INTRODUCTION

1. Several combat situations and non-combat related stressors have been reported in current combat conflict in Afghanistan.
2. Accumulating evidence suggests that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the most common sequela resulting from combat (Hoge et al., 2004; Erbes, et al., 2007).
3. Recent researches among military veterans returnees from Afghanistan reported that 11.2% met screening criteria for PTSD and 22.3% met screening criteria for Partial PTSD (Hoge et al., 2004; Pietrzak et al., 2009).

OBJECTIVES

- Socio-Demographic Questionnaire (SDQ; Maia & Osório, 2009).
- Combat & Deployment Experience Scale (CDES, Maia & Osório, 2009).
- Response to Traumatic Event Scale (RTES; McIntyre & Ventura, 1996).

Participants

113 male (mean age 26.7; S.D. = 3.3) military commandos (special forces) who had completed at least one deployment in Afghanistan. Most participants were single (64.6%; n = 73), reporting having an intermediate school diploma (91.1%; n = 103) and were drawn from junior enlisted ranks - private to corporal (80.5%; n = 91).

RESULTS

PTSD Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No PTSD (n</th>
<th>Partial PTSD (n</th>
<th>Full PTSD (n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants (n = 113)</td>
<td>100 (88)</td>
<td>10 (9)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bivariate Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Combat Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Adverse Physical Conditions</td>
<td>-.16+</td>
<td>.38***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Unit-Related Problems</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.34***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Deployment Duration</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.16+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p <.01; **p <.05; ***p <.01

DISCUSSION

- Participants in our investigation endorsed multiple combat experiences and adverse physical conditions during military deployment.
- Contrary to our expectations, the prevalence of PTSD was low, but PTSD symptoms are significantly related with adverse physical conditions and combat experiences.

REFERENCES

- Pietrzak et al. (2009) Depression & Anxiety 26; 739 – 744.

CONCLUSIONS

- This research provides an initial look at the mental health symptoms among Portuguese special forces deployed in Afghanistan.
- Based on these findings, it is essential the creation of special programs that evaluate and monitor all Portuguese military members, as well as to provide them with psychological and psychiatric care if needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Angela Maia for her tireless teaching and inspirations.