



Three armies – one battalion

The Bundeswehr, Dutch and Czech armies tuned in Germany the preparation of the Battalion Task Force earmarked for the Enhanced Forward Presence force (eFP) in Lithuania



Subscribing to the PESCO project, the European Union Member States made an important step towards expanding defence cooperation

The Czech Republic among signatories

Building the European Union Battle Groups became a regular effort for our military a long time ago. At the end of the last year, the European defence cooperation marked another major step ahead. Twenty-three states including the Czech Republic signed the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). That is in no way any duplication of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; it rather serves in a complementary role. The agreement is designed to provide for a faster and more effective response by the European Union to various events outside its boundaries.

PESCO will soon become a new platform for training and for sharing costs of the EU military operations, joint investments into procurement of defence capabilities as well as modernisation of military infrastructure. In this phase, the Czech Armed Forces will join three specific projects: military mobility, joint European medical command and the centre of excellence for European Union training missions.

The signatories undertook to regularly increase their defence budgets to the effect of achieving common goals; raise the proportion of their defence budgets dedicated to investments to twenty percent in the medium term; realise joint strategic armaments projects supported by the European Defence Fund; increase their defence research expenditures to two percent of national defence budgets; expand cooperation in the

domain of cyber defence; provide working groups and logistic support for EU Battle Groups and joint missions (particularly EUFOR). That also involves improvement of force interoperability and joint funding of deployed operations plus higher engagement in European defence markets.

PESCO signatories are also required to meet the following conditions. They should continue to develop their defence

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capabilities, including participation in multinational and European armaments programs. In case needed, they have to be able to provide forces and the associated logistic support for the period of 30 to 120 days with 5 to 30 days of notice to move. Observance of those conditions is overseen by the European Defence Agency. Every Member State was tasked to develop a plan laying down the way they would contribute to the cooperation effort. In twelve-month intervals, the performance on that plan will be checked in terms of how individual Member States deliver on their commitments.

From legal perspective, PESCO defence cooperation leans on Article 42 and 46 of the Treaty on the European Union. Experts say PESCO compares to a sort of a "military Schengen". It is an endeavour that has the

potential of becoming an important step towards building a joint European military in the years ahead. Despite close cooperation on the European level, all Member States retain an exclusive responsibility and sovereignty over their armed forces. The responsibility for joint coordination is vested with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Defence Agency, EU Military Staff and EU Military Committee. The Czech Military Representative in the European Union is Lieutenant General František Maleninský. The Deputy Military Representative and the Head of the Military Unit of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic in the European Union is Colonel Ladislav Sekan.

by Vladimír Marek



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Identification number: 60162694

Address: Rooseveltova 23, 161 05 Praha 6,
Czech Republic
Phone: +420 973 215 648, +420 973 215 786

Editor-in-chief: Vladimír Marek
Layout: Milan Syrový

Translation: Jaroslav Furmánek, Jan Jindra
Cover photo: Jana Deckerová

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Karla Šlechtová was born on May 22, 1977, at Karlovy Vary. Between 1995 and 2001 she studied at the University of West Bohemia, Faculty of Economy. Fields of study: Public Administration, Management, Regional Development, Business Management, Economics. In the following three years, she was employed in Brussels, with CSR Europe organization, as Project Portfolio Coordinator in the Department of Communication and Membership. After returning from Belgium, she led and managed EU projects at the Prague European Centre for Public Administration. Later she worked as a Senior Consultant at Deloitte Consulting Comp. In February 2011 she joined the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic. From June 2014 until September 2014, she served as Director for the EU Funds at the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. From September 2014 until December 13, 2017, she assumed the office of Minister for Regional Development for the Bohuslav Sobotka government. The same day she took over the office of Defence Minister in Andrej Babiš' government. She can speak English, French and German.

Minister of Defence Karla Šlechtová:
There are professionals in the army,
who know what they are doing, but
they need suitable conditions

Soldiers are a priority

On Wednesday, December 13, 2017, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš introduced Karla Šlechtová as Minister of Defence. Right in her first speech, she said she wanted to invest in people, soldiers, into the Czech army, to be able to defend the country. The priority of the new Minister of Defence is also the modernization of the army. Immediately, after taking office, she began a series of working visits to the units and facilities of the Ministry of Defence.

Dear Mrs. Minister, the public was a bit surprised by your decision to leave the already running Ministry for Regional Development (MRD) and to become the Minister of Defence. What made you do that?

Above all, to be a Minister of Defence is a great honour and a tribute to me. I feel strongly responsible to both the state and the citizens. For many people it might sound like a cliché, but I was brought up to patriotism, and that's a huge value for me. I know that soldiers understand this very much. And why did I accept the offer? Politicians should go

where they need them most. I do not conceal that the offer to run the defence department pleased me, but the minister does not choose where to go: he or she goes there, where the Prime Minister and the President will send him or her. In three years, I set up the Ministry for Regional Development, my results, including new laws, were quite visible, and that was probably the reason why I was nominated for this new post. In any case, I'm going to do that with the same enthusiasm with which I reformed the MRD.

I am a graduate economist, a manager, I worked on audits, communicated with the

European Union and the United Nations, and I have diplomatic experience. Moreover, I have many years of experience with public procurement, including the preparation of a new law, which fundamentally regulates their proclamation. So, if the Czech Republic needs to speed up military orders, in a way that everything remains clear and transparent, who else should go here? But it is valid also the opposite, the Defence opens the door for Czech arms factories and industrial companies abroad...

Of course, I have no ambition to control the generals. In the army, there are professionals



who know what they are doing, but they need appropriate conditions. And that's my main task, to create them. In the first 14 days I visited Tracie, ČSLA, Chrudim, and I was pleased to find a lot of wonderful men and women with a high level of professional honour. It's a pleasure to work with such people. And as I'm going to visit other garrisons and units, I think a lot of nice meetings are still waiting for me.

You came to say from the bottom of civil service to the post of Minister of Regional Development, because you had gone through a number of offices before. Is the knowledge of the state administration an advantage, because such person is not so easily deceived?

Surely. You have to know the officials to understand them, you must be able to distinguish between common and necessary administrative processes from tricks, how to do nothing or not to take personal responsibility. And that's my next task. I want to make the ministry's work system more clear, to run more effective, and to make it more transparent. The public should also know that

the Ministry of Defence is not just an army, but there are many other responsibilities, such as the management of five state-owned enterprises with thousands of employees.

Your grandfather was a soldier, and your family has a certain history during the Second World War. What was your relationship to the army and war veterans in the past?

Yes, my grandfather used to be a soldier; we have a lot of photos from that time at home. But regardless of family history, my relationship to the army and veterans has been positive for a long time. I always honoured honest people who were not afraid to put the ideals before their health and life. I was lucky to meet them repeatedly at veteran festivals and during memorial meetings.

At the MRD, I met Mountain Rescue Services members, on trips to villages and towns volunteer firefighters. They all joined their lives with risks, just like soldiers or members of the Active Reserve. I appreciate these people, often unusually modest, who contribute to the fact that our country is regarded as one of the safest countries in the world. Everyone

deserves not only my respect, but also the respect of the public.

Many were probably surprised by your knowledge of defence department when you came to the ministry. How did you manage to get acquainted with these issues in such a short time and study them?

As the famous ancient Greek philosopher Socrates said, "I know that I know nothing." I accept the information with humility. I've tried a lot to study and I'm still learning.

Before the Christmas holidays, you surprised your colleagues that your car pulled over at their places and you personally wished them. You are known for having a lot of talk and chatting with them. Do you see this personal contact as an advantage?

This is not an advantage. This ought to be self-evident for every manager and the duty of each commander. If you want people to follow you, you have to know a lot about them. My goal is to keep the soldiers as close as possible. That's why I visited unexpectedly

We have recorded

"I am very glad that we came to agreement with the leadership of the General Staff on several priorities, including soldiers, equipment, armaments, gear and good boots. Simply, so that they could get everything they need for the defence of our state," said Karla Šlechtová during her visit to this Army Command. "Naturally, other priorities include namely the equipment, especially related to large purchase orders, which I'm just going to sign." Alongside she enumerated orders for Mobile Air Defence Radars (MADR), purchase of multipurpose helicopters and purchase of new artillery pieces. She pointed out that with the generals of the Czech Army they discussed together the increase in the number of military professionals, as well as those in the Active Reserve. She would be glad if there were five thousand of them if the Czech army in 2020, which is five years earlier than originally planned. Similarly, she spoke about meeting the plans of recruiting professional soldiers. According to Karla Šlechtová, the Czech army has a lot to offer and addresses citizens to be interested in the conditions of joining the army.

"We have 24,000 soldiers. My goal is to gradually increase the number of men and women in uniform to 30,000, which is corresponding to the country of our size. In addition, we need five thousand active reservists. The situation seems satisfactory, but I will try to increase those numbers, even with the help of greater defence education. In the area of financial payments for soldiers, there has been a significant improvement in recent years, with an average income somewhere around 40,000 per month, after adding up the pays and bonuses. However, soldier salaries are one of the things that I want to look at," said Karla Šlechtová in the context in the interview for website Parlamentní listy.

She also stressed that she is a strong proponent of our membership in NATO and the EU. "They are for us security and stability certainties that do not have a comparable alternative. We are a member country just because we do not defend by ourselves in the event of conflict, so that we shall have allies to help us. The North Atlantic Alliance was built on this collective defence. And what about people's awareness of how to behave? We have to build this gradually, since the youth. That is why I want to return defence education in schools, both elementary and secondary ones," she added.



some garrisons, a day before New Year's Eve and wished them, who were on duty, all good things to the New Year.

You mentioned that during your visit to the General Staff it took some time to start talking to the generals. Maybe it was because the fact that soldiers mostly express themselves with regard to their profession very briefly?

This was probably caused by several factors. They had an unknown person in front of them; they did not know what they could expect from me and what I knew. I would not like to confuse the word "talk" as a "gossip". Talking means clarifying, arguing, and putting into context. Mere information without context is useless. Therefore I asked a lot about what the soldiers most needed. It is good to sort out what I heard with what was written in the plans on paper. Finally, the outcome of my visit was a debate that I considered to be beneficial to both parties.

You have a reputation for great workmanship and also strictness, perhaps some people are afraid of you...

Worries? If a clerk works honestly, there is no need to worry. There is a fear only for those who do not understand that the Ministry of Defence is not a kindergarten, but it needs full engagement. The security of our homeland depends on the military, and my job at the ministry is to get for soldiers the best conditions for training, equipment and armaments. This is a professional honour in this field.

Probably no ministry has so many ceremonial and memorial events as the defence department. How much do you personally want to participate in them, and will they not lead you away from important conceptual work?

Traditions form an army. If we respect the meaning of our work, we must have patterns and repeat rituals. I consider my attendance

at veteran meetings or festive events as an honour for those who often freeze in rain or snow. It is a kind of thanks and also a reinforcement of the team spirit of the army. But just to celebrate and not to work, it is not my real style.

It is said that your main job in the ministry will be launching the acquisition process. What specific measures do you intend to take in this regard?

I've already started with them. I work with different information and I need to understand the system. Where there are conceptual documents, they must be consistent. We have a concept of military development, a medium-term plan, an acquisition plan. And it is not possible for a project to be in one document and in the next one it was missing. Therefore, I get acquainted with the role of all involved elements in this process. The specialists on given issues, both Czech and European, explain me the connections. I try to shorten the time of introducing technical specifications, so that these requirements would be conceptual and comprehensive.

We cannot buy weapon systems without knowing who will supply the ammunition to us, who will take care of maintenance, who will train their personnel. In this respect, it has not always worked conceptually.

My first findings made me believe that some changes will have to be made in the future. We will begin with a properly prepared specification of real needs, prepared by the General Staff. I will not buy unnecessary equipment in order to spend money. I want to know from the generals the clear needs of the soldiers and from the officials to hear if we have the money and how and when everything will be done.

You mentioned that your priorities include soldiers, their equipment, their gear and accoutrement. What else do you want to focus on?

I want to increase the number of people serving in the army. I emphasize first-quality people. I want to reach or at least to approach



the target number of 30,000 soldiers and 5,000 members of the Active Reserve. But that means to motivate a lot of people, to awaken in them patriotism and the desire to protect the Republic.

One of the big mistakes is to think that a professional soldier is a cynical calculator who thinks just for a pay. The Czech army is not a Foreign Legion. It has to be a professional, well paid, but also a dedicated, perceiving their job as an honour and a mission. I do not want anonymous troops, I want concrete soldiers, with families and friends proud of them, and who will be a model for others. It may have seen naive in today's pragmatic time, but I think it is one of the things that will keep this country with a straight backbone. Supposing I am in the head of the department for a sufficient period of time, I will also focus on education, the proliferation of pre-military education and introducing modern military preparation at elementary and secondary schools.

I cannot do miracles, I do not have a magic wand with which you wave and everything will be done. All these plans and activities are long-term. I'll be glad if I get a chance in the coming months to implement them.

The task of the Czech Republic, as a member of NATO, is to meet the obligations of the defence budget. How important is the further increase in defence spending?

Absolutely important. With old technology, compatible with the army of the Warsaw Pact, it is not possible to survive in the 21st century. And good equipment costs money, nothing can be done about it. And it's not just equipment and weapons. It also includes high quality helmets, camouflage suits, bullet-proof jackets, boots, a personal GPS... And I do not talk about drones, clever ammunition, and other "refinements" of this century. We cannot have milliard-dollar helicopters and the soldiers who will buy bulletproof vests and helmets for their own money. This is not only inappropriate, it is even immoral.

Czech soldiers have long been appreciated for service in operations abroad. At the same time, some politicians are calling for a reduction of our participation in missions. What would you say to these critics?

I've repeated it many times. Foreign missions are proof that the Czech Republic takes its part in international groupings seriously. Resolving conflicts right there, where they generated, is cheaper and safer than dealing with them on our borders, in airspace or in immigration camps. Moreover, I'm not talking about the fact that missions are an invaluable combat experience for soldiers.

And there is one more thing to know. This year, in addition to the hundred years since the establishment of the Republic, we have recalled 80 years since 1938 and 50 years since 1968. As you know, in both cases, our army alone could not stand against much stronger opponents, nor did it stand. But more important for us is to have strong and reliable partners to guarantee our independence.

Therefore, our membership in NATO and as well in the EU is important. And if we want counterparts who behave honestly and reliably, above all we have to act in the same way. That is why we have to be part of the combined foreign missions, for that reason we have to keep our promise to give 2% of GDP for defence. We do it for ourselves.

And what message would you send to soldiers, readers of A report magazine, who fully realize the role of the army in the 21st century?

I wish all people who are honestly dedicated to changing things for the better, all the best. And I wish them every success in this eternal struggle. I repeat, I look forward to cooperation and I stress that I'm here for you, I'm here to help you.

*Prepared by Vladimír Marek,
photos: MRD archive and Jana Deckerová*





To Afghanistan as one team

The drilling of shooting, tactics, encounter battle with an opponent, demanding several kilometres movement with the heavy workload, all under tactical scenario, but also cooperation with air support in the air-to-earth combat. At the beginning of October last year, the 10th Guard Company BAF (Bagram Airfield) opened the preparation for Afghanistan. The core of unit is formed by members of the 42nd Mechanized Battalion from Tábor. Further it will be supplemented by specialists from other units of the Czech Army.

The main task of the unit in Afghanistan will be, above all, the outside protection of Bagram Base. This is directly related to patrols sent a few miles away to the vicinity of the base, in order to search and scan potential threats, to eliminate impending rocket attacks.

Doupov Mountains are demanding

The prerequisite for successful operations is repeated training. Its goal is among others also cohesiveness of the unit, so that the unit could act as a team at the deployment site. The Tábor soldiers planned everything. In October last year, even the first exercise in the Military Training Area Hradiště, they stirred all participants up. "We started a bit unconventional, but it was our intention to get individual platoons under high physical and psychological pressure," says company commander Captain Viktor Patia. "The goal was to verify the selection of personnel at the very beginning and identify the possible risk behaviour of individuals."

