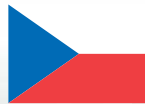


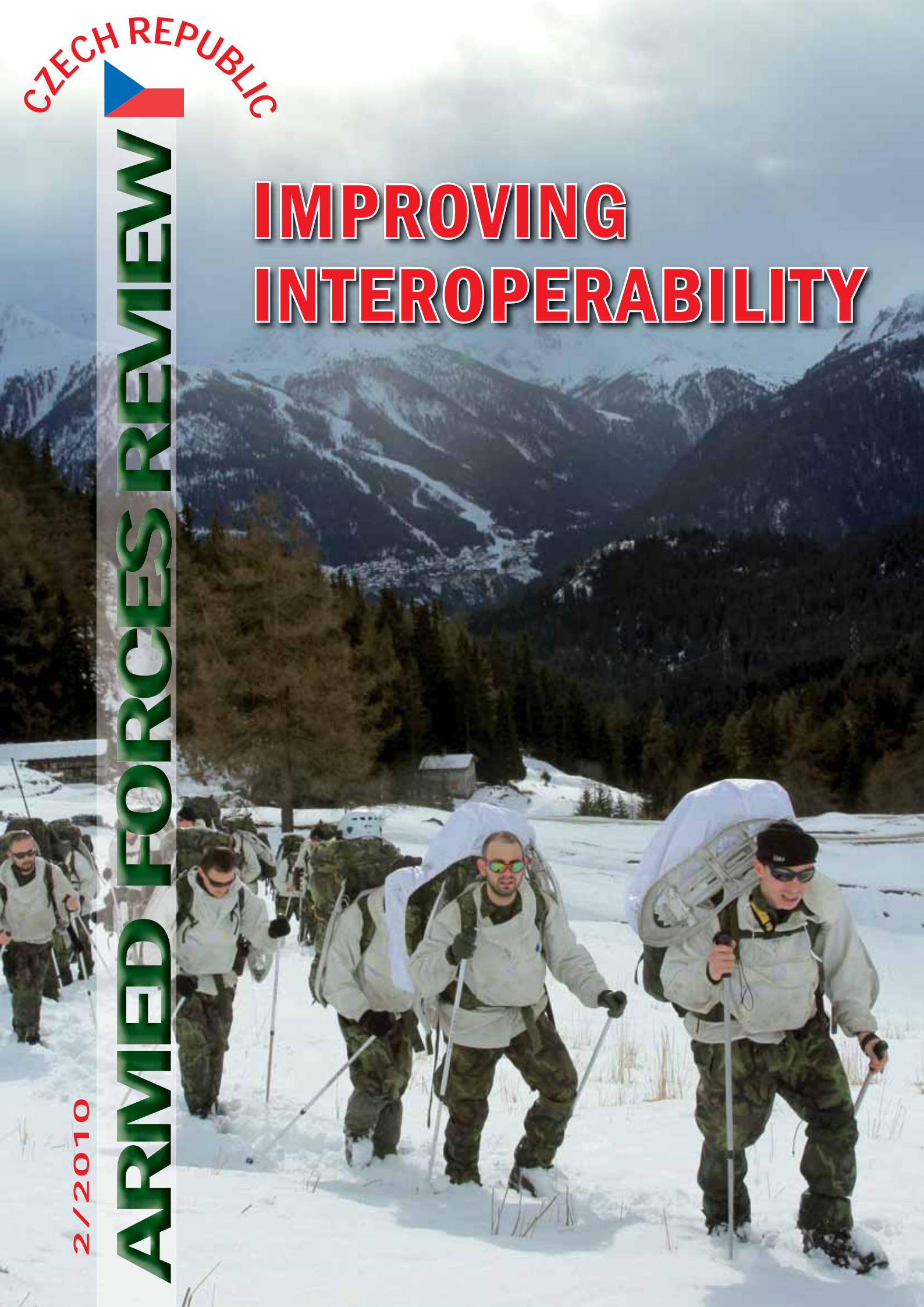
CZECH REPUBLIC



ARMED FORCES REVIEW

IMPROVING INTEROPERABILITY

2/2010



President of the Czech Republic decorated Veterans of War

On the occasion of national independence day, October 28th, 2010, the President of the Czech Republic valued outstanding civic merit in building free democratic society, professional accomplishments, merit in national defence, heroism and other exceptional deeds by some prominent personalities, and conferred on them state decorations of the Czech Republic.

