the removal of a name, and provides the board with additional information, this information must also be provided to the individual, who is given a chance to respond. The secretary does not, however, have the right to change the board report; only the US president has the right to remove the name of an officer recommended for promotion prior to the report's approval. Following approval, the report is submitted to the US Senate, who approves all promotions to the rank of major and above.

Source: Department of the Army, *Officer Promotions*, Army Regulation 600–8–29 (25 February 2005), www.army.mil/usapa/epubs/pdf/r600_8_29.pdf.

Applying the Strategic Approach: Integrity, Transparency, Accountability

Humans are complex creatures. Assessing this complexity is difficult by logic alone and our judgements about others are often highly intuitive. This is necessary and good: our intuitive assessments about other people take into account an enormous amount of information and are reasonably accurate. However, intuition is also highly subjective, diverse between people and prone to influence by other psychological factors. In personnel management, as in leadership, the principle challenge is not to eliminate intuitive assessment and judgement but rather to balance it with standardisation and objectivity. Any anti-corruption effort must take the limits of objectivity on personnel matters into account if it is to succeed.

Integrity

At its most fundamental, integrity is about the decision-making process. What information was input? What was the decision? Who made it? Why? The integrity of decision making is maximized—and standardization and objectivity supported—if functions within the personnel system are clearly delineated. Key functions should include:

- *Determining current/future personnel requirements:* This creates the independent yardstick by which other actions are measured. It is a logical Ministry of Defence/General Staff function.

- *Strategic planning for manpower use and development:* This sets out policies and approaches for developing human resources needed to meet requirements in the short-, mid- and long-term. It includes developing guidance (for approval by political authority) for major actions, like selection boards, as well as setting the framework in which daily personnel decisions will be taken by personnel administrators and commanders. This is also logically a Ministry of Defence/General Staff function – but separate from requirements.

- *Personnel administration:* This supports the real-time personnel actions needed to recruit, train, educate, promote, qualify, assign and release specific servicemen. In many systems, there is an autonomous, centrally-run personnel administration working directly for senior MOD/armed forces leadership (within guidance determined by strategic planning). In other systems, this is a function delegated to services. Within personnel administration, there may also be a healthy division of function between those responsible for career management (representing individuals) and those responsible for requirements (representing commanders).

- *Personnel boards:* These provide for consideration, with maximum objectivity and standardisation, of a consolidated group of candidates for actions like promotion and major career milestones. Having temporary boards that are brought together once to act as an impartial jury, based on strict regulations and guidance, also helps ensure impartiality and reduce corruption risk. See Box 5.3 for a detailed example.

- *Statistics/assessment:* This ensures that accurate information regarding personnel actions—and their aggregate impact—is collected, analyzed and distributed to all relevant institutions. Ideally, this should be done with a high degree of autonomy to ensure accurate information on the effectiveness of personnel management is being provided to senior leaders.

- *Commanders:* The principle day-to-day customer of the personnel system, who need to have the flexibility within their commands to freely apply human resources and perform the highly intuitive skill of leadership to achieve objectives. Commanders, or other superiors, are also the principle source of information on personnel performance and frequently play a major role in lobbying the careers of their subordinates and agreeing to incoming assignments. Yet their authority should not be arbitrary or absolute, lest for the sake of short-term expediency it violate the rights of subordinates or undermine the long-term interest of the armed forces in the development of its human resources.

Each element above works to bring a particular perspective to the personnel management process. As they do so, their interaction maximizes the integrity of the system

as a whole and increases standardization and objectivity. For this to work, however, it is important to have internal transparency – whereby accurate information is effectively distributed to all elements of the system. Of course, the smooth interaction between various elements is also important to ensure the system operates efficiently.

Transparency

Ensuring transparency in the area of personnel issues is complicated by several factors. Many important personnel actions are of a routine, almost daily nature, and their application is diffused across the entire system. Collecting accurate information on these actions is a challenge, since administrative reporting is usually done via chain-of-command, making it unlikely that negative information will be forwarded to a higher authority. Automated, real-time reporting systems, delegated to administrative officials within commands, can help ensure that the central personnel management system has complete, up-to-date information on personnel actions taken by commanders.

Another challenge is the cultural divide between units and central staffs. Local deviations from written laws and regulations are often socially sanctioned (and perpetrators protected) by unwritten norms and traditions. These unwritten norms are frequently reinforced by the belief that they are an essential part of a military culture that is vital for success in combat – a strong imperative for those who believe they are likely to face the test of battle. The enforcement of these cultural norms creates strong disincentives for whistleblowers. This can only be mitigated by building trust between the central personnel system and commanders; that is, the "operational" side of the armed forces must believe that the personnel management system supports the goal of victory in battle – rather than administrative perfection. Regular distribution of relevant information via message, commanders' conferences and rotation of operational personnel into the personnel management system can help convince commanders to be constructive stakeholders in the wider personnel system, rather than just focusing on protecting their own prerogatives.