After standard training in the first part of live exercise, within four days they reached

the bottom of their capacities, all under the supervision of the Psychological Service of the ACR. Within 75km of the movement by foot, through the Doupov Mountains, under extreme weather conditions, the soldiers performed complex tasks, such as reconnaissance of a historic launching area of missiles, they assumed an observation post, and at the last locality they had to react to shooting with live ammunition. "The simulated environment of Afghanistan, together with psychologists, helped us to reveal the personalities of individual soldiers and to build a team we can rely on," the commander continues.

"For seventeen years of service in the combat unit, I have not met such a challenging exercise," Sergeant First Class M. D. comments the key moments of just finished training.

Team is the basis for success

In operations abroad, where soldiers have to rely on one another, interpersonal relationships play one of the key roles. Other complications the platoons had to solve

included a rapid movement towards, the wounded in the Water Reservoir Jordán. They had to overcome the dam using rafts and then to move together with the wounded to the bridge. From there, the unit had to rope down the rafts on the water level, and subsequently rappel down on them.

Another example was the extended weekend, when the company was deployed for the second time. Its first part was a game inspired by the TV gameshow Fort Boyard, where on a six-kilometre route the masters competed with blindfold platoon members in loading the cartridges with mixed rounds, in the last match game, in radio check, or in Kim's spy game to promote memory and observation skills, and also in other abilities. After all platoons reached the goal which was the climbing simulator Jakub, they had to move through the climbing path called Ferrata to occupy a platoon strong point on the top floor. The challenge of the day was a fight for the best wrestler on the ground, within each platoon. The peak of the competition was a night fight, who would become a champion



of the 10th Guard Company. The atmosphere was unrepeatable and the ultimate winner of the 10th Guard Company BAF became Corporal Richard B. of Bravo Platoon.

Air support

During the protection of the base, the platoon was trapped by a strong enemy. The last vehicle of the patrol was destroyed. The fate of the patrol again depends on the commander's decision. First of all, it is necessary to escape from the dangerous zone, gain firepower superiority and correctly define the enemy.

"This was a recoilless cannon on the cross country vehicle, about eight hundred metres away from our forces, further a group of Taliban fighters, four hundred metres in the Green Zone," Captain Patia explains the following training phase. Within 20 minutes of the call, the L-159 ALCA appears, the confirmation of the target is followed by the launch of free flight rockets, together with subsequent verification of destruction in the target area.

"The close air support is one of the main tasks we are doing as a squadron," says the pilot of one of the airplanes. "I think it is beneficial for both sides. The L-159 aircraft is primarily designed to conduct air-to-earth combat, and the experience we gain together today will be useful in the future, when we expect deployments of live ammunition."

Air support provides the unit with a significant advantage over the enemy by firepower and observation, but it is also a significant psychological support for the soldiers, who find themselves in a trap. "The airplane is able not only to positively support our soldiers, but above all, it can intimidate the enemy with its presence over the area, and thus to contribute significantly to the protection of its own forces," says about the situation Master Sergeant Milan J., Senior NCO. "The 212th Tactical Squadron pilots

demonstrated the perfect skills here, as well as tactical air controllers, assigned to our unit. The use of allocated equipment is the key to successful combat activity, and we want to go further in the next training," says Senior NCO.

The programme also included a test of aeromobile operations, using the W3A Sokol helicopter from Kbely Air Base. The use of the helicopter at the deployment site, especially the CH-47 Chinook, provides a significant advantage over the enemy, as there are very little roads in the area, so it is not too difficult for the enemy to estimate the next manoeuvre of the unit when driving out of the base. The use of the helicopter therefore provides utmost concealment during deploying company units.

Every soldier is a living target

In the following days they worked only with live ammunition. "Once again we simulated the situation when the platoon falls into a set trap, performing the protection of the base," Captain Patia continues.

When moving over the open terrain, insurgents detonated the IED (Improvised Explosive Device) and commenced the fire at a patrol. Applying the manoeuvre by fire and movement, the Guard Platoon pushed the enemy back and consequently destroyed them. After that, the unit must review the combat results and secure traces. "Combat shooting is a combination of the tactical and fire preparations, with the use of live ammunition." Units do not know the target situation in advance, nor the time, or the type of attack that might come. Even with a simple tactical theme, this activity is difficult for coordination, quick decision-making of the command corps, searching targets, and the deployment of all available firing means. This is where the integration of the all platoon will appear. There is no better way how to push the unit in preparation forward," says Captain Viktor Patia in conclusion.

The unit is bound for the Hindu Kush in March

The training does not underestimate the preparation of commanders for talks with local officials. It is precisely the relationship with the local population, which will reflect the security situation in the area of deployment.

Up to now, members of the 10th Guard Company BAF have practiced a wide range of abilities to verify that the entry level of the soldiers' training is good. "In December, we also underwent further training at Bechyně, where we verified, in particular under the guidance of members of the EOD Company, our capabilities in the fight against booby-trap explosive devices. Our company will be flying to Afghanistan at the end of March, which gives us enough opportunities to train the unit."

*by Jana Deckerová and First Lieutenant Daniel Piša,
photos by First Lieutenant Daniel Piša*





Report from ongoing preparation of the 10th Guard Company
BAF for the foreign operation of Bagram Air Field Company

Difficult preparation for Afghanistan

A patrol of Czech soldiers approaches the densely populated Afghan village. They move slowly. They monitor the area, as well as villagers. Prudence is essential, death can be at every turn. The vehicles with several soldiers remain on the edge of the village and cover patrol soldiers by observing. Soldiers are approaching to the place where they are supposed to meet the village's highest representative. Patrols are located around the building and protect meeting participants. They are accompanied by an interpreter. The negotiation begins: Salam alejkum – Alejkum salam!

A common Afghan village. Curious villagers all around. The unit of soldiers is stretched at intervals of nearly one hundred metres, but the instructions by the commander always reach each soldier in few seconds. "Keep distances, move on the footpath, and look around and under your feet," says the commander.

Everyone knows that any inattention could have disastrous consequences. Just one wrong step or oversight, as trapping systems can be everywhere. There is constant communication between soldiers. "All clear, I do not see any suspicious move, the road ahead is safe," says the first patrol who spearhead the movement. The unit slowly enters the village. A two-person patrol lies down behind a protective wall and monitors distant surroundings. Other patrols are located around the building where negotiations will take place.

In a visual field of the enemy

The village representatives welcome the commander of the Czech unit and his escort with an interpreter. There is tea prepared on the ground. Everything is in a friendly spirit. The commander as a unit representative highlights the offer of help and protection of the village.

Peace and silence, but after a while, there is a sound of the RPG attack on the vehicle that remained on the edge of the village. "Eleven hours, inside the building I see movement," repeats several times a soldier of advanced patrol in the protective wall. "I've got him! I got him!" reports another soldier who caught the attacker. Soldiers cover by fire their comrades-in-arms who retreat behind buildings for safety. Attackers return shooting.

First aid on the spot

The main task of the whole unit is to get out of the place of fight and retreat to the safety. The commander inspects the state of the unit and asks for the vehicles, which after loading the wounded will cover their retreat. "Cover the retreat by fire," the commander orders.

"Six wounded," says the first information in the communicators. To find a safe hideout is the first principle. Then you can help others. "Penetration of the upper leg, I strangle it, well, you'll be fine," says the soldier giving the treatment to a wounded soldier, and immediately puts a pressure bandage over the wound. The second soldier immediately writes down the time of strangling. "Let's go, you can do it," he screams and supports a wounded soldier, as they are all running in the direction towards the truck, to safety. "Cover us, now!" – The sound of a machine-gun fire spreads across the village.

Part of the unit is retreating to the vehicles, loading the wounded. They are hidden behind one of the buildings. The remaining troops cover their retreat with fire. The task is to load the wounded as quickly as possible and move to safety. In the meantime, the commander

calls a helicopter to transport the wounded to a field hospital.

W-3A Sokol in the role of MEDEVAC

Vehicles bring the wounded to a safe place for further treatment. The wounded must be sorted out, pressure bandages checked, eventually weaken, and the respective time must be put down again. Everything goes very fast. We can see that these processes have been rehearsed by the soldiers many times. After treatment, the wounded are quickly loaded onto vehicles. "Heads in front, legs at the back," says the medic to soldiers with stretchers. And immediately he kneels to the next wounded. Everything must go perfectly; there is no time to delay.

The vehicle is coming to the place where the helicopter is going to land. One soldier prepares an improvised cross made of aluminium foil for the place of landing. The golden foil shines on white snow. "Three minutes before the helicopter's landing," the commander says.

The accompanying soldiers form a circle. They watch everything carefully. The helicopter is heard in a while. It lands on an improvised foil cross. Snow is all around. The propellers are still rotating, but the soldiers are already taking out the wounded and are ready to go to the aircraft. The wounded are loaded in a short time, after that the soldiers pull back to the vehicles. The helicopter rotates the propeller, and in a while it leaves with the wounded aboard.

Harmonization check

"The final preparation of the 10th Guard Company BAF (Bagram Air Field) here at Boletice, culminated in two-week training," says First Lieutenant Daniel Piša, Deputy Commander of the 10th Guard Company BAF and at the same time the Head of the Boletice exercise. "The core of the unit is formed by members of the 42nd Mechanized Battalion Tábor. For their deployment in the foreign operation in Afghanistan the soldiers have been preparing intensively since October last year. They will be deployed by the end of this March."

At the Ondřejov Firing Range the soldiers improved the firing of guns, small arms shooting, throwing hand grenades, and then there began a three-day review of the coordination of individual platoons. This comprehensive training was attended by soldiers from 131st Artillery Battalion Jince and air support was provided by members of the 24th Air Transportation Base located at Prague-Kbely.

Afghan reality at Boletice

"The individual scenarios were inspired by the realities the soldiers might encounter during their engagement in the foreign operation," says First Lieutenant Piša. It is said that the combat firing scenario was partly

inspired by the real event that four soldiers of the 2nd Guard Company had to solve four years ago. When dealing with local officials in a densely populated Afghan village, there was an RPG attack on the vehicle. The incident resulted in six severely wounded. "It was necessary to take them to safety, give them first aid, prepare them for removal and transport by the helicopter W-3A Sokol in the role of MEDEVAC.

It is important to reach the bottom

One of the main priorities of the training of the members of the 10th Guard Company BAF was also the harmonization of the whole unit, which will act as a team for at least six months in performing operations in Afghanistan.

"Training was constructed from the very beginning in October last year on both physical and, above all, psychological demands," states Piša. "We are the unit that built training on this reality the entire phase of six-month. Even soldiers who underwent several foreign operations said that never before they had experienced such a challenging and realistic preparation. During the preparation, they reached not only their physical but also their psychic bottom," adds the deputy commander.

The fact that this training of soldiers was very demanding is proved even by army psychologists who were also involved in their preparation from the beginning. "An important part of preparation for a foreign mission is for everyone likewise a psychological part," says psychologist of the 42nd Mechanized Battalion First Lieutenant Patrik Weiss.

Text and photos by Jana Deckerová





CIRC Centre operators protect defence department communication and information systems for 24 hours, seven days a week

Every day under hackers' fire

Will the next world war take place in cyberspace? Daily attacks and collecting information can be only a slight prelude to a fatal blow. Today, hackers around the world are trying to break through the walls of communication networks and get inside individual information systems. They are often interested in social networks and individuals' accounts, but getting a scalp of a government organization is tempting for many of them, as it is very prestigious, from their point of view. The Czech Army is also aware of the risks associated with cybercrime or cyber-attacks. Like almost every army, even the ACR has a team of IT specialists whose combat tools are special computer systems, professional knowledge and abilities to prevent cyber-attacks or successfully defend themselves against them. An indispensable role in this fight is played by the experience gained from cyber trenches.

Modern technologies transport present-day conflicts into cyberspace. The internet has become a battlefield – a network of networks that breaks down any physical boundaries and obstacles (oceans, rivers, mountains, forests). Computer attackers, hackers and terrorists present a very serious security problem, not only just for the military and its information systems, but for the entire infrastructure of each state. It's hard to predict anything, but it's possible that the cyber war is much closer

than ever before. Its consequences may be not only the physical damage of infrastructure, but also the destruction of human lives.

Every day on the battlefield

"In order to ensure the ability to prevent or minimize cyber-attacks inside their networks and information systems, for more than ten years the Czech defence department has been building the CIRC Centre (Computer Incident Response Capability), providing immediate

responses to computer security incidents. With the use of continuous monitoring of important segments of the data networks of the defence department, the Centre defends information systems assets against abuse or disgrace," says Lieutenant Colonel Tomáš Hrabovský from CIS Integration and Interoperability Department, CIS Agency (Communication and Information Systems Agency), which methodically guides the CIRC Centre in Brno. "We have to realize that these

soldiers are constantly under the "fire" of an anonymous adversary, who attacks without warning, hidden in cyberspace anywhere in the world. His attacks are very sophisticated and all advantages of the attacker are on his side."

Operators' weaponry is a keyboard

The alpha and omega are for CIRC specialists their knowledge and abilities to defend communication and information technology against hackers. A soldier of this first front line is the CIRC operator, whose task is to monitor several "Matrix" monitors, in which there are only Ones and Zeros of cyber world, i.e. a flow of digital data.

"Our operators provide continuous security monitoring, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Their task is to detect irregularities from information received (for example strange events, flows or logos) that can be evaluated as an attack on the basis of predefined rules and experience. The weapons of a CIRC's cyber soldier are therefore not only keyboards and special security technologies, but above all his skills, expertise and experience," explains Lieutenant Colonel Jaroslav Pachlopník, Chief of the CIRC Centre.

Training cyber space defenders

When comparing the training of soldiers in combat units with those who guard the information and communication networks of the MoD we find that these army specialists, whose main weapons are keyboards and specialized knowledge, must also undergo classical military training, shooting, annual examinations, to pick up everything, what other soldiers do in units of the Czech Army.

"We have to combine our tasks with classical military training and at the same time gain new experience and improve the use of increasingly modern and sophisticated security technologies. A cyber specialist is learning continuously, almost daily, according to scenarios being invented for us by real invaders," says Lieutenant Colonel Pachlopník. "Every cyber-attack is specific in its own way. It makes use of different procedures and techniques to exploit their vulnerability – weak points or technology mistakes and shortcomings in security settings. Our priority is timely identification and response to security threats and cyber incidents, detailed analysis and reporting of facts."

International exercise – the basis for success is cooperation

"The exchange of experience, training cooperation and co-ordination in addressing cyber-security incidents across countries, those are major objectives and contribution of international exercises," explains Lieutenant Colonel Pachlopník, Chief of the CIRC Centre.

On this virtual battlefield, army specialists, along with other civilian and security experts from academic and private software companies, regularly participate in various

international cyber exercises, as a joint national Czech team. The most important include Locked Shields or NATO Cyber Coalition.

One of those who prepare or participate in international exercises is Captain Tomáš Šlajs, Chief of Group for Detection and Analysis of Vulnerabilities. "I have been here practically from the very beginning, since 2007, when the army began to monitor and defend its networks and systems centrally. I went through all basic positions, e.g. I was there when the first ticket was set up to solve a security incident, or when the first rotation of operators began in 8.5 hours mode."

Exercise scenarios are based on reality

The preparation of the international cybernetics exercise takes almost a year. Individual states are invited, several planning conferences take place, and in this preparatory phase some exercise scenarios are devised. "As I already participated in a number of similar exercises, both on the part of those who prepared the exercise, or in the position of a member of the national team, I know that the greatest benefit for all participants is the understanding of how the states and their institutions work during cyber-attacks," says Captain Šlajs. "Individual incidents are answered differently in each state. That is why is important for participant states to know namely the functioning of the internal processes of a respective state. The national team that solves an assigned attack scenario; it actually only verifies knowledge gained in everyday practice. Nevertheless, the scenario is always based on the latest and most real cyber security incidents. We already covered cyber security incidents, related to the leakage of sensitive data through compromised mobile devices, attacking systems for monitoring and controlling industrial equipment, or armed unmanned vehicles, as well as common shortcomings in the security of communications and information systems and facilities that are important to the performance of the army."