The President of the Czech Republic conferred the White Lion Order, 3rd Class the Military Division, on Colonel Emil Boček for eminent merit in national defence and security, and combat excellence.

Colonel Emil Boček ranks among the heroes of WWII air battles. He departed from the Protectorate territory in 1939 and joined the Czechoslovak forces abroad. He underwent air training in Britain and was involved in fighting in the western front. He has received high Czechoslovak and British war decorations for bravery in combat. He was dismissed from the Armed Forces in 1946. After restoration of democracy in our country, he was morally and politically rehabilitated and is still publicly active, including as the Chairman of RAF Airmen Association in Brno, Czech Republic.



The President of the Czech Republic conferred the White Lion Order, 2nd Class the Military Division, on Colonel Marie Ljalková-Lastovecká for eminent merit in national defence and security, and combat excellence.

Colonel Marie Ljalková-Lastovecká volunteered to join the nascent Czechoslovak forces in the Soviet Union in 1942. She was involved in fighting as a medic and she was also one of the first females ever to fight as a sniper. Serving with the Czechoslovak Army Corps, she was took part in the battle of Sokolovo, in liberating Kyiv and western Ukraine, the Battle of Dukla Pass and other fights when liberating homeland. She has received high Czechoslovak and Soviet war decorations. She celebrates her ninetieth birthday this year.

The President of the Czech Republic conferred the White Lion Order, 3rd Class the Military Division, on Colonel Jan Plovajko for eminent merit in national defence and security, and combat excellence.

After Czechoslovakia had been occupied, Colonel Jan Plovajko departed from Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union, where he was arrested and spent three years in a gulag camp behind the Arctic Circle. Then he joined the forming Czechoslovak forces in Buzuluk, with whom he went through battles in the USSR territory through Dukla to Prague. He sustained several combat injuries. He was arrested in 1948 on charges of counter-Soviet stance and dismissed from the armed forces. His political endeavour in 1968 earned him additional persecution by the ruling regime. He is still publicly active as a member of the Military Association of the Rehabilitated, the Czechoslovak Association of Legionnaires and the Czech Freedom Fighters Association.

Photos: the President's Office

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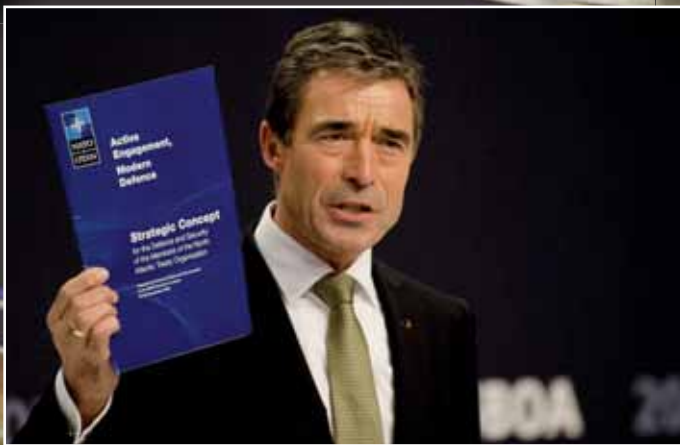
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NATO Structure Over Branched

Facing the Implementation Phase



NATO's Summit in Lisbon adjourned its sessions just several weeks ago. Experts from all twenty-eight NATO nations immediately started elaborating on the Summit conclusions. The Czech Republic has been a NATO member state for over a decade and has gathered some experience with becoming involved in the process of implementing major decisions and strategic plans. Although much has been written and said about the Lisbon Summit, we interviewed the Czech Republic's Ambassador in NATO on retrospect.

Your Excellency, the attribute most frequented in reference to the Summit was "ground-breaking". Why?