Two additional aspects of transparency are worth mentioning. First is the need to ensure clarity and broad understanding of personnel requirements in order to ensure that all elements of the personnel system share a common vision. Second is the need for transparency to individual servicemen. Servicemen should have full access to their record and be in a position to dispute and change parts that are in error or that they feel do not accurately represent their performance. Likewise, commanders' evaluations should be fully briefed to subordinates and the latter allowed to make a written statement or to appeal the evaluation. Finally, the results of administrative decisions affecting large groups of servicemen should be published; for example, the results of promotion boards or the list of officers awaiting apartments (and their place in the queue). The implementation of these lists should also be publicly available.

Accountability

Three levels of accountability are of specific interest for personnel issues. First is the accountability of commanders and supervisors to the central personnel administration for the execution of their role in the personnel system. Second is the accountability of the central personnel manager to the politically appointed civilian executives responsible for the defence establishment. Third is the responsibility of those executives to parliament and the public.

The individual nature of personnel issues requires a great deal of nuance and judgement in dealing with specific situations. Best practice indicates that supervisors that are in regular contact with the individual are in the best position to make such subjective judgements. Thus, while it is possible to submit such decisions for review by higher authority, this does not necessarily increase objectivity. If mechanisms are not in place to bring new information to the review process, such review can rather act as a further opportunity for subjective decisions – and under conditions where the reviewer is far removed from the practical results of the problem. It is important, therefore, that central personnel administrations minimize the number of commanders' decisions subject to automatic review; rather, they should require automatic reporting and track overall trends to ensure the consistent application of regulations and judgement.

For example, commanders are rightfully the final decision authority on requests for leave (vacation) time; review at a higher level should only be automatic in cases where denial of leave would result in certain negative results (e.g. six months without leave, loss of annual leave allowance, etc.) However, by tracking aggregate data, the central personnel administration can ensure that a commander's discretion is being applied evenly by looking for statistical abnormalities like excessive lost leave for specific personnel or commanders.

Likewise, senior-level executives are well advised to apply oversight mostly at the aggregate level, rather than micromanaging specific personnel cases. A principle goal should be directing and ensuring the integrity of the planning and personnel management systems. Important tools include validation of requirements, issuing planning guidance and providing instructions for selection boards. It is also important to carefully review results of specific personnel programs to determine if they are having the desired impact. Of course, senior executives should review specific personnel decisions with high visibility (and potentially, high corruption risk), as well as conduct spot-checks to verify system integrity.

A key moment for influencing individual decisions is the selection of senior civil and military cadre. Best practice will have political discretion applied in making (or validating) a specific selection out of a pool of candidates that have already been identified by professional military or civil service boards as being qualified.

Political appointees themselves should be accountable to the government and legislature. Legislative powers should include approving reports from promotion or selection boards, as well as individual approval for senior cadre. The legislature should also ensure a clear legal framework regarding human rights and working conditions in the armed forces. An ombudsman should be charged with ensuring that workplace rights are respected.

Final Thoughts

Corruption in the area of personnel can substantially undermine defence output—and national security—in favour of personal gain. Given the enormous resources and time invested in personnel—decades in the case of senior leaders and technical experts—the damage can be serious and lasting. Such corruption can become entrenched, systemic and self-perpetuating as those who paid or pulled strings to rise insist that future generations follow the same path. The result can be the creation of a "shadow system" based on personal contacts, loyalty and corruption that is often linked through retired officers and their families to the wider clan systems within the state. This subverts the regular chain of command and undermines the military ethos of shared risks, meritocracy and willingness to sacrifice personal profit for wider goals.

Dedicated efforts are needed to counter corruption in personnel systems and prevent—or reverse—damage to defence capability and military ethos. Dedicated efforts require the dedicated attention of senior leaders, as well as devoted staff. This staff can be quite small if it is professional, empowered and has direct access to the responsible senior leader.

Of course, a key task for this staff will be to identify and counter specific corruption risks and schemes within the personnel management system. But that should not distract from the principle goal: to build integrity, transparency and accountability of key decision-making processes. This is best done through implementing a system that balances central policy, decision making and oversight with commanders' discretion and initiative. Criteria for inputs and decision making should be clear. Information should be available to all stakeholders (within the bounds of privacy) and there should be measures in place to ensure its accuracy. There should be clarity on who is responsible for decisions and to whom they are accountable. Perhaps most importantly, by focusing on a common set of requirements that reflect a common vision and military ethos, corruption can be made anathema by exposing it for what it is – a key component of possible military failure.