In international exercises, the Czech team usually occupies leading positions and, with

its knowledge and successfully solved tasks, they hold the position of recognized experts and specialists of cyber warfare. "The exercises are important for us as we come to know new technologies and practices that are used not only by coalition states, but also by our national security counterparts and, last but not least, by specialists from the civilian and academic spheres. We use this knowledge to plan the modernization and development of our army security technologies that we use every day to defend our systems and networks against cyber-attacks," says Captain Šlajs.

Not to rest on laurels


"However, the results of the day-to-day work of our CIRC specialists in detecting cyber-attacks or achievements in international exercises cannot make us calm. On the contrary, we must constantly seek new challenges and goals to further advance and improve our technological and professional capabilities," Colonel Hrabovský summarizes at the end. "The dynamic development of information technology, weapon systems, deepening dependence of society and the army on computers and their trouble-free operation, all this put ever more demands on the expansion of both technological and personnel sources. Cyber space within the North Atlantic Alliance was recognized as another combat domain. That is why even the Czech army must respond to this demand. Just as we need a sufficient number of top-trained pilots, artillery men, tankers, chemists, engineers, specialists, and many other soldiers to successfully meet the country's defence tasks, there is also a need to build sufficient structures and prepare necessary number of military cyber specialists to accomplish all tasks coming from cyberspace. Supposing we miss a train in this area, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow we will not get into it."

If you are interested in a career with the CIRC Centre, please send your CV to the following e-mail address: circ-iho@army.cz

by Jana Deckerová,

photos by Captain Lucie Masaříková





Deepening co-operation between NATO member states in planning and implementing operations

Allied Spirit VIII

More than 4,000 soldiers from 10 nations took part in the exercise in Hohenfelde, Germany, at the turn of January and February of this year. The Army of the Czech Republic was represented by 30 members of the 22nd Helicopter Air Base Sedlec, Václavice near Náměšť nad Oslavou. Compared to the previous years, our role was mainly in command support for air operations, i.e. without the direct representation of our pilots or mechanized brigades, as it used to be in previous years.

The aim of the exercise was to train personnel in airborne (helicopter) operations in a multinational environment, developing interoperability and sustainability of the DSQOC (Deployable Squadron Operation Centre) in the structure of the Helicopter Task Force (US Army) and to verify and adapt the helicopter operations conducted by the DSQOC. The role of the US aviation task force (Czech soldiers were part of the command element) was the air support to ground operations of the 12th Multinational Mechanized Brigade (MMBde), under the Polish command. This support mainly consisted of offensive and transport operations, including the transport of wounded persons (MEDEVAC). There was a full range of aviation assets, namely AH-64, CH-47 and UH-60, for transport and in MEDEVAC versions. The move to the exercise took place in two waves. The advanced guard (it arrived two days before the main body) was made up of logistics personnel, DSQOC staff, and drivers of the 14th Logistics Regiment, transporting materiel. The main body of the training unit was moved by the bus. During the transport, except for a very long wait

on the D1 motorway, nothing interesting happened.

According to the scenario

The concept was fixed in advance. The enemy forces (a fictitious alliance of countries called Skolkan) moved from Scandinavia to the southwest in order to gain dominance in the region. The newly formed enemy alliance occupied Central European territory and crossed the border of Germany, where NATO-led task forces were set up to stop enemy forces. The 12th MMBde was part of forces, preparing for a defensive operation in order to exhaust an enemy and to create a counterattack opportunity. The whole exercise and our role in it were summed up by Captain Filip Šilhan, commander of our unit. "The participation in Allied Spirit VIII exercise is a chance for us, especially in terms of direct integration of Czech personnel into the staff of an American helicopter unit. Due to the division of the participants into individual groups of the staff, we found that it was no longer possible to plan in Czech, according to Czech rules, but we had to learn and follow the procedures that were the standard for

our superior level. This integration method undoubtedly enabled the development of interoperability of Czech personnel in planning real helicopter operations in the most realistic environment. Deeper understanding the organization of work and the structure of our traditional coalition partner's command is another bonus for us."

Support for all

For our soldiers, engaging in structures was a significant extension of experience in the international environment. Together we evaluated who needed air support, how it would be provided, and what equipment would be used for the most effective rearrangement of forces and their support. First Lieutenant Julia Frassetto, an American helicopter pilot, said about this combined training: "During the exercise, we emphasize our readiness to support ground forces, how to run operations effectively. We even learn some states of better coordination of ground and air forces that must operate seamlessly, hand in hand. The exercise enables to multinational forces to add us to their plans and take advantage of what we can offer as

a strategic asset for more effective mission management."

Czech airmen were embedded within the aviation task force prior to moving to the tactical training area, also known as "the box." There was a great coordination of maintenance services, when Sgt 1st Class Paul Kitchen demonstrated the steps required for service and repair operations on a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. At the same time, it was a language test, in which every member of the 22nd Helicopter Air Base proved to be successful. For a long time, we have been in the forefront of language training in Europe. Because ground preparation was quickly mastered, especially with regard to the above-mentioned maintenance service, the helicopter could be deployed earlier and the support arrived on time, without undue delay.

Operational dialogue

Within the Operational Centre, a dialogue often was conducted, with regard to the correct deployment of forces. Therefore it was not only the support to other nations, but also the exchange of important and valuable experience between two countries, namely the US and the Czech Republic that worked together to successfully accomplish the mission. It included practicing all possible scenarios, including deploying the AH-64 Apache during checking the perimeter or protecting a shot down aircraft and performing MEDEVAC operations. From the logistical point of view, it was necessary to secure the aircraft bridge using the CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Because of their capacity, they could supply ground units but, if necessary, also to deliver an airdrop

factsheet

Over 4,000 participants from 10 nations came together to train during the exercise Allied Spirit VIII. The exercise took place at Hohenfels Training Area, south-eastern Germany. In addition to 2,420 participants from the United States, there also participated militaries and NATO allies from Albania, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom. Multinational brigades were commanded by the 12th Mechanized Brigade from Poland.



or to assembly the wounded. This was primarily a task for the UH-60 Blackhawk, but they also practiced a variant of using the Chinook. The most important thing was to keep moving forward, do not stop, and to avoid unnecessary delays. In this way to beat off the enemy's attack (or to paralyze him or completely eliminate) and get the occupied area back under our full control. All this was accomplished and according to the words by Captain Šilhan, such cooperative exercise and the way of training would be welcomed even at home, in the Czech Republic. Thanks to their long-standing experience from fighting on all fronts and in virtually any environment, American mentors can offer help not only to us, but also to all nations, for which Allied Spirit VIII has become the imaginative top of ground and air force training.

by Michal Voska, photos: army.mil



Tankers trained at Boletice at extremely low temperatures

Forestex 2018

At the turn of February and March, there was a continual military training of units of the 73rd Tank Battalion from Přáslavice under the name Forestex 2018. During the exercise, manoeuvring units – 1st Tank Company, 3rd Tank Company and Mechanized Company – underwent occupation training, shooting from combat vehicles and tanks, managing and tactical preparation at levels of platoon and company. Members of Engineer Platoon practiced activities related to both the construction of ditches and dismantling live ammunition.

factsheet

The 73rd Tank Battalion is currently the only tank unit of the Army of the Czech Republic and it also includes the 1st Tank Company, Active Reserve Force. Together with the 71st, 72nd Mechanized Battalions and the 74th Light Motorized Battalion, they constitute the 7th Mechanized Brigade "Dukelská", with headquarters at Hranice na Moravě.



In the training area, the main parts of units were transported by rail. These were 85 pieces of equipment and more than 200 soldiers. To begin training, the move to Boletice was launched in mid-February. Primary, those were support units which moved first to prepare the conditions for the arrival of the other units and ensured the unloading of the equipment at Polečnice railway station. Already during the transfer to the Podvoří region, the drivers met demanding field conditions. Moreover, at Boletice in winter, there are really low temperatures, so the bitter cold waited for soldiers, as well as snow and strong winds for most of the training.

Kitchen of their own

Mess section started preparing hot meals and tea in a local kitchen. For any case, they also brought with them field kitchens on the PV3S chassis, to be used in the event of a power failure, which actually occurred several times. After their arrival, the units were billeted in wooden houses, heated by stoves for solid fuel. The staff developed an operating centre in a building at Podvoří barracks, where the activities of the units were coordinated throughout the whole training area. One of the first tasks to be accomplished was the construction of an ammunition dump (PMS) and furnishing the equipment of the guard-house with the necessary materiel and basic documentation. The task of guarding the PMS was entrusted to a mechanized company. After reconnaissance of the training devices, the units started to fulfil their training tasks in accordance with the training plan. As the platoon training level was completed last year, this year live exercise was focused on the conduct of combat activities (attack and defence) in a company formation. The difficult task waited also for some novices, for whom it was not only the first familiarization with the training area at Boletice.

Command and cooperation

During its first week of the exercise, the first tank company was trained in driving combat vehicles, throwing live grenades and tactical preparation using blank ammunition at Brzotice Joint Shooting Range. The 3rd

Tank Company carried out training in small arms shooting, practiced the fire from gun-carriages at the shooting range for Jablonec combat vehicles, and continued in tactical preparation, and also in the coordination and preparation of novices. The mechanized company was expected to practice a number of skills, which often had to be improvised as they would have been in a real fight. The crews of combat vehicles performed tasks in BVP-2 armoured personnel carriers, including gun and machine-gun firings on stationary, as well as on moving targets. It was also necessary to train the deployment of a mechanized platoon on vehicles into the combat formation.

Building ditches

The mechanized sub-units at that time focused on infantry tactics, combat drills, planning and execution of the raids, along with shooting practice from small arms, including RPG-7. Engineer squads were improved as part of their professional tactical preparation in the construction of weapon pits for combat vehicles, antitank ditches, building minefield lanes and railroad bridges over field obstacles. All this was done with the use of heavy vehicles, including an excavator, but also using shovels and pickaxes, which was a difficult task in strong frosts. The same thing happened during practicing the recovery of military equipment. In addition to running the Operating Centre, the signal platoon performed retranslation (expanding a signal by installing additional antennas), using R-5 devices to make available radio communication with training units, throughout the whole training area. Although the military equipment was ready for operation in winter conditions, a repair platoon, logistics company, had a chance to practice the repairs of track and wheeled vehicles in field conditions, including pre-heating the engines and ensuring conditions for the operation of the fuel system, with regard to possible freezing.

Maintenance and service

As mentioned above, the mechanics had to fulfil an uneasy task to keep the materiel

and equipment ready to ensure their operability, at temperatures below freezing point, throughout the duration of the whole exercise. Only over the weekend there was more free time, but still the equipment had to be constantly checked, so that it would be able to be deployed immediately. In the morning, the thermometer showed on the average less than 15 degrees below zero, and during the day the temperature climbed up to a maximum of minus 9 degrees. But it seemed that the temperature was much lower, thanks to the strong, penetrating wind. These climatic conditions tested not only the resistance of soldiers and their equipment, but also the quality of the clothing components, as practically every soldier had thermal underwear and the updated Gore-Tex camouflage uniform. Only a few layers of such clothing allowed them to perform tasks in such an environment.

Logistics is also important

"Despite the extremely cold weather that these days predominated, the companies met the all targets set by the commanders. Vehicles and equipment operated well, because of the work of technicians. I can also praise our novices, who thanks to the mentors prove their abilities and thus also the right to be included in our units," said Lieutenant Colonel Ján Kerdík, Commander of the 73rd Tank Battalion. The end of the training was composed of drilling acquired skills, including professional and tactical procedures. The engineer platoon fulfilled all given tasks, including dismantling ammunition. The conclusion of the exercise at Boletice was filled with the maintenance and cleaning of vehicles and equipment, prior to loading on railway wagons, before moving back to Píslavice garrison, which in itself required high coordination of loading and unloading procedures.

by Staff Sergeant Lucie Gallová, Michal Voska,
photos by Michal Voska





Special Forces members attended the CLS course, which is based on first aid experiences in foreign operations

Ready for the worst

The barracks in the town of Hranice are among the five accredited training centres of the Combat Life Saver (CLS) courses in the Army of the Czech Republic. These are places where soldiers learn to save their team-mates directly on the battlefield, according to the TCCC methodology (Tactical Combat Casualty Care). This time, a ten-day course was attended by a number of members of the 601st Special Forces Group, for whom it is a necessary skill that could decide about life and death.

The training of the 601st Special Forces Group is focused on developing the capabilities and skills of individuals with an emphasis on their professional competence in team work. Basically everything starts with a selection process, after its successful completion and admission to the 601st Special Forces Group, there follows a 12-month qualifying course. Successful graduates are assigned to combat units. After that, each member completes the courses required for his occupation specialty in team, takes part in military exercises with multinational participation and gets practical experience from foreign missions. An essential part of the training is preparation for activities in an international environment.

Also, international conferences are of great benefit for the correct direction of training and exchange of experience. However, let's get back to the necessary courses needed for a member of Special Forces. One of them, and we may say that the most important, is the CLS course, which is based on experience with providing first aid in foreign operations.

Seven years of preparing the soldiers for the worst

The CLS Accreditation Centre has been operating in Hranice since 2011 under the patronage of the 7th Mechanized Brigade. The purpose of the centre is to teach selected soldiers to provide immediate, life-saving help

directly on the battlefield. CLS-soldiers form a sort of link between medics (combat medic) and the soldiers. However, there is also the training of regular medical staff. Primarily, the centre is designated for the 7th Mechanized Brigade troops. Due to the overcrowding of similar centres of the Czech Army, at Hranice there are trained also soldiers from other units, including soldiers from the 601 SFG. Soldiers who are trained at the CLS Learning Centre learn the TCCC methodology. It is a method of providing emergency medical assistance in combat and extreme conditions. CLS soldiers provide not only first aid, but they can also act properly on the battlefield. The need for this occupation specialty and

the development of the TCCC methodology are related to military operations in Iraq and subsequently in Afghanistan. In Iraq, there was a problem to provide effective first aid for detached soldiers and units, or how to organize first aid, before the wounded could be transported to respective medical centres.

Perfect simulation

The Centre at Hranice has enough free space in which soldiers can acquire theoretical and practical knowledge. Soldiers perform an infinite drill, how to identify various types of injuries and how to treat them. During training, they are supervised by experienced instructors who not only check the correctness of the procedures but also pass on invaluable practical experience. It is possible to simulate here various combat conditions. In an inside training room in the building, the impression of warfare is induced by the projector and speakers. Instructors can mute the lights as needed, so that course participants could "operate" only with the help of a mounted headlamp. On the contrary, the outdoor training area is used to practise tactical drills. The CLS candidate must be able to rescue a soldier, but he himself must not be the victim of a fire. Soldiers learn how to move towards the wounded, how to cover, and so on. For this purpose they also train various practices to overcome traps, shooting from imitation firearms in form of airsoft weapons, etc. They learn the proper handling of the weapon, especially that of a casualty, which would not stay on the battlefield, in an ideal case. Moreover, the last thing a soldier providing assistance needs is a weapon falling over his head, blocking his legs, or a case, when the weapon was even lost somewhere. During the transfer of a wounded person, it is still necessary to keep in mind that you are still under fire. Even with a casualty, it is essential to use natural shelters, answer the enemy's fire, and then proceed further. It is necessary to check a field dressing regularly, so that the wounded soldier does not lose blood during the transport.