I came back from Lisbon literally a couple of hours ago and I believe it is fair to say it was one of the good NATO summits. I think there are three principal reasons for the media to call the summit ground-breaking. First, the new Strategic Concept was adopted for the Alliance to follow in the next decade. The adoption of the concept does not mean the job is over – we are facing the implementing phase, which is primarily designed to modernise NATO and adapt it to the changing security environment. The second reason was indeed the progress in Operation ISAF in Afghanistan into the phase of handing the primary responsibility for security over to the Afghani National Security Forces.

The year 2014 however will not see forces withdrawing, but a progressive change of the nature of our military presence from warfighting to training and mentoring. Finally the third "ground-breaking" impetus was the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council and the adoption of a joint declaration, which by the way has not happened since 2005. It is fair to consider it a headway made towards a much more cooperative relationship between NATO and Russia, not necessarily only in missile defence, but also in other areas, for instance in relation to Afghanistan.

You say it was a good summit. Was everything well prepared beforehand?

The conclusion can be made today that all objectives were met, but I have to state at the same time that

neither everything was certain at all from the beginning of day one, nor prenegotiated and completely clear. It was not clear by far how the domain of NATO-EU relations could end up or what compromise it would result in, with Turkey being a strong player. There was a similar situation concerning the decision on missile defence and admittedly, it was not entirely clear what solution would there be for the "rule of three" - the relationship between missile defence, nuclear deterrent and non-proliferation as the third aspect. The Summit is over and we may conclude that all those outstanding issues were closed relatively painlessly.

NATO's new Strategic Concept clearly has a paramount importance. What is new about it?

The document defines NATO's three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management and building a stable international environment through cooperative security. From the beginning of discussions and deliberations of the new concept, the Czech Republic had the position that crisis management and cooperative security would not sort of push out what we deemed the very fundamental task for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: Article V collective defence. The right balance was struck between what is referred to as NATO's first core task, and what we call the new tasks arising from the changing security environment and new threats that prevalently originate out of NATO's territory. NATO must be politically prepared to engage outside its territory and develop adequate capabilities at the same time to be a useful part of the international community in handling postconflict development in areas of crises.

Cooperative security encompasses new relationships with a number of countries. Is NATO opening up in this sense?

The Strategic Concept accentuates partner relationships in the sense that apart from traditional formats, including the Partnerships for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, it newly places a high premium on global partners. NATO opens up for somewhat closer relations with other global actors, not only those contributing to some NATO operations but also those emerging as new strong players in the global context - such as China, India, Brazil and others.



The new Strategic Concept entails a range of tasks. Are there timelines as well for delivering the Summit conclusions in practice?

The NATO Defence Ministerial meeting in March 2011 is expected to endorse a general political guidance, meaning that the Strategic Concept will turn into a practical political-military level. That will bring about a gamut of ensuing assignments, one of which will be, for instance, the need to develop the Cyber Defence Concept covering what is in principle a new battlefield. Another strategic document will be the Partnership Policy Concept. Efforts must also continue to develop





missile defence related documents. As to the Strategic Concept's relation to the Czech Republic's two primary policy documents, i.e. Security Strategy and the White Book on Defence, efforts are underway to prepare both documents. There are indeed many detailed issues we will need to address, for instance how to reflect on cyber defence in national policy documents. In my view, the Czech Republic has something to make up for in this regard.

You mentioned the White Book on Defence. Much has been written about it and it has raised high expectations. Why do you think it is important?

I believe it is essential in all advanced countries to truly concentrate some sort of intellectual effort from time to time for experts to take stock and review options how to steer the armed forces future development. This effort has a broader context, particularly in relation to our membership in NATO, which is the crucial defence and security pillar for us, but also in the context towards the European Union – the EU has, at least in political and legal terms, a stronger defence and security dimension after Lisbon than ever before.

Since 1999, the NATO Alliance has also grown from sixteen to today's twenty-eight members. Is the open-door policy still valid – or is there someone behind the door?

