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## Summary

Date: 2022-08-17

Reference number: 3.1.1-2020-1006

RiR 2022:19

# Expansion without priority

– human resources provision of squad leaders,  
soldiers and sailors in continuous service

## Summary

We have audited whether the Swedish Armed Forces are working effectively to achieve their staffing goals to a greater extent regarding squad leaders, soldiers and sailors in continuous service (GSS/K). According to the Swedish Armed Forces' annual reports, the government agency has had a continuous large deficit of GSS/K staff. It is important that military units are staffed for the Swedish Armed Forces to achieve the objectives regarding capability and preparedness that the Riksdag has set out in its defence decision.

Our main conclusion is that the Swedish Armed Forces do not fully have appropriate working methods to reach the staffing goals in terms of the number of GSS/K employees. A few of the Swedish Armed Forces' organisational units account for most of the deficit, although most units have some degree of deficit. The deficit is the result of the Swedish Armed Forces' priorities, limited access to equipment and infrastructure, unclear internal management and because GSS/K staff who leave during the course of the year are not immediately replaced.

## Audit findings

Overall, the number of GSS/K employees is increasing over time and the Swedish Armed Forces do not consider recruitment to be a problem. However, the Swedish Armed Forces have found it difficult to retain GSS/K staff for as long as would be desirable, and have not significantly given priority to efforts to get more people to

stay longer. This can lead to an unnecessary amount of resources being used for recruitment and training, and also to difficulty in staffing the units. The difficulties in retaining personnel are in part due to a lack of equipment, infrastructure, and professional officers, which has made it difficult for the Swedish Armed Forces to provide adequate operations for their GSS/K staff, but also in part because GSS/K staff feel done with their profession after a certain point. The Government and the Riksdag have called on the Swedish Armed Forces to review incentives to convince GSS/K staff to stay longer.

The Swedish Armed Forces' recruitment efforts are mainly focused on conscripts. They also form the main recruitment pool for GSS/K staff. As a result, recruitment generally takes place once a year, when the conscripts complete their military service. This leads to vacancies during the year. When the number of GSS/K staff decreases, it becomes more difficult for those who remain to carry on adequate operations; exercises often require a certain number of staff in order to be relevant. If adequate operations cannot be provided for, this risks decreasing the motivation among GSS/K staff and can thereby lead to more staff leaving.

According to the Swedish National Audit Office, the development of GSS/K staff has been hampered by the Swedish Armed Forces' internal management and prioritisation of funds. The Swedish Armed Forces' internal planning leads to both a strategic target figure and an economically balanced forecast and allocation of funds. These figures may coincide for some organisational units, while for other organisational units the economically balanced forecast is lower than the strategic target figure. The organisational units that carry out the recruitments believe that the economically balanced forecast is dominant. The organisational units with large deficits do not grasp the strategic target figure, since they do not feel that it matches their needs. This management has led to ambiguities concerning how many GSS/K staff any individual organisational unit may employ during a given year and how they should view the allocation of salaries. The number of GSS/K staff has not increased at the rate predicted by the Swedish Armed Forces. When the goal has not been reached at certain points in time, it has been pushed forward, and different dates have applied simultaneously. The goal that should have been reached in 2018 is now to be reached in 2027.

The 2016–2020 defence decision has been underfunded. This, despite the fact that the Swedish Armed Forces have received additional funds for matters such as increasing the number of employees and acquiring more bulk material. This meant that the Swedish Armed Forces have needed to make priorities that may have made it more difficult to reach the staffing goal. The Government took measures to secure a balance between objectives and means ahead of the current defence decision, which applies 2021–2025.

## Recommendations

The Swedish NAO recommends that the Swedish Armed Forces:

- review possible measures to persuade squad leaders, soldiers and sailors to remain longer, in particular at organisational units with large deficits or a high staff turnover rate. They can include clear communication in terms of priorities that are made regarding, for example, allocation of equipment, infrastructure and professional officers and the different tasks that GSS/K staff are expected to perform, as well as measures to develop skills among more experienced staff and make it easier to combine work and private life.
- ensure that the organisational units have a sufficient number of squad leaders, soldiers and sailors on duty throughout the year to be able to continuously conduct adequate operations.
- clarify internal management to ensure that it is understood uniformly across different parts of the organisation. This can be a matter of being clear about the meaning of different concepts, which goals apply and anchoring the goals that are decided.