Statistics speak clearly

In Iraq, 90% of soldiers died directly on the battlefield and "only" 10% died later in health care facilities. That's why there is a need to save the soldiers on the battlefield and get them into a medical facility, which led to the development of the TCCC methodology. Health education of Czech soldiers is based mainly on the costly paid and bloody experiences of American soldiers. The Americans in the war in Iraq found that a lot of deaths were useless and they could have been avoided. At Hranice, there are statistics on the most common causes of death on the battlefield. In the Iraq War, 44% of deaths were due to massive bleeding from the limbs. But the statistics do not specify whether they were wounds caused by the shooting or by the explosion of an explosive. Which, in fact, do not play a significant role in this tragic balance. The second most common cause of death was chest injury (32%). At first glance, it may seem that in the time of modern ballistic protection the chest is more protected, it is not quite true. Against the days of the Second World War or the Vietnam War, a number of chest damages have certainly decreased. On the other hand, explosive IED systems expanded enormously in Iraq and Afghanistan. The explosion of these traps not only causes more frequent harms to the limbs, but through the unprotected places on the vest (especially the hips) seriously injured soldier's body. The third most common case was head and neck wounds in the form of a still scary number of 16%. The remaining 8% involved multiple devastating wounds, the so-called multiple traumas. Over the years, percentages have moved up and down, but the wounds rate persists. This is true for both Iraq and Afghanistan.


Ten days of drilling

"I think we again moved the course in the right direction, and we, thanks to our cooperation with other units, continue to improve and improve. The course is very challenging, ten days of hard drilling is

completed with tests that do not forgive anything, just as if the mistake is not forgiven in real combat," says Master Sergeant Michal Pluhař, guarantor of the CLS course at the 71st Mechanized Battalion, where the training was provided. The whole course was a combination of theoretical schooling and practical training of all procedures on simulation trainers, including pork necks on which soldiers learn how to perform tracheostomy in the approved manner. Last but not least, an autopsy is also necessary, which took place in the Department of Forensic Medicine and Medical Law of the University Hospital Olomouc. It was here where they demonstrated the construction of the human body, the deposition of internal organs, etc., which is necessary for understanding the principles and procedures of treatment, including the treatment of most difficult, traumatic wounds, even those with fatal consequences. It was necessary not only to manage perfectly the ways of removal of the wounded, but also to understand the system of sorting the wounded and determining the order of their treatment. In addition, various methods of transport were practised, for which a helicopter is usually used. In this case, the helicopter was replaced by a Tatra car, because of the bad weather.

by Michal Voska, photos by author and 601 SFG archive





Hranice Battalion completed 2017
training year in the Libavá MTA

Operation **METRO-C**

The military training of units of the 71st Mechanized Battalion "Siberia" took place at the end of last year and thus became the final, third live exercise of the battalion. The main objective was to synchronize the activities of mechanized platoons and to verify the achievement of the operational capabilities at a platoon level. It was attended by over 350 soldiers with almost 70 pieces of combat and support equipment.

The Metro-C followed up this year exercise, which took place in June and September in the Military Training Area Hradiště. The complex field training was accomplished by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd mechanized company and the firing platoon of the mortar battery. Essential support for training units was provided by the command and logistics companies. The traditionally bad weather was waiting for them in the Libavá MTA. "We focused on deepening the tactical capabilities of mechanized and mortar units at a platoon level, developing their capabilities to lead all kinds of combat, and achieving combat harmonization within the units, and we also focused on deepening the capabilities of the lowest commanders to command the subordinates," described the concept of exercise Major Libor Tesař, deputy commander of the 71st Mechanized Battalion "Siberia". "Both enhancement, as well as challenges for platoon commanders were presented by assigned mortar fire, by air support, using the L-159 and JAS-39 Gripen aircraft and electronic combat means of the 532nd Electronic Warfare Battalion Opava that increased their tactical capabilities and tested the units' proficiency, which significantly improved their synergy with these means," said Major Tesař.

Command company support

The exercise followed the tasks of previous live exercises and focused on harmonization the activities of mechanized squads and platoons. The training was primarily focused on the members of mechanized companies with the support of the command company and logistics companies, which formed the 71st Battalion Task Force. Unlike the previous Screener 2017 exercise, this one was done without simulating an enemy. Although almost the entire battalion was involved in the operation, the greatest attention was paid to the attainment of the operational capabilities of the 2nd and 3rd mechanized

companies, namely alignment of procedures, the verification of command capabilities, but also to solving crisis situations, for example, the immobilization of vehicles after stripping tracks or their rescue and recovery. For this purpose, vehicles and equipment were to be prepared to operate without the slightest hesitation, including the necessary protection of all personnel involved. The correct procedure was always supervised by an exercise supervisor or assigned instructor. No mistake was forgiven, as even a slight hesitation and inaccuracy would entail a serious risk in the fight, endangering a soldier, equipment, and also his comrades-in-arms.

Combat drills under attack

The main theme was the harmonization of their activities. For two weeks mechanized units practiced combat drills in situations when the units were attacked, they were in contact with an opponent, or during overcoming dangerous areas, they practised activities in movements, in attack and defence. Regardless of the weather prevailing in the military area Libavá, the soldiers completed shooting both from small arms and platform guns, and throwing hand grenades. Additionally, the soldiers trained the maximum effectiveness of using the BREN assault rifle in different positions. Their skills improved not only members of infantry sub-units, but also the drivers of infantry combat vehicles, whose training was focused on driving in complex terrain conditions. An essential part was also the flawless guidance of mortar fire and the support of air raids, with mortar firing at a distance of more than two kilometres. In the light of ongoing combat activity, in addition to perfect simulation of real combat or real engagement, the air attack was necessary to run in English language. Our air controllers can speak English above the average and thus they are fully prepared to perform all tasks not

only for defence of the homeland, but also in case of their deployment within the Alliance.

Difficult for novices

As mentioned earlier, a considerable number of trainees were novices in the army, and therefore the third, long live exercise, lasting several months, was a tough test of their physical and psychic strengths. Nervosity was particularly noticeable during first live exercise in June. Even though they were novices, they were still military professionals, so in September their performance was better, including the removal of "childish" mistakes in the form of slower loading and minor accuracy of shooting. On the contrary, aiming at moving targets was completely flawless and a sight velocity was sufficient. Most rounds found their target and in the event of a retaliatory attack they would certainly eliminate hostile activities to ensure territorial integrity and safeguard a perimeter. All this was performed in a challenging environment, where air controllers operated, a mortar battery was employed, and everything was done in constantly changing weather. The Metro-C exercise practically culminated a training year and for the commanders and exercise supervisors it was the success of their year-long preparation. "All tasks and objectives of this comprehensive field training of the battalion were met, including the cohesion of combat units. You have done a piece of honest work, with which I am satisfied," evaluated the exercise at the final roll-call Major Libor Tesař.

Text and photos by Michal Voska

factsheet

The 71st Mechanized Battalion is characterized by a high degree of readiness, high mobility and firepower, by the ability to move quickly to different distances; it has partial airborne capability and the ability to perform special tasks. This also corresponds to its organizational structure, in which the individual elements are integrated into three basic parts: combat part, part of the combat support and part of the logistical and medical support.

The 71st Mechanized Battalion can perform the following tasks:

- depending on the type of tactical activity, according to the place and role of the enemy in combat, its strength and activity, in frame of a mechanized brigade, or on his own, at the state border, in the encirclement, within anti-diversionary, anti-parachute activities, or as a tactical air drop;
- in deploying in non-military threats, for enhancing state border protection, guarding important objects, during natural disasters, in peacekeeping, rescue and humanitarian operations, or other non-standard operations outside the state territory.



In the 24th year of the International Army Championship of the Czech Republic in Winter Survival 2018 competition, the Austrians won

Instead of snow the Mud



The wind blew the mist. With a bit of fantasy, it looked like an old man with a long white beard. It might have seen as if more than six dozen participants of the 24th year of the International Army Championship of the Czech Republic in winter track and field competition, called Winter Survival 2018, were visited by Praděd, the lord and good spirit of the Jeseníky Mountains. Perhaps he wanted to look after a fair play. But the soldiers of seven armies on special skis for alpine touring already moved. A four-day, extremely demanding race in Hrubý Jeseník area started.

The Winter Survival competition has been organized by the General Staff of the ACR and the University of Defence regularly, since 1995. This year, besides the teams of the individual components of the Army of the CR, even representatives of the Slovak, Belgian, Austrian, Polish, German and Ukrainian armies also participated, and for the first time in the history there were also two teams of the Police of the CR (from assault units of South Moravian and Moravian-Silesian regions). This is a very selective race, because those, who do not know the details of survival problems, military climbing or mapping, are not allowed to participate. It represents the culmination of training in military units, the verification of the qualities of top-prepared soldiers who later will transfer experiences gained back to their units.

"This very challenging race has acquired certain traditions, but its scheme is still developing. Initially, it was more focused on the sporting field. But gradually it more and more responded to the demands of

the commanders. The organizers tried to incorporate in the competition as many military skills as possible. And that is why it complements the training in a suitable way. Individual participants can take advantage experiences gained there. And it is also true in the opposite way," Brigadier General Ivo Střecha said.

Occupation of bunkers

The organizers of Winter Survival show us a great invention every year, formulating new and new disciplines. In the past, disciplines included for example knife and axe throwing at a wooden target, archery, expanding survival skills, rescue and first aid in the avalanche, rescuing a parachutist from the crown of a tree, skirmishes, and first aid to soldiers who were heavily injured after a grenade exploded in a mountain cottage. This year's novelty was to find three bunkers of the pre-war fortification, their occupation and targets elimination. Another discipline, the participants had to master, was establishing

a connection with the radio transmitter, hanging at a height of thirty meters in tree crowns. Moreover, it had a discharged battery. And so the contestants had nothing else but to pull up a selected team member into the tree crowns. There he had to complete the radio and establish a connection. The premiere also experienced the use of orthophotomaps, along with classic topographic charts.

"We have participated in this championship for a very long time, basically in the same group. We won three times in a row. Last year we did not finish the race for health reasons. One of team mates was on a mission in Afghanistan at that time, so he could not take part in. Instead of him, we hired a very young boy, who did not have too much experience, and we eventually paid a little for it. This year we are already in the ideal set. Our advantage is, above all, the team's balance. We know each other perfectly, we also know our limits, we know who can climb, who knows maps well, and so on. One just puts the pace and the other two holds him with him. We do not

have to say anything. The team is as powerful as its weakest link," explains Captain Viktor Novotný of the 7th Mechanized Brigade. "In particular, we did not prepare for the Survival competition. In December, we had a weekly preparation for the winter track and field competition Krkomen, which is in fact, for ground forces, a nomination race for the Winter Survival. We were under the supervision of an instructor of 73rd Tank Battalion, who was not only an excellent climber. We focused on movements and other disciplines of special PT and combined arms preparation. The real test of our capabilities was performed only by the Krkomen; this race is actually the best practice. During the year, we have no special exercise; we carry out our military occupational duties. In the free time everybody does what interests him. For example, a colleague is engaged in biathlon, I myself run on skis, in summer I ride mostly on a bike. The last member of our team is dedicated to the triathlon." The contestants had to spend two cold nights in the field, without a tent, mostly in improvised bivouacs. Improvised was also the way of eating. Throughout the main race, we only had to do with the allowed materiel and the food we took with us at the start. It was even forbidden to use broken off tree branches as insulation or some cover stuff. In the lower positions of the Hrubý Jeseník mountain range, there is not a little snow this year. And so, instead of the relatively more comfortable skiing on Alpine skis, individual patrols went by foot, all the way. The skis were carried on their backs in rucksacks. The more this year's Survival hurt.

Rocks as obstacles to crack

But there is already a rock city. Competitors must cross four sections of protected climbing routes called Ferratas (Italian for "iron paths"). Some of the rocks are covered with ice, other rocks by slimy coating on the surface, much like a slug. This discipline is currently performing by the team of the 43rd Airborne Battalion from Chrudim. The team is doing very well. At the end of the journey, two soldiers will rappel down from the high rock. The third member of a team gets down on a sloping rope. One of Chrudim members has visible problems. He suffers from severe back pain. After a short meeting the team withdraws from the competition. It's already the second resignation. The team of the 15th Engineer Regiment resigned not long before.

Under the rocks, the Ukrainian team also arrived. They recruited from the cadets of the Odessa Military Academy. At the last minute, however, one of its members fell away, and was replaced by their chief, Colonel Ihor Ovcharuk. The Ukrainians are very tenacious, their competitiveness is welcome, but they obviously lack better preparation for individual disciplines. Also with skis they still do not know much. For a while, they are watching the high rocks and finally come to



the conclusion that they omit this discipline, even at the cost of full penalization. Yet they quickly move to another discipline. They want to get better than their last year predecessors from the Airborne Regiment.

On the contrary, the Slovaks, represented by a team from the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, had no problems with a Ferrat path or the descent, using a rope. "For this action, we were preparing only for three days with Alpine skis, in the Malá Fatra mountain range. Finally, however, due to the snow conditions here, it did not help us much. Except for Monday, when there was the climb and a downhill race, we wore the Alpine skis on the back," told us a representative of the Slovak team. "We do not have problems with climbing disciplines. Such matters are part of our training. We have also a pretty good Ferrat path built in our Training Centre Lešť, and another one at the Višňová village, nearby the town of Žilina.

Training on the rocks was also completed by the team of the 7th Mechanized Brigade, Czech favourite of the race. "We've always struggled most with climbing disciplines, it's our weak point. Again, this time we ended

around ninth place, no big success. The organizers invented this discipline very well, I personally liked it very much. We did fast movements, so usually it was enough for us to win only some of the disciplines," Captain Novotný explains.

They overlooked a swallowed tongue

On the next section of the path, the soldier's foot patrol gets in contact with the adversary. When they retreated, two of our soldiers were shot. After the skirmish, both collapsed from about a fifty-metre steep slope in the forest. The opponent was neutralized, the patrol's task is now to treat the wounded and transport them safely, with the use of the universal stretcher UT 2000. Most teams know what to do with gun wounds, as well as how to organize the transport. However, some teams sometimes overlook a swallowed tongue of one of the wounded soldiers. In a real battle situation, it would mean the suffocation by choking. Here it means not meeting this discipline.

Small arms' shooting is purely military matter. Shooting is done in a standing position, without support, at a distance of



about forty metres, on the silhouette of non-protected lying figure. "A bit paradoxical, shooting is our weakness. We're simply used to other weapons. In our arms equipment we have the M4 assault rifles and here we were shooting from the Brens. In addition, we shot with the Phantom pistol at a distance of forty metres and for this you must be a really good shooter," the Slovak team representative explains. "The distance was actually somewhat larger for the pistol, it was not entirely standard. Perhaps this could have disadvantaged somebody. In any case, you should take into account the ballistic missile path, so you must aimed at higher. Allegedly, some did not even hit the target. But the conditions were the same for everyone, so it's about skills and perhaps a bit of luck," Captain Novotný smiled.



Austrians showed what they do better

Fourth, in fact the final day of the race, was in sign of downhill skiing with measured time and orienteering. There during the race dominated the team of the 26th Mountain Infantry Battalion in Spittal an der Drau, which was composed of Lieutenant Peter Lamprecht, Daniel Buchacher and David Suntinger. At the end, their team became the overall winner. "We liked race disciplines. It was a pity that there was little snow," said Lieutenant Lamprecht, who works as a drill instructor of the mountain infantry. "Participation in the Czech Winter Survival is a good preparation for us for a race in Switzerland, which is waiting for us. There is nothing like this in Europe, so we liked to accept your invitation," he added.

The 7th mechanized brigade came second. "For the downhill ski race, the Austrian really deserved rating One. Nobody can compete with them in this field. We won four times there, we obviously also wanted the fifth victory. After many years, our southern neighbours arrived, as the really strongest team. They all are instructors of mountain hunters (rangers), i.e. the best of the best. They showed us who dominates," Viktor Novotný commented overall results. The logistics team ended third.

"We are not very happy with our place in the competition, we could have done more. Especially in individual survival disciplines. As far as movements are concerned, then in this case our conscience is clean. I think we did our best," said the Slovaks, who finished as the second best foreign team in the ninth position.

"It was a good experience for us. We do not normally practice such long movements. We prefer to use vehicles. That made us the biggest problems. For the best discipline we consider crossing a Ferrat path. It was constructed very well," said at the end the representative of the South Moravian assault unit, the better one of the two police teams (11th position), for which this year's Survival was the premiere.