Since the Bucharest Summit, waiting right behind the door has naturally been Macedonia/FYROM. Its accession is a matter of settling the name of the country in relation with Greece. NATO may not and does not want to play any role here. It is purely a relation and problem involving a NATO member nation and a candidate nation. There are naturally discussions regarding other Western Balkans countries. Likewise, there is consensus that the future of the whole region

lies in Euro-Atlantic structures, depending in principle on how these countries are able to meet membership criteria; that applies both to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. As to Serbia, it depends on Serbs themselves to tell what they want to do in the future. Speaking about Balkans, Kosovo may not be omitted. There is no single NATO policy on Kosovo, because a number of NATO nations have not recognised its national independence. I believe in the long-term strategic perspective there can be no doubt Kosovo has and will have its path open to join the Alliance. As

far as Georgia and the Ukraine are concerned, the Summit declaration made it completely clear that the Bucharest conclusions remain valid. The fact that these nations have in a way differentiated from one another is the expression of their will. Georgia has not modified its ambitions. Future development in relation to the Ukraine is fully in the hands of Ukrainians and their political leadership. Nevertheless, this situation does not change anything in NATO's strategic interest to cooperate with those states effectively. NATO's door is still open.

Your Excellency, we are speaking of possible enlargement, but the Lisbon agenda rather highlighted streamlining of the military structure ...

Yes, indeed. The framework that the Summit gave blessing to is the reduction from 13,000 to 8,950 posts, which is a relatively major, already second round of downsizing the NATO command structure. But you cannot follow sheer numbers in this debate nevertheless. The command structure reform is much more about the conclusion that can fairly be made that for commanding and controlling operations in the changing security environment and faced with the crises we have seen, NATO's command structure is in principle unnecessarily branched. There are too many echelons and echelons in between echelons in a number of locations, which entails considerable joint logistic support costs. The Summit only decided about a generic model. We are now facing decisions that will be highly political, very problematic and complex. First of all, this will involve geographical distribution of command echelons, or in other words where the cuts will materialise. It will be an extremely complicated debate. Let's ask the question: Which one of NATO nations would be willing to give up physical presence of forces in their territory? The second debate will



concern setting common standards for host nation support, in other words what the host nation is required to provide the command headquarters with. These two aspects are what the reform stands and falls with. We should approve the basic framework in June 2011 and the implementation period will follow immediately.

The restrictions are also to affect a number of NATO's agencies. Will the Czech footprint downsize too?

As to NATO agencies, a specific framework was approved envisioning that the current number of fourteen would reduce down to three say mega agencies, to become only two down the road. Given the historically short Czech membership in NATO, we have not yet become involved in all agencies, which however may not be necessary. In this respect, we are discussing about how to make the decision-making processes within agencies work. We are very committed to seeing the reform expand the decision-making capabilities of the agencies we are engaged in. It appears that the reform in this sphere will be slowest and most complex, because their activities are tied to businesses. Massive interests of rather influential business actors will play a role there. The overarching goal is to make the system more transparent for NATO to be able to deliver a much swifter response to the rapidly changing environment.

Your Excellency, we have already covered the fundamental change currently under consideration of the role ISAF will play in Afghanistan from 2014 on. You have recently visited the Czech deployments in the field. What is your understanding of the role the Czech contingent plays?

Czech soldiers have done an absolutely tremendous job here. I feel we are making a qualitative progress. The experience men and women in uniform of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic have gained serving multiple operational tours is irreplaceable. The quality of equipment also improves. However, the important thing is that today we perform completely different missions in entirely different locations. We should realise that majority of the current Czech contingent once acted in the role of support forces with the German PRT in the north of the country in Feyzabad. I do not want to play down the role of support forces; it is one of the most responsible and most risky assignments. But considering how and where the Czech PRT acts today, it is a completely new definition of quality. Another example is the deployment and performance of the helicopter unit, which is one of the critical capabilities in the whole operation. It is highly valued that the Czech Republic has been able to deliver modernised machines plus aircrews to fill an operational capability gap and that the Czech Republic managed to launch a multinational initiative in support of this critical capability. We should not omit the fact that we are taking over the responsibility of training and mentoring an ANA Kandak in the Wardak province. Looking at the performance by Czech service personnel through "reverse binoculars" in retrospect, then you see how far we were then from what we are able to deliver today in terms of quality and capabilities. And that is an unbelievable progress.

by Pavel Lang and Jan Procházka
Photos by Pavel Lang, Jan Procházka
and Luboš Světnička (natoaktual.cz)



Defence Minister and Chief of Defence visiting Czech Deployments in Afghanistan

In the first week of November 2010, Defence Minister Alexandr Vondra, accompanied by the Chief of General Staff General Vlastimil Picek, visited Czech soldiers serving tours in Afghanistan.



Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, Chairman of the Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security Jiří Dienstbier, member of the Lower Chamber Defence and Security Committee, Mr. Zdeněk Boháč. and the Czech Ambassador to NATO, Mr. Martin Povejšil accompanied the Defence Minister on the trip.

In four days, the officials visited members of the Czech representation in ISAF Command in Kabul, the ISAF KAIA base at the Kabul International Airport, where the Czech Armed Forces Task Force ISAF is based, chemical and biological defence unit, Air Mentoring Team (AMT), National Support Element (NSE) and the Czech representation in ISAF Joint Command (IJC), Forward Operating Base Sharana where the Czech heli unit is stationed and Camp Shank, which is the temporary home for the Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The first day was marked with official discussions with leading Afghani and ISAF officials. Commander ISAF General David H. Petraeus thanked during official talks for additional Czech contributions to coalition forces in Afghanistan and noted the Czech commitment was inspiring for other nations, especially in the run-up to the Lisbon Summit. Minister Vondra underscored he deemed it important for the Czech Republic to meet its commitments to NATO, despite faced with budgetary restrictions.

In the afternoon, the Czech Foreign Minister and Defence Minister met with the First Vice-President of Afghanistan, Mohammad Quasim Fahim. Minister Vondra then had a meeting with Afghani Defence

Minister General Abdul Rahim Wardak. Minister Wardak said he highly valued what Czech soldiers had done in his country and underlined that given the Czech Republic's size it was one of the biggest commitments. He said the positive examples were the Czech instructors training





71st Mechanised Battalion based in Hranice, while the force protection company, reconnaissance team and combat support company, including an explosive ordnance disposal team and medical support form the major part thereof. A partner to 11 experts comprising the civilian component who provide for specific development

Afghani police officers and soldiers, the heli unit and the efforts by the Czech provincial reconstruction team. Minister Vondra reaffirmed the Czech Republic was ready to deliver on its commitments in the country for period of time necessary and until the country would be able to provide for security and stability on its own.

At the Sharana base located in southeast Afghanistan, the Defence Minister and Chief of Defence met the members of the 4th Heli Unit contingent led by Colonel Jaromír Šebesta. The deployment's core is formed by the members of the 23rd Air Force Base (Helo) in Přerov and is equipped with three modernised Mi-171Sh rotary wing aircraft. The unit's mission is to provide air mobility for coalition forces personnel and materiel, search and rescue, casualty evacuation and aerial reconnaissance missions. In an informal debate with the unit personnel, which followed after the tour and briefing on the mission and day-to-day activities of the unit, the issue of the future of Czech airbases was raised as well. Minister Vondra and General Pícek alike assured soldiers that they would not need to worry about their future. The airbases have had and will have their important role in the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic. Minister Vondra also informed soldiers about the 2011-13 mandate for foreign deployments recently endorsed by the Parliament of the Czech Republic and added no one had to worry this time about uncertainty that the Czech military service personnel performing demanding duties in foreign operations were faced with not a long time ago.

The last location the delegation visited was Camp Shank in the Province of Logar, where the Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is stationed. The PRT comprises a military and civilian component; the mil component is manned by personnel of the



and reconstruction projects in the province, the Civil-Military Cooperation team is another important PRT component. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Defence and the children's Centipede Peace Movement was signed during the visit at Camp Shank on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of cooperation between the movement and the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic. It is Camp Shank, from where Czech soldiers help the "Centipede Movement" realise projects in the country in the form of bringing in and distributing aid to local children, youth and medical organisations.

by Mira Třebická, CZE CHOD Public Diplomacy Manager, and Michael Machek

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between the
Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic
and
the "On own feet - Centipede" Movement

The Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic (hereinafter the Czech MoD) and the "On own feet - Centipede Movement" (hereinafter "the Movement"),

Building on over ten years of cooperation and realising benefits, usefulness and meaningfulness of fulfilling, shaping and