Lieutenant General Aleš Opata was appointed the Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces on May 1, 2018

Lieutenant General Aleš Opata became the new Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces on 1 May 2018. Minister of Defence Karla Šlechtová deliberated her proposal with the President of the Czech Republic and with the acting Chief of General Staff, General Josef Bečvář, who is nearing the end of his service contract.

In accordance with the Constitution and the Act on the Armed Forces, Defence Minister Karla Šlechtová proposed this change in command to the Government which subsequently proposed the appointment of the new Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces to the President of the Czech Republic.

"I have deliberated my proposal with the President. General Bečvář's contract ends in June and I would like to thank him very much indeed for everything he did for the Czech Armed Forces. Not only in the highest post, but also throughout the decades of his military service he boasts a respectable track record of significant accomplishments," Minister Šlechtová underscored.

"General Opata enjoys my full confidence. He was a commanding officer of units in the home territory, operational deployments in the Balkans and in Afghanistan, he has an extensive experience from defence diplomacy. His person guarantees the stability and continuity in command of the Czech Armed Forces. And what is extremely important for me, he enjoys a high respect among military professionals and the expert community," Minister Šlechtová pointed out. The Minister proposed that General Bečvář ended his tour of duty on 30 April 2018 and General Opata started on 1 May 2018. Over the following two months before the contract for General Bečvář expires, normal handover process will be underway.

Lieutenant General Aleš Opata

Aleš Opata was born in Hranice na Moravě on 9 September 1964. After completing studies

at the Military Grammar School in Opava, he studied at the Army College in Vyškov in 1983-87. He began his military career serving in various command positions with the 4th Tank Division in Jihlava.

In 1992, he was deployed in UNPROFOR in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Croats mounted an offensive at that time. They sought to force Serbians out of the Serbian Krajina. A French unit got lost as the front moved. Together with General Petr Pavel and Colonel Karel Klinovský, they jumped into their APCs and began to search for the lost French unit. The Czechs found the French unit besieged by Serbs in the Goleš community with Croatian shells exploding all around. They nevertheless managed to load into APCs fifty-three French soldiers alive and remnants of two men torn by mortar fire.

"The French will never forget this courageous and highly symbolic act of help, so much needed among coalition members. No mission can succeed without mutual support among Allies. You helped France in a moment it needed you," said the French Ambassador to the Czech Republic Pierre Lévy in February 2012, shortly ahead of decorating General Aleš Opata, on behalf of the President of France, with the Legion of Honour in the rank of Chevalier.

The year 1994 represented the turning point for Aleš Opata, when he started to serve with the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade. He dedicated a major part of his service career to that elite formation. At the beginning of 1996, ranked Captain, he deployed with his soldiers as the commander of the 3rd Company of the 6th Mechanised Battalion

to NATO IFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His unit set up a base in the Brezicani community. Already on 22 January 1996, they started to take over the area of responsibility from A Company of the British Light Division. The next day, the Czech company members started to fulfil their operational assignment by apprehending a group of armed persons in the Otoka separation zone. The Czech soldiers eventually apprehended and disarmed twenty persons in total and seized various types of weapons by the end of January 1996. A lengthy and demanding effort started to disarm the local population.

Aleš Opata returned into Bosnia and Herzegovina once more – in 2000 as the commander of the Czech Armed Forces 43rd Mechanised Battalion for Operation SFOR II. In 2002 through 2003, he served an operational tour in KFOR. After the completion of that mission in 2004, he became the commander of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade. Three years later he served as the commander of the Czech Armed Forces contingent – Chief of Staff of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in ISAF Afghanistan. In 2008, he was appointed the Deputy Director and later Director of the MoD Force Development Division – Operation Division. In 2010 through 2014, he served as the Chief of General Staff – Director of the MoD Joint Operations Centre. He spent the next three years as the Czech National Military Representative in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium. After the return to homeland, he was appointed Deputy Chief of General Staff – Chief of Staff and promoted to Lieutenant-General.

Aleš Opata completed studies at the Command and Staff College of Marine Corps University in Virginia, USA; the Royal College of Defence Studies in London, and; the NATO Defence College in Rome.

by Vladimír Marek,

photos by Vladimír Marek and archives



Three hundred warriors of the 41st Mechanised Battalion and assigned components honed their skills ahead of deployment into Lithuania

Preparation for Lithuania coming to head

Rain, snow, sharp sunlight and bitter cold – an all-inclusive two-week tough training exercise in the Hradiště Military Training Area in the Doupovské Mountains for three hundred soldiers of the 1st Company Task Force assigned for operation Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Lithuania.

Individual platoons perform the tasked missions in their assigned posts. One of the platoons is hidden in trenches dug on the hill and perfectly blends with the snow cover thanks to their white camouflage. The horizon also hides three Pandur APCs standing ready for a quick withdrawal after they would accomplish the mission they were inserted for in the area.

Stop the opponent and retreat quickly

"Yesterday the platoon withdrew to another line of fire and its mission is to prepare a fire strike during the night targeting the frontline of the advancing opponent, hold them and weaken the opposing force," says Lieutenant Colonel Jiří Líbal, deputy commander of the 41st Mechanised Battalion Žatec acting in the capacity of exercise director. "They were tasked to build a minefield overnight on the access route the opposing force would move on with their equipment. They had to set up a checkpoint in snow to watch the advancing opponent from a safe distance."

Soldiers need to be able to remain lying down for many hours and no movement on the opposite hill may escape their attention. The access road is monitored nonstop by the Pandur crew. The operator permanently watches the screen and evaluates the targeted sites. In any weather, at day and night, he is able to notice any movement. The company is under continuous communication, waiting for the order to attack.

Holding fight

"Movement, I see movement, on the horizon at twelve," the first information breaks through the silence. Everybody takes their positions. The opposing forces approach on the access road. There is a minefield awaiting them on the crossroads at the end of the road. The camouflaged soldiers are getting ready for a fire contact with the opponent.

"Open fire after the first explosion," the commanding officer says.

The first vehicle hit a mine, and enemy soldiers jump out of damaged vehicle. In that moment, the opposing force gets engaged with continuous fire by the attacking unit. They defend themselves and answer fire, covered by the vehicles. The moment of surprise becomes the advantage of the attacking soldiers.

"On the last hundred, I am gonna run out of ammo," one of the soldiers lying prone says. "Reloading!" – "Covering," the team member lying next answers.

Ammunition runs out quickly, it is necessary to withdraw fast. Some of the opponents were successfully eliminated. The unit accomplished the mission, the opponent was delayed in their advancing.

"At this point, it is important for the attacking soldiers to conduct a holding fight; they performed a fire strike, eliminated the front of the opposing force and now they have to use the wheeled vehicles to quickly withdraw to the next fire line," LTC Líbal explains.

When the advance of the opposing force was stopped, the attacking soldiers withdrew. The Pandurs are ready to quickly transport the manoeuvre force to the designated area to take another defensive position.

Unit integration is a high priority

The core of the company task force assigned for deployment as part of the eFP primarily comprises the members of the 41st Mechanised Battalion homebased at Žatec. The unit is nevertheless complemented with engineers from the 15th Engineer Regiment, artillery fire controllers from the 13th Artillery Regiment, Pandur maintenance specialists, signal, logistics and other assigned specialists. "That composition makes a standard mechanised company very specific because it has a broad coverage by containing all those elements," LTC Líbal explains and goes on to say: "For commanders, such preparation is quite challenging because they have to learn to task those specialists who became part of

the unit and control elements not normally organic to the unit."

The OPFOR were played by the servicemembers of the 102nd RECCE Battalion in MTA Hradiště this time.

The harsh environment of the Doupovské Mountains put to a test the unit's combat readiness with all extremes of February weather. "Throughout the two weeks of tough and challenging training, they all had to cope with rain, new fall of snow and incessant fluctuation of temperatures at day and night, which was demanding both for soldiers' mental and physical condition, and for the equipment alike," LTC Líbal points out.

With Pandurs for 6 months

"During the first week, soldiers honed their shooting skills both with handguns and mounted weapons, and drilled combat fire of mechanised platoons here at Doupov," the Exercise Director LTC Líbal summarises. "The second week proved all specialist skills of the unit including the equipment. The training came to a head with a force integration check of the whole company task force. Integration of the unit as a whole is extremely important for the commanders. They have to be absolutely sure that if they give certain command the unit performs the mission exactly the way they planned it," the Deputy Commanding Officer LTC Líbal elaborates.

The two-week training exercise that ended in the Hradiště training area in mid-February was the first training of the company task force slated for deployment in Lithuania. Another predeployment rehearsal with live fire exercise followed in April. The first rotation will take over their operational assignment in eFP in Lithuania later in June. The deployment is slated for six months and the warfighters from Žatec will deploy in Lithuania with their Pandur Infantry Fighting Vehicles.

"It is another foreign deployment for the soldiers of the 41st Mechanised Battalion," LTC Líbal adds. "They will reinforce other NATO forces in Lithuania and our unit will be included in the order of battle of an eFP task force."

by Jana Deckerová



factsheet

For the Czech Republic, Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania is one of its NATO membership commitments to be fulfilled. A mechanised company with Pandur armoured vehicles, reinforced with an engineer platoon, medical team, fire support platoon and a logistic subunit will deploy into Lithuania to strengthen NATO's eastern flank. They will operate in Lithuania in the total strength of 250 personnel through January 2019.



Soldiers from Hranice practised a real deployment of their mortar batteries

Rehearsal for Latvia

Servicemembers of the mortar battery of the 71st Mechanised Battalion will be part of the Canadian-led task force deployed in Latvia. The unit's primary mission will be to perform joint training with NATO and host nation forces. They will also be involved in deterrence and NATO collective defence effort in their area of deployment, in peacetime, crisis and possible conflicts until the NATO Response Force units would arrive to relieve them. During those days, practically until the summer, they complete numerous training events, including live fire with the calibre 120mm PRAM mortar.

"Later on this year, our unit will deploy a new type of foreign operation. The core of the Czech Armed Forces 1st mortar platoon task force Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) comprises our servicemembers from Hranice. They have intensively prepared themselves both in dry practice of mortar deployment, and during a live fire exercise that will be held in the Libavá Military Training Area in the upcoming weeks," said First Lieutenant Michal Bogdan, who trains soldiers for deployment in the eFP mission and at the same time he will be a commanding officer of the force in Latvia. In the course of training in the Valcha-Drahotuše area, the service personnel practised arrival into fire position, aiming the mortars and performance of the fire mission, same as the final departure into the waiting position. That purpose was served by a number of new Tatra 815 8x8 PRAM trucks that soldiers have had available since the end of the last summer, and naturally the calibre 120mm Model 82 mortars that may use ammunition with range up to eight kilometres. Those are designed for elimination of the opposing forces, elimination of antitank systems and lightly armoured targets or destruction of light field shelters. In that case, it was the so-called dry practice without ammunition. But it was completely realistic until the final phase, i.e. the use of live ammunition.

Challenging training

Preparation for the fire control and fire in mortar units as opposed to gun artillery shows some differences primarily arising from the completely different design of the mortars, which is closely associated with their purpose. Predeployment exercise of the unit that will perform the missions in Latvia was required to seamlessly verify the most important measure for fire control preparation, determining elements for effective fire by thorough preparation and target engagement with emphasis on engaging the width of target with a mortar battery comprising multiple 120mm mortars. The forces usually engage observable individual and group targets. The

primary way of preparing the fire elements is registration shooting that subsequently generates accurate fire elements and there was not any difference with dry training this time around. Effective fire after target ranging is performed with series of 2–4 rounds one by one or with continuous fire until the mission is accomplished. Engagement of unobserved individual and group targets by mortar forces follows the same principles as with gun artillery.

Reliable mortar

The primary weapon for deployment in Latvia is, as was mentioned, calibre 120mm model 82 mortar that will be transported into the area of deployment on Tatra trucks with rear platform. During the practice, the mortars were transferred into trenches using light add-on wheel platform. In case needed, it is however also designed be towed on that platform, and it can be easily dismantled and prepare for shooting. The crew was standard as during a live deployment: mortar commander, aimer and loader. The shell activation is adjustable – it can detonate automatically after it hits the striker, or it can be fired manually by cocking the striker and pulling the activation cord. That was only dry-practised, same as entering the coordinates and setting the fire range, which is adjusted on the shell by selecting the amount of filling used. In case of live fire, the height ceiling would be up to 4,000 m and range approximately 8,000 metres with extended range munitions, and normally just over 6,000 metres.

Driver training

During the deployment in Latvia, the mortar, ammunition and crews will be transported on Tatra 815 8x8 PRAM trucks. The Tatra trucks replaced the obsolete Praga V3S vehicles. In line with that, all mortar battery drivers have completed a type retraining course. "During that course, the drivers have to prove they are able to operate the vehicle safely in specific conditions," said Mr. Jiří Pospíšil, the driver

training coordinator. The retraining is the basis for continuous special training during which the drivers will be required to prove their skills in extreme driving conditions. "There is a dedicated site for the drivers to train driving on extreme obstacles, find out how the vehicle performs in such situations and rehearse the right reactions. Such training also includes recovery of equipment stuck in sand," one of the instructors, Mr. Jiří Smeták, described. The special training includes practising the right reactions at various speeds, practical mastering of intensive deceleration, skid control and aquaplaning. Attention is also paid to various slants and inclinations depending on terrain. The vehicle weighing up to 38 tons with armoured cab is designed for transporting a heavy mortar with a load of ammo. The special hydraulic ramp at the rear of the truck serves for handling both the mortar and the rounds. The vehicle crew also have available special seats offering extra protection in the event of explosion under the truck. There is a hatch in the cabin roof with a mount to install various fire weapons. Many were confused by the designation PRAM, but it is only a name. In case self-propelled mortars will be acquired in the future, the Tatra trucks would only be used for transport of ammunition and operators/crews.

by Michal Voska

factsheet

The formation and deployment of four multinational battalions was agreed among NATO nations in the Warsaw Summit to strengthen its deterrence posture against Russia in the wake of the annexation of Crimea. The reason is that NATO Allies on the eastern flank are concerned with Russian policy. There are roughly a thousand Allied forces in all of the nations, who serve tours after certain period of time. The battalion equivalent force in Estonia is led by the United Kingdom, Germany is the lead nation in Lithuania, while Canada leads in Latvia and the United States in Poland. The multinational battalions are manned by individual NATO nations, including the Czech contribution in the form of mortar platoons.



Members of the Active Reserve unit of the Biologic Defence Department Těchonín joined an activation exercise for the first time



Ebola experienced first-hand

There is a patient at the intensive care unit of the specialised hospital Těchonín, Czech Republic. A highly dangerous Ebola-type infection has been confirmed. Before hospitalisation, a demanding reception and next sampling procedures are done; then a comprehensive treatment is underway and patient monitoring with everything under strict safety conditions and under expert supervision of military specialists. For the first time ever, eighty-five servicemembers of the Active Reserve Component of Biologic Defence Department Těchonín joined a regular activation exercise for the first time. The unit had an opportunity to practise routine civilian procedures, which the PPPS suits and working in a highly infectious environment did not make it any easier for them.

In the first half of the two-week exercise, the reservists were primarily up to academic training. They had to gain familiarity with the whole areal of the specialised hospital of the Biological Defence Department (BDD) Těchonín with strict safety measures. They underwent mandatory training and then had practically drilled the procedures with the only exclamation mark they had to keep in mind at all times: a highly infectious environment.

Simulation of real operation

"At this time, we are at the intensive care unit, where a patient with confirmed highly dangerous Ebola-type infection has been hospitalised," explains Major Larisa Solichová, a physician and a reservists training instructor in the specialised facility in Těchonín. "Here they are tasked to provide a comprehensive care to the patient but they have to comply

with all sanitary measures, particularly as concerns occupational safety, to prevent the personnel from being infected. That is what we use our replicator patient for – to provide a highly realistic simulation."

The aim of involving medical and non-medical personnel from the Active Reserve component is to learn them to move in the hospital in the positive pressure protective suits (PPPS) and perform procedures that those medical personnel conduct routinely in their civilian postings, including difficult conditions for movement in a highly infectious environment.

"Specialisation of the members of Active Reserve members is quite diverse," Major Solichová says. "We have here medical staff who regularly work in hospitals in their civilian assignments, some of them even in intensive care units. There are also physicians

with various specialisation. Our mission is to train them at our facility in order for them to be able to work here."

Lab: instant patient status

The specialised hospital also contains a biological-hematologic lab. "What you see are personnel practising lab activities, when the Active Reserve members in protective suits with the highest safety level rehearsed routine lab activities as part of analysing bio material samples," Lieutenant-Colonel Zbyněk Valenta, the head of the biologic defence laboratory activities section of the BDD Těchonín, comments on the action taken by two lab technicians. "The lab system automatically communicates the results into the hospital information system to improve the attending staff's awareness of the patients' current condition."

Greatest challenge: positive pressure personnel suits

Eighty-five specialised members of Active Reserve include a physician serving in hospital in Horní Beřkovice, who completed basic training in Vyškov in the autumn last year. "The fact that I may offer to the armed forces my specialist medical expertise was what made me join the Active Reserve. From professional perspective, it was very attractive for me to be in an highly interesting environment in specialist terms and I am able to put my hands on an expertise I would perhaps never encounter in the civilian sector," Major Jan Skalický states. "The most challenging part for me was to get used to working in the pressure suits and practise in them the procedures we routinely perform in the civilian sector and manage them at a high bio safety level. Working in the suit is very demanding, particularly in terms of physical fitness. You sweat all over, you cannot take anything off, you have to always have on your mind that you are in a highly infectious environment; the patient has an infectious disease, so it is essential to minimise contact. Communication on intercom is also more difficult and we use it to communicate among ourselves and with the control centre that continuously monitors everything that is going on at the hospital. It is the first training exercise, so everything is new for us and I should admit it is also quite demanding. We also get to know each other better. And that is also what I consider very important for continuous teamwork."

The military offers career growth to specialists

"We formed this specialised unit only this year; it has the total of 135 posts and we managed to fill over ninety of them – so we have the first eighty-five members of Active Reserve participating in this first exercise," says Lieutenant-Colonel Michal Kroča, Director of the Biological Defence Department Těchonín.

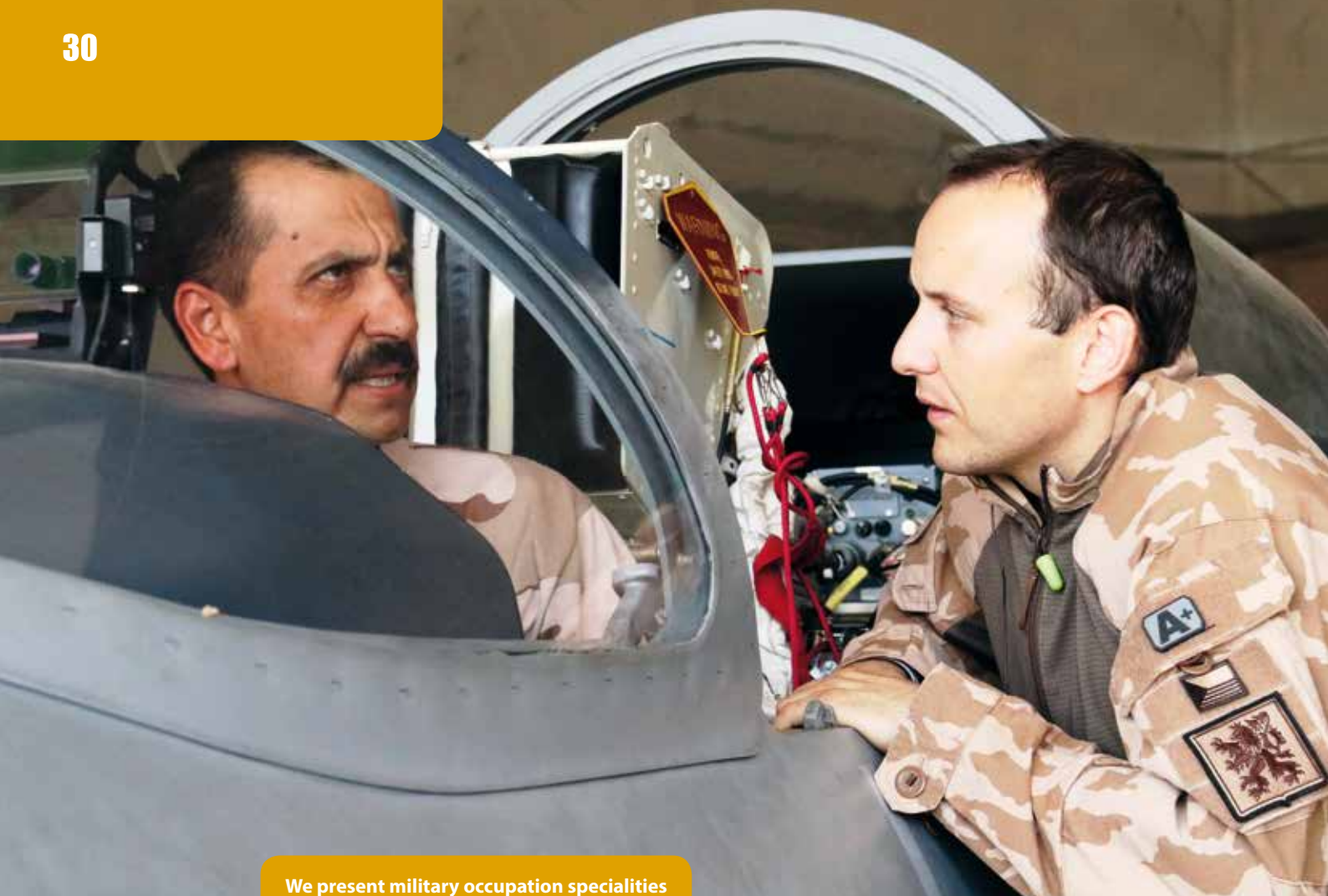
The unit primarily comprises medical personnel including physicians and nurses; that is approximately ninety percent of the trainees complemented with the support team comprising cooks, drivers and technicians.

The Czech Armed Forces is of the opinion that the high interest of people involved in the activities of the Active Reserve unit of the BDD Těchonín is because Těchonín is a unique facility in the Czech Republic that enables to provide in-patient care and long-term treatment of highly dangerous infections.

"We also offer to civilian medical specialists additional opportunity for career growth particularly by involving them in something completely different than what is commonplace in other medical facilities," LTC Kroča expands. "This historically first exercise is also valuable for us in the sense that our military professionals, who serve here as instructors and perform these activities on daily basis, prepare their potential replacements for the contingency in which it would be necessary to augment or relieve our in-house staff because of a real treatment of patient with such an infection."

by Jana Deckerová





We present military occupation specialties

Aviation Engineer

When we met Captain Tomáš Končický first, the sun stood well above the surface of the Iraqi Tigris river, beating down without mercy. As a member of the 3rd Air Advisory Team, he helped the Iraqi Air Force at Balad Airport. As the deputy chief of the Advisory Team, he directed everything related to the aeronautical service.

After graduation from the six-year grammar school at Nový Bydžov, Tomáš Končický joined the former Military Academy in Brno. From early childhood he loved airplanes. They had attracted him all his life. It was his boyish dream; he wanted to be a professional pilot. Unfortunately, he did not succeed. Nevertheless he decided to take care of the aircraft at least on the ground. During his studies, the Military Academy Brno underwent a transformation. In 2005, he completed the studies of aircraft technology at the newly created University of Defence.

"I only fly in my free time, in the Aeroclub. In 2002, I started with plain gliders, now I am flying even on a motor glider. It's my big hobby. Because of school and children, I had to leave flying several times, but I always returned back. I am very happy to be even

in my work near the aircraft," says Tomáš Končický.

The town of Čáslav captivated him

When he finished school, more than thirteen years of service waited for him with Čáslav Air Force Base. At the beginning of his career, he was lucky he started with the 212th Squadron, as Commander of a Technical Flight. He spent eight pleasing years there. Since 2014 he has become a member of the tactical wing. Here he holds the position of an aircraft engineer for fuselage and engine.

In Iraq he served as a deputy commander, guaranteeing that Air Force technical personnel could do their work. Explicitly, so that they might not deviate from a set system and the concept accepted by both parties was met. It was a similar activity to the work of

chief engineer. It was about the management of technical staff and cooperation with the Iraqi contractor. What was also important was the transfer of technical experience to the Iraqis.

"Our activity at Balad base was quite diverse. We supervised technicians, armourers and other occupation specialties during pre-flight, flight and post-flight preparations. If there was a defect, our technicians helped in terms of technical expertise to solve this problem. In addition, we cooperated with other activities, such as periodic aircraft inspections. And it happened after two or six months. In these cases, cooperation was at a higher level and the supervision was better. Besides, we provided theoretical and practical training both for certified and non-certified personnel," explains Captain Končický.



He swears by Alca aircraft

He belongs to those who do not say a bad word against the L-159 aircraft. In his opinion, the Gripens were certainly a good choice for our Air Force. But the problem was that the Alca aircraft sometimes stayed in their shadows. In fact, these airplanes have an important role in Air Force of our army. Their deployment in Iraq shows that they are able to find their way without difficulty. In addition, they can move the Air Force forward.

"I enjoy most the work with people. But it's sometimes also bitter. It's not easy to get on with everyone, but I try to cooperate with everybody. That does not mean that the technical issues of my work would be less pleasant. When a problem is resolved, or if we finish a long-term challenge, I feel very good," says Captain Končický. "In dealing with technology, you must constantly educate yourself and follow the latest trends. For example, in Iraq, we were forced to address a whole range of issues in this context. In my opinion, this work, places great emphasis on analytical thinking. One must be able to break the problem and analyse it. You need to think and look at the problem from multiple angles. Sometimes it happens that you lose yourself. Whether experience or some idea drives you in one direction and you think it's the right way. I try to avoid something like this and look at each task from different angles," he adds.

If a technical defect occurs, he must go through the technical documentation and the relevant schemas. Many trivial things need to be followed and considered. And then proceed to a possible solution. First of all, a man should have a plan that counts with different variants. There is also a need to find a certain system of how to exclude mistakes. In this way he eventually finds what causes the fault.

"If we have a serious problem at work, I do not get rid of it even at home. I come back from work, take a moment to relax, and think about it again. It holds me; I have to constantly think about it. I'm trying to figure it out. I say to myself what I might miss over, what I overlooked. Positively, it's not only my business. It's the teamwork, in a similar way it works also among my team-mates and subordinates," he explains.

But that does not mean he would not be able to relax. In addition to the aforementioned flying, skiing is also one of his hobbies. And, of course, he is dedicated to his family and children. The girl is two years old, and the boy four. They live at Kutná Hora. Actually, it's a beautiful town.

Text and photos by Vladimír Marek



The story of one of the most successful modern service dogs

Shepherd dog Thomas



Tomi is an 8-year-old Belgian shepherd of the Malinois breed. No one ever addresses the dog in other way than Thomas (Tomáš in Czech). From the age of the puppy it was prepared for service with the Military Police as a patrol dog. At present, the dog serves at the Ammunition Base at Týniště nad Orlicí, which falls into the territory of the Military Police Headquarters Olomouc. Up to five years of its age Thomas was prepared almost exclusively for demanding service in the Military Police. In 2013, however, there was a big change in its life. During the reorganization of the Military Police, it was assigned to the new dog handler, Staff Sergeant Stanislav Doležal.

At that time he was one of the most successful competitors across all armed services. "I was surprised at the high level of training Tomas achieved. That's why I decided to test the dog at several races here in the Czech Republic, and if it succeeds, to prepare it for a really top-of-the-line cynology programme I was running at that time," said Staff Sergeant Doležal. This programme is the called Globalringm, young cynology discipline, developing very fast around the world.

And Thomas actually showed its qualities at the races here in Czechia. Its potential was proved by the second position in the LTC Jan Ryba Memorial and by the victory at the Grand Prix of Municipal Police Liberec. After a few months of intensive training, the dog took part in the first dog competition Globalring, where it was doing very well. With the exception one or two races, Thomas always was on the winner's rostrum.

The World Championship

"After these successful results, I decided to try to qualify myself and Thomas for the World Championship in Globalring, which took place in Amsterdam in 2015. It wouldn't be possible without a permission of the head of our Command. He gave me the green light, and as a bonus, my superiors accommodated all my demands, for which I am very grateful to them," Thomas' handler Staff Sergeant Doležal continued.

The qualification for the race went smoothly and Tomi won the third place in its category. At that time it started in the lowest category, in class one. After the World Championship, Thomas continued to be successful, winning at each race. Besides the competitions, it also performed a demanding service. Indeed, it still kept its level. In the following year, Thomas won Vojtěch Plaček Memorial, which is regarded as the hardest police race for service dogs. It was again

qualified for the World Championship, held this time in Tienen, Belgium. There it reached a good position in the competition. In the second highest category, it reached a beautiful second place. In the overall rating, it got to the sixth place.

Meeting health requirements

The year 2016 was a great surprise for Thomas and its dog handler. It was seven years old, and there was necessary to take into account how long that burden could last, especially in terms of health. The answer came during a further comprehensive examination at Hlučín Veterinary Clinic. Surprisingly, veterinary surgeons did not found a single health problem, which is an exception for service dogs at this age. It also shows that Tomas is really a unique dog. This year continued in the trend of previous years. The defending victory at Vojtěch Plaček Memorial and a successful qualification for



the World Championships in first three races, all this gave the opportunity to prepare itself properly for the World Championship, this year held at Třeběchovice pod Orebem, near Hradec Králové. Thomas won all the qualifications this year. It was one of the big favourites of this championship. It confirmed its role until the last discipline, when it fought for a total victory.

Fatigue manifested itself

Unfortunately, during the last discipline, defence of the handler, it did not bite, which automatically means zero for this practice discipline. But more important for its handler was the situation just before the bite, when his four-legged friend looked at him and its eyes were terribly tired. As if the dog was tired of all years it lived through, and simply it could not go any further. At that time, it was already eight years old, the very time other service dogs went into a deserved dog's retirement. Even at this advanced age, at the World Championships, Thomas won the beautiful 4th place in its category. Again was proved, it was a dog master.

Retirement in the chief's garden

"Tomi is a perfect partner, a member of our family, and a great character. After the last World Championship, I decided to save it for military service, which I think Thomas can do for at least two years. After that, a dog's pension awaits for him in our garden.

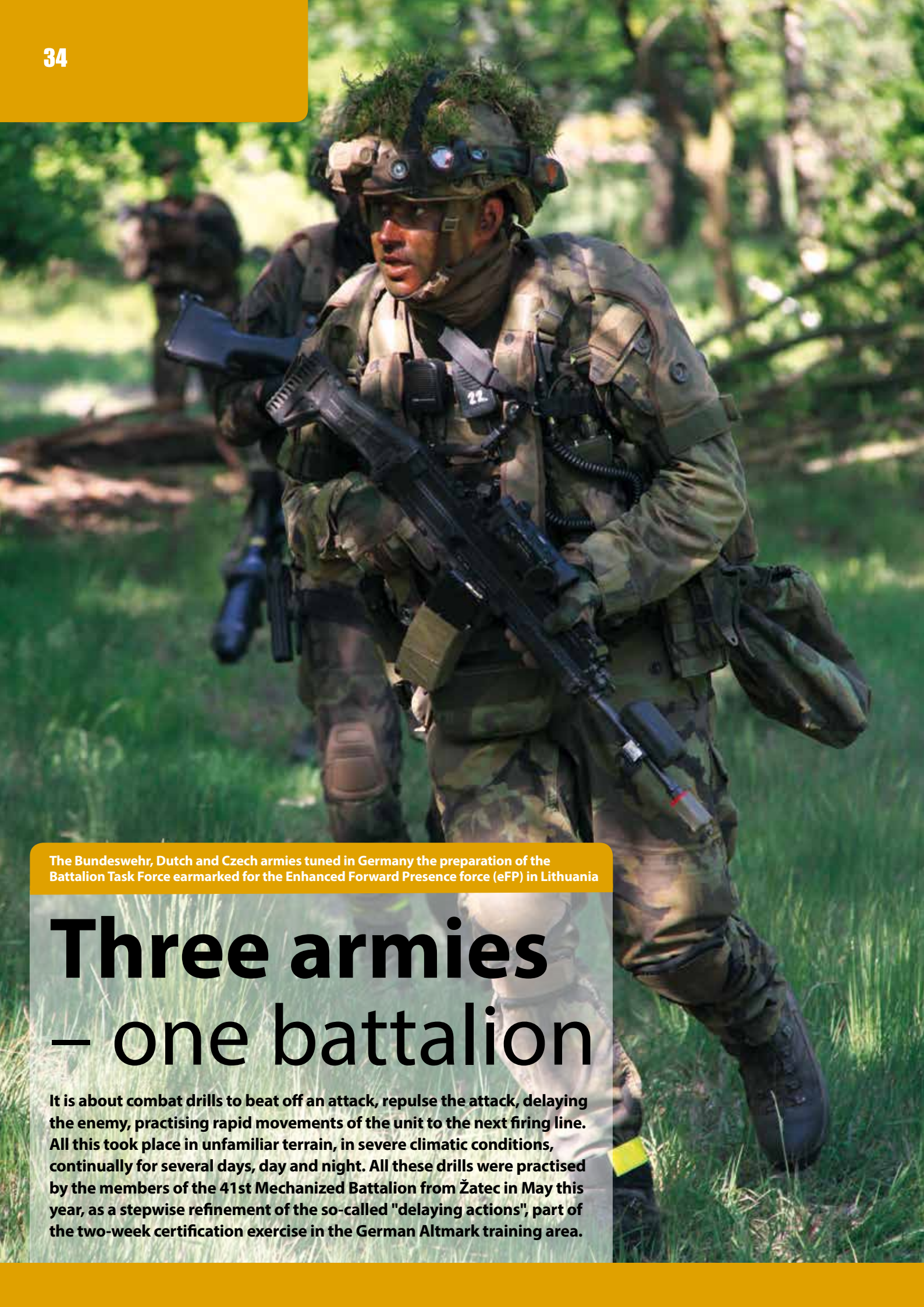
factsheet

The dog competition Globalring came into being upon the request of dog handlers who asked a more relaxed race than the traditional Belgian ring, which required much greater precision and only dogs, registered under the International Cynological Federation, could participate in. Unlike the traditional and most widespread cynology sport in the Czech Republic, which consists of three disciplines, stalk, obedience and defence, Globalring is focused on obedience, jumps and defence of handler. Everything is done at the same time in a closed area, the so-called ring, where the dogs, at the beginning, perform various exercises, such as walking next to the handler, retrieval, searching for a handler's items, or refusing to eat. Then there are a variety of obstacles for jumping up, jumping into the distance, and the climb. Then there is a defence by itself, where the dog must find in the area a figurant and perform various tasks, to face opponent's assault, chase. The dog has to handle various model situations that come from the practical life. The dog is appreciated for quick reactions and even a minute delay is penalized by point losses.

Thomas had its entire career as a partner one of my civilian dogs, Sunki. It became this year an absolute world champion in Globalring, so I will devote now my energy mainly to Sunki. Tomi will compete only for its own joy, because it loves this kind of activities," said with a sigh, but also with pride, the dog handler Staff Sergeant Stanislav Doležal. It was not only his work, his dedication, but also the natural authority and ability of perfect preparation of this exceptional dog, which was in the background of successes that are unique in cynology, all the more so in view of Tomas' occupational speciality.

*by SSG Stanislav Doležal and Michal Voska;
photos: SSG Stanislav Doležal's archive*





The Bundeswehr, Dutch and Czech armies tuned in Germany the preparation of the Battalion Task Force earmarked for the Enhanced Forward Presence force (eFP) in Lithuania

Three armies – one battalion

It is about combat drills to beat off an attack, repulse the attack, delaying the enemy, practising rapid movements of the unit to the next firing line. All this took place in unfamiliar terrain, in severe climatic conditions, continually for several days, day and night. All these drills were practised by the members of the 41st Mechanized Battalion from Žatec in May this year, as a stepwise refinement of the so-called "delaying actions", part of the two-week certification exercise in the German Altmark training area.

The individual armies, assigned to the eFP battalion task force, had been preparing for their deployment in Lithuania for almost half a year in their home territories. The final multinational certification exercise, involving the German, Dutch and Czech armies, took place in the first half of May in the Altmark training area of the Federal Republic of Germany, with the aim to unify common practices, drill common tactics and harmonize common communication in unfamiliar terrain. All this, especially for the Czech and the Dutch army, was valuable experience for the upcoming combined deployment. The first Czech contingent is to be deployed in Lithuania during July this year.

The core of the Czech unit consists of soldiers of 41st mech Bn Žatec

"The core of our unit consists of soldiers of a Mechanized Company of our battalion from Žatec, enhanced by an Engineer Platoon, composed in part out of our Engineers of the 41st Mechanized Battalion and from the 15th Engineer Regiment and Arty Recce team of the 13th Artillery Regiment," says Lieutenant Colonel Jiří Líbal, commander of the 41st Mechanized Battalion Žatec, and at the same time commander of a unit assigned for the eFP in Lithuania. He added that the whole unit is also complemented by other specialists from reconnaissance and logistics elements of the Army of the Czech Republic.

For some Czech soldiers, this exercise in Germany is the first opportunity to co-ordinate their activities in the international environment, whether with individual companies of the German and Dutch armies, or with the whole combined battalion. For many of our soldiers, this is also the first opportunity to work in an international environment, because deployment in Lithuania will be their first foreign experience. As part of this training in the Altmark training area, they not only gained valuable experience in training tactics and combat drills, but at the same time they had to prove their linguistic knowledge, since all communications within the armies were in English.

For Pandur drivers, the terrain was a valuable experience

The terrain that the German Bundeswehr has in this military training centre is very similar to that in Lithuania.

"It is very flat and for us this flat and uncovered terrain is something new that we must get used to and adapt our training to it," says Captain M. S., commander of the Czech Mechanized Company of the eFP force. "At the same time, this experience for our soldiers is very valuable because our half-year preparation in the home environment took place especially in mountainous and rugged terrains of the military training area in the Doupov hills."

The exercise was challenging not only for infantry soldiers, but the terrain was challenging even for the Pandur drivers, who had to cope not only with the unknown terrain, but also with its surface. "The sandy subsoil is very dusty, so the ride in the column requires a lot of attention and caution for drivers who have to follow not only the terrain, but also the map," Captain M. S. continues. "This means that the entire crew of a combat vehicle must be constantly on guard, monitor the area and be ready for rapid and unexpected moves."

In the field, day and night

The time of deployment of soldiers in the field was continuous during all certification exercise. In unknown terrain they were day and night.

"This required not only the physical exhaustion of soldiers, but also a psychological burden on them," the mech Coy commander explains. "Over time, people are logically experiencing sleep deprivation and fatigue. On the other hand, I must say

that these difficult crisis situations are not uncommon for our soldiers and are not an extraordinary burden for them. We simulate these crisis situations as part of our year-long training and they are a regular part of each exercise. This is also related to the fact that our soldiers are trained to operate in the field for several days, without any logistical support."

"I myself appreciate the experience gained from the new terrain, because I have experience mostly with hilly terrains, which means focusing on some landmarks in the field," says one of the soldiers of our unit. "Operating in this new terrain is not easy even from a tactical point of view. Just because of the flat and open terrain, we do not have visual contact with each other, and therefore this is a very new and very valuable experience for us."

Delaying operations

The entire certification exercise is focused on drilling the so-called delaying operations. "This means constantly retreating from the



hasty positions and keeping contact with the enemy, using a large system of barriers, which is also relatively new to us," said Lieutenant Colonel Jiří Líbal, commander of the unit. "Our artillery is a major part of this exercise, which is not so customary for our 41st Mechanized Battalion. Then, it is very important for us to align all of our elements, and at the same time to align with the other elements of the participating German and Dutch armies."

Combat service support in battlefield environment

Even a logistical part of the unit tested its role in combat deployment. The transport of ration supplies to the respective place of deployment of a unit, without any losses, that is the task of logistics. Food and water, this is the base of the soldier's survival in the battlefield.

"Our logisticians checked their orientation in unknown terrain, communicating with deployed units, moving quickly on unfriendly terrain, as well as quickly withdrawing from the battlefield," the commander points out. "When deployed, the infantry must learn how to survive for a few days without logistical support, only with prepared personal belongings. Each of our soldiers is trained to survive in the field, with limited rations of food and water, directly at the site of topical deployment."

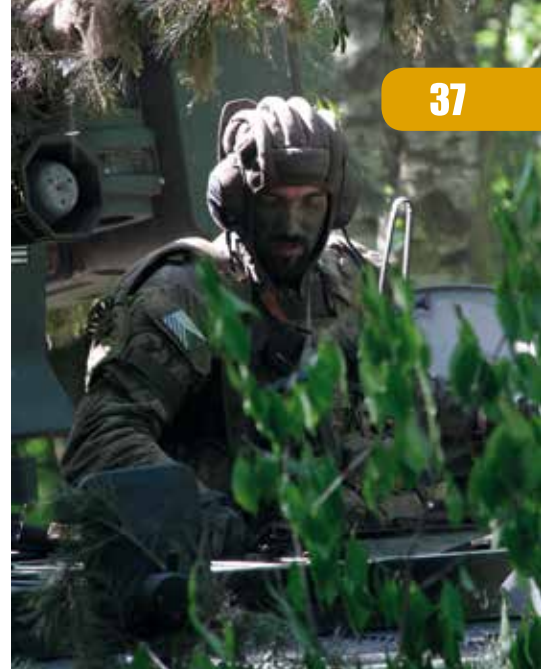
Position of each soldier on the monitor

In the field, German referees ran between the enemy and combat troops. They instantly recorded, evaluated, and immediately sent to the secret location of the commander's staff the final results of deployed units on the firing line.

One of the Czech technical mentors, who were in charge of information on the tactical procedures of our troops for the main German referees, was also First Lieutenant M. K. "My task is to issue instructions for the enemy in coordination with the German referees," says the First Lieutenant and adds that he monitors the soldiers through the transmitter to see what positions were taken by the soldiers. Operators send him master maps; he selects the route on the basis of this information and determines the enemy where to move.

All participating units use the identification system of the German army, MAILS or AGNUS, which is worn by every soldier and is on their battle equipment. Based on this identification, all their positions are known throughout the whole exercise. German field referees will find on the monitor the current position of each soldier, and at the same time this information goes to the higher level of referees, who are at the Operations





Centre. "On the basis of their evaluation, we get immediate feedback," continues the Czech referee. "That's why I can immediately explain the soldiers what are the possible shortcomings in fulfilling their particular task and what are their weaknesses. Upon completing the task, they are leaving with this feedback."

The laser beam is a point of impact

Every army uses its own identification systems in the national environment. This means that the German, Dutch, and Czech armies use the American system. But as part of this exercise, German identification systems were used.

"It works in the way that each weapon has a box that emits a beam that imitates ammunition," explains Captain M. S. "But this beam does not make any sounds, so soldiers use the blank ammunition to make everything real and the contact with the enemy is accompanied by shooting. For wheeled and tracked vehicles, specifically for our Pandurs, this is done in the following

way: when the vehicle is hit by the beam, the impact is accompanied by the sound and subsequent explosion. On the identification box, the info is immediately displayed, what part of the vehicle was hit, e. g. a broken engine, damaged weapon system, or a loss of radio connection." The Pandur driver, sitting inside a combat vehicle, can see immediately, on the identification system, what a problem the vehicle has.

"If a soldier is hit, it is easier to report the impact," the Czech referee explains. "The system on a soldier's ballistic vest continuously sends an audible signal, KILL, KILL, KILL, or eventually reports a specific injury. All these sounds a soldier can hear immediately."

Exercise tested the individual preparation of armies

"The task of the multinational unit is to build and defend the battalion's defence area," Lieutenant Colonel Líbal explains. "In the case of an enemy attack, we use the so-called delaying action, which means

to repulse the attack, to stop the enemy's advance, to quickly retreat to another defence area of the battalion. For soldiers it is especially demanding, as they have to spend many hours in defensive positions, so that no movement of the enemy can't be left unnoticed."

For example, a gunner-operator of the wheeled infantry fighting vehicle Pandur must monitor the space through the vehicle's viewing devices, to be ready to beat off immediately any enemy's attack. "His main task is to destroy heavy armoured vehicles with anti-tank missiles SPIKE and light armoured equipment with a 30mm cannon," said the unit commander Líbal. He added that the final certification exercise in Germany not only inspected previous individual training of national armies, but also integrated the combined Battalion Task Force, so that it could fulfil successfully its mission in Lithuania.

**The Czech Armed Forces
honouring its 25th
anniversary**



Formed by a division

At the beginning of 2018, twenty-five years passed from the establishment of the Czech Armed Forces. Several months prior to that, it was necessary to perform one of the largest operations in the history of our military. The process of dividing the federal armed forces encompassed unprecedented transfers of both materiel and personnel. The divide affected thousands of families, and so it was also essential to manage a variety of social aspects at the same time. On the other hand, as opposed to 1918, it was not necessary to build Czech Armed Forces from scratch.

The very process of dividing the federal state and indeed the armed forces started on 17 July 1992 with the adoption of the Declaration of Independence of the Slovak Republic by the Slovak National Council. The very agreement on the division of Czechoslovakia was signed in Villa Tugendhat in Brno on 26 August 1992. As to the division of the military, it was based on the Constitutional Act No. 541/1992 Coll., on the Division of the Property of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and its cession to the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, and the Constitutional Act No. 542/1992 Coll., on the Abolishment of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. To realise that process, the Ordinance of the Chief of General Staff was developed on settlement and transfer of armaments, equipment and materiel between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. That was authorised on 26 October 1992 by the Minister of the Czechoslovak Federal Republic Imrich Andrejčák and signed by commissioners of governments of both Republics. The division of the military property was controlled by the General Staff. The Western Command, Central Command (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) and Eastern Command (Slovakia) joined the process as well as the Air Force Command and the Air Defence Command.

The rough order of magnitude of such a venture can be indicated in the following figures. For many years, meticulous care was given to prevent the existence of two national militaries in the territory of the federation. In particular, there was a trend to assign conscripts prior to 1989 to serve their conscription duty in the territory of the other republic than the one they originally came from. The federal armed forces was nationally mixed to a large extent. A similar pattern applied to the families of career soldiers. Approximately 62% of career soldiers with Slovak nationality serving in Bohemia had a Czech wife and contrarily 75% Czech commissioned officers in Slovak garrisons had married Slovak females. At the beginning of 1993, over eight thousand career soldiers serving in the Czech Armed Forces were Slovak nationals, i.e. over twenty percent of the total personnel strength. The total of 778 career soldiers transferred into the Slovak Armed Forces; the rest opted for service with the Czech Armed Forces or retired. There were 2,580 Czech military professionals in the Slovak Armed Forces, i.e. 15% of the total personnel strength; some 217 transferred into the Czech Armed Forces; that is about eight percent. Regardless of nationality, all career soldiers were granted the possibility to elect the armed forces they

would serve in. That was another principle that helped to divide the federation without conflict.

It was natural for conscripts to return to the place of their permanent residence after the completion of their service. In addition, recruits only served in the part of the federation they had come from since 1 October 1992. So, the transfers only applied to a limited number of persons in that case.

Additional human resources were in military schools. Some 363 career soldiers and 75 soldiers on extended contract, who were Slovak nationals, studied in the territory of the newly formed Czech Republic. The military schools in the Slovak Republic were attended by 517 career soldiers and 62 soldiers on extended contract, who were Czech nationals. All those students were allowed to complete their studies in the territory of the other Republic. At the same time, there were intensive efforts underway for the necessary military academic training capacities previously located in Slovakia (military schools were much more abundant in quantity than in the Czech Republic) to be newly built in the Czech Republic from the new academic year on. The Military Academy in Brno, Army College in Vyškov and Military High School in Moravská Třebová played a key role in that regard.

The key principle for the division of all movable military property was the one to two ratio in favour of the Czech Republic. Immovable property was to be divided based on what country it was located in. Weapons and equipment were divided based on types, variants and wear. In all instances however, a high priority was given to maintaining functional components. In case something could not be divided according to the adopted ratio (for instance, the Federal Armed Forces had two Tu-154 airplanes), the splitting pattern was different, often half by half. The difference was then compensated so that the Czech party received Tu-134 and Jak-10 in addition to Tu-154. The Czechoslovak Armed Forces only had one advanced Soviet-designed S-300 air defence missile system and, upon agreement, it went to the Slovak Republic. Likewise, the newest MiG-29 fighters, twenty units of which were in the inventory of the federal armed forces at the time of the division (including two MiG-29 UB double-seaters) were not split according to the prescribed key, but every party obtained ten of them. Three years later, the Czech Air Force exchanged them in Poland for eleven new W-3 Sokol rotary wing aircraft equipped for helicopter emergency medical service. The Czech Republic contrarily retained all thirty-three MiG-23 fighter jets. A more complex situation prevailed in the case of splitting the air traffic control – the military only possessed a single ATM capability, which was also the case with some other similar components.

The total of 2,324 military railway transports and 117 road transports moved 347 artillery systems, 163 fixed and rotary wing aircraft, 164 tanks, 59 infantry fighting vehicles and armoured personnel carriers, 2,032 vehicles and 610 other types of equipment from the Czech Republic into Slovakia. Contrarily, 224

artillery systems, 42 fixed and rotary wing aircraft, 39 vehicles and 691 other types of equipment travelled from Slovakia into the Czech Republic. The transports started already from 1 November 1992 and practically ended up on 20 December 1992. No emergency happened during the transport. Likewise, air assets were handed over at the end of 1992. The division of the federal military property however continued through 1993 and was formally concluded only at 31 October 1993. Military archives, administrative archives, archives of the Military Defence Intelligence, former Military Counterintelligence Service and the former Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff were left in whole since they were difficult to split; both parties were granted access.

The military property's value was estimated at CZK 418 billion. The costs of dividing the armed forces were covered from the military budget.

In January 1993, the Czech Armed Forces comprised the Land Forces, Air Force and the Air Defence. It furthermore involved units earmarked for territorial defence, primarily the Civil Defence military rescue units, railway troops and the units with the mission to provide security to critical defence infrastructures. At that time, the Czech Armed Forces total personnel strength was 106,447 service personnel.

The Land Forces comprised two tank divisions with reduced personnel strength, two mechanised divisions, a mechanised division with reduced strength, a missile regiment, two artillery brigades, four engineer brigades, two NBC defence brigades, a signal brigade, two technical support brigades, two materiel support brigades and two medical support brigades. Starting in January 1993, Mr. Antonín Baudyš took up the position of the Minister of

Defence. Lieutenant General Karel Pezl was reconfirmed in the position of the Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces.

The figures above imply that the armed forces were still up to a number of major organisational redesigns. But that is a completely different chapter though.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by archives





The largest exercises of the Army of the Czech Republic in 2017

4th RDB Exercise in MTA Doupov "FEATHERED SERPENT"

August 21st – September 1st 2017, MA Doupov

Personnel: 1,500 soldiers

The main objective of the exercise was to evaluate the interoperability of 41st Mechanized Battalion from Žatec and 43rd Airborne Battalion from Chrudim. This means that the units were to demonstrate their capabilities at basic doctrinal activities, such as offence, defence, movements, etc.

Main equipment: Pandur II Wheeled IFV, Iveco Light Armoured Vehicle, AGS-17, LR Kajman, Tatra T 810, LR Defender



4th Brigade Task Force command and staff exercise "VITAL SWORD"

October 9th – 19th 2017, Wildflecken (SRN)

Personnel: 2,300 soldiers from several NATO countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania) and 250 soldiers from 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade and its subordinate elements participated in the exercise.

The goal of Exercise "VITAL SWORD" was to improve the level of interoperability between the staff of 4th BTF, DSK (Division Schnelle Kräfte), and 1st German-Netherlands Corps, to deepen the knowledge of the staff about conducting operations IAW Article 5 of the Washington Treaty to secure the safe allied territory and territorial integrity, to improve the capability of the staff to command international forces within 4th BTF.



Complex military exercise of the 41st Mechanized Battalion, 2017 – Military Training Area Hradiště

February 15th – 26th 2017

Total: 358 PAX, 117 PCS vehicles

The main task of the military exercise was to perform individual companies' training. During the exercise under the command of the Battalion Commander, the companies practised activities in the field independently for several days. The basis was to perform movement of the unit, occupation of defensive positions, and transfer from defence to attack. The training was psychologically and physically very demanding, and the complete battalion with all its equipment participated.

Tasks:

- Subordinate units are to fulfill FTX's tasks;
- accomplish 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade commander's controlled exercise;
- to accomplish live combat firing;
- prepare documentation for upcoming COYs' Field training.

Main equipment: Pandur II APC



COYs' Field training exercise with live combat firing (real scenario: reaction to hybrid warfare)

June 18th – 23rd 2017

Total: 369 PAX, 65 PCS vehicles

Tasks:

For commanders:

- test and improve platoon leaders and company commanders in planning and organizing offensive and defensive actions;
- increase ability of quick and skillful decision making process in dynamically changing situation during day and night;
- improve ability of company commanders in cooperation with attached support units;
- improve ability of company commanders in planning, organization and performance of hybrid warfare;
- increase ability in control of maneuver by force and by fire in the conditions similar to real combat situation as much as possible.

For units:

- test and improve units in performance of offensive and defensive actions; while cooperating with a direct fire support unit;
- increase capability of the mortar battery in cooperation with FOs (forward observers);
- increase the units' ability in transition from offence to defence;
- test units' performance during decontamination.

Main equipment: Pandur II APC, T-810, T-815, Mi-17/171, Model 52 82mm mortar

Specification:

Hybrid warfare is a military strategy which employs political warfare and blends conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyber warfare with other influencing methods, such as fake news, diplomacy and foreign intervention.



“SABER JUNCTION”

25th – 27th April 2017

Total: 350 soldiers (180 CZE / 170 US)

The main task of the exercise was to conduct joint training between partnered units – 43rd ABN Bn (CZE) and one of the ABNs of 173rd Airborne Brigade. The main objective was seizing the airfield for next echelon units. 350 airborne soldiers were dropped on the airfield from both US and CZE aircraft. Right after the drop, the US and CZE soldiers seized key infrastructure and ensured safe landing for the next echelon units.

Main equipment: C-295M CASA (CZE), Lockheed C-130 Hercules (US)



COYs' Field training exercise with live combat firing (COYs' attack after the transfer from depth with overcoming a water obstacle)

June 5th – 16th 2017

Total: 244 PAX, 83 PCS vehicles

Tasks:

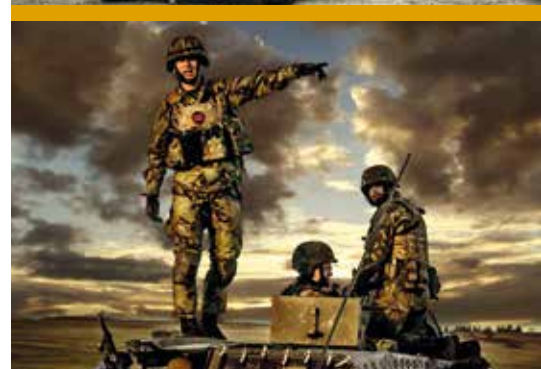
For commanders:

- test and improve platoon leaders and company commanders in planning and organizing offensive and defensive actions;
- increase ability of quick and skillful decision making process in dynamically changing situation during day and night;
- improve ability of company commanders in cooperation with attached support units;
- improve ability of company commanders in planning, organization and performance of overcoming a water obstacle;
- increase ability in control of maneuver by force and by fire in the conditions similar to real combat situation as much as possible.

For units:

- test and improve units in performance of offensive and defensive actions while cooperating with a direct fire support unit;
- increase capability of the units in overcoming a water obstacle;
- increase the units' ability in transition from offence to defence;
- test units' performance during decontamination.

Main equipment: Pandur II APC, LAV Iveco, Mi-17/171, 82mm mortar model. 52, AGS-17



TRAINING BRIDGE 2017

January 10th – March 20th 2017, Lithuania

Personnel: 112 soldiers from 74th Light Motorized Battalion

The aim was to practice tactical activities and training in challenging climatic conditions, to ensure the logistic support of the unit and to get the most experience and knowledge from training in the international environment. The unit carried out 40 pieces of military equipment, including 15 pieces of light armoured vehicles Iveco.

Equipment: 40 pcs, include 15 pcs light multirole vehicles Iveco



SECTOR POLAND

March 9th – March 10th 2017, Chotebuz

Personnel: 400 participants, include 42 soldiers from 7th MBde, international exercise together with the Police and the Polish Border Guard

The task of the military professional of the mechanized brigade was to practice the driving times in the reception areas, to occupy the designated areas on the Czech-Polish border and to strengthen the members of the Police of the Czech Republic in returning control and protection at selected border crossings in two twelve-hour shifts.



LIBAVEX III

March 17th – April 2nd 2017, MTA Boletice

Personnel: 450 soldiers from 72nd Mechanized Battalion with 144 pcs of equipment

An exercise called Libavex III was attended by 450 members of this unit with 144 pieces of equipment. During the first week, a number of training activities took place. Shooting from small arms, throwing grenades, sharp tearing, combat drills of mechanized cooperatives, night shooting or mortar shooting.



MOBILIZATION 2017

April 3rd – April 12th 2017, MTA Libavá

Personnel: 300 soldiers and reserves from 73rd Tank Battalion

The main goal of the exercise was to check the operation of the unit in full combat readiness with the practical onset of the Active Reserve. The activity of the mobilization sites, the combat and professional deployment of the 73rd Tank Battalion, the demobilization and release of the AR from the exercise when the military exercise was concluded.



SCREENER 2017

April 21st – May 5th 2017, MTA Libavá a PLA Beskydy

Personnel: 450 Czech soldiers, 68 foreign soldiers

The main purpose of the exercise with international participation was to practice conducting the survey in conditions of symmetrical and asymmetrical combat as well as management and support of already established reconnaissance teams.

Equipment: 70 pieces of military equipment, including three T-72M4 CZ tanks and 16 infantry vehicles BVP-2



METRO 2017

June 19th – June 30th and October 3rd – October 15th 2017, MTA Hradiště

Personnel: 400 soldiers from 71st Mechanized Battalion with more than 80 pieces of equipment

During both phases, the mechanized unit exercised combat drills in attack, contact with the opponent, overcoming dangerous space, cooperative activities during the movement, attack and defence. The soldiers were shooting handgun and throwing hand grenades. Driving training focused on the management of infantry combat vehicles in complex terrain conditions.



COOPERATIVE SECURITY 2017

September 10th – September 16th 2017, MTA Allentsteig (Austria)

Personnel: 2,400 soldiers from Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary; thanks to the observers were present also Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia, 78 soldiers from 74th Light Motorized Battalion

The main goal of the COOPERATIVE SECURITY 2017 international exercise, which took place in the Allentsteig military training area, was to practice international cooperation on the external borders of the European Union. The exercise was attended by 2,400 soldiers from Austria, the Czech Republic and Hungary.



DUKLA SPIRIT 2017

October 2nd – October 6th 2017, Hranice, Přáslavice, Bučovice a CSST Brno

Personnel: 600 soldiers from 7th Brigade Combat Team

The main objective was to test the capabilities of the 7th BCT HQ in combat planning and management. It was also part of the preparation of this task force for certification according to the NATO methodology, which is scheduled for 2019 as part of the international exercise "CZECH LION 2019".



DYNAMIC FRONT II

February 27th – March 10th 2017, Grafenwöhr, SRN

Personnels: 1,400 soldiers from Germany, France, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Czech Republic

The main task was to examine and evaluate the functionality of the processes used for command and control in the international environment, with the emphasis on the co-operation of the national automated firearms systems within the ASCA (Artillery Systems Cooperation Activities) international project. The aim of the ASCA project is to enable joint firefighting across the Alliance armies. In the future, ASCA will be able to unify the national artillery fire control and coordination systems to create favourable conditions for rapid and continuous fire support for mechanized units in the international environment.

Main equipment: two Czech ARTHUR radars with the task of detecting impacts of individual missiles, 152mm Model 77 DANA and American M-777-2 howitzers



EBONITE JAVELIN 2017

October 30th – November 10th 2017, MTA Hradiště

Personnel: over 360 soldiers of 73rd Tank Battalion and its Active Reserve with more than 120 pieces of equipment

The first half of the exercise was focused on the training of tank and mechanized companies. The other half of the exercise was focused on accomplishing combat shooting of the companies.



ELBE 2017

September 11th – September 22nd 2017, VC Litoměřice

Personnel: 250 soldiers of other Czech Army units also participated e.g. 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade, 7th Mechanized Brigade, 13th Artillery Regiment, 14th Logistic Support Regiment, 21st Tactical Air Force Base and 15 members of Slovak Armed Forces Engineer Battalion Sered' and 15 members of the Texas National Guard. In addition there was the participation of members of the Pontoon Company of the Active Reserve of the 151st Engineer Battalion

The main goal of the international exercise of engineer units was to examine the technical, tactical and combat capabilities of bridging units within NATO in the event of a forced river crossing during an armed conflict.

Main equipment: 70 pieces – Pontoon Bridge Set PMS, Bridge Erection Boat MO-634, MO 2000, Laminated Boat RUSB



JOINT FIRES 2017

October 16th – October 27th 2017, MTA Hradiště

Personnel: approx. 500 soldiers

Combat task was to improve tactical and technical fire control activities within 131st Artillery Battalion in the provision of firing support for the BTF maneuvering units in defensive activities. Improve the operations of firearm co-ordination and fire control. For members of the Reserve (AR), in the all-round preparation, master the shooting and refine in basic tactical activities (contact with the opponent) and in the technical training of artillery.

Main equipment: SpGH DANA 152mm, recce systems ARTHUR, SNĚŽKA, LOV-Pz, LOS-M



JAS-39C Gripen multi-role combat aircraft



Tactical and technical specifications

Wingspan	8,4 m
Length	14,1 m
Height	4,7 m
Maximum takeoff weight	13,000 kg
Maximum ordnance weight	4,200 kg
Top speed (at 12–18 km above the ground)	2,128 km/h
Top speed (at 1 km above the ground)	1,223 km/h
Time of climb to 10 km	120 s
Time of climb to 14 km	180 s
Ferry range	3,000 km
Combat radius with 2,000 kg of payload	700 km
Crew	1 pilot

152-mm Model 77 DANA Self-propelled Gun Howitzer

This howitzer is a modern artillery weapon with an automatic loading system, capable of delivering effective fire support to land forces. It features a long firing range, accuracy and a rapid rate of fire. Its 152 mm cannon is complemented by a 12.7 mm model 38/46 air-defence machine gun and an RPG-7 portable anti-tank grenade launcher.



Tactical and technical specifications

Combat weight	29,500 kg
Max speed on road / off road	80 / 25 km per hour
Range on road / off road	800 / 400 km
Crew	5
Maximum firing range of cannon	18,000 m
Elevation	−4° to +70°
Traverse	±45°
Rate of fire	4 rounds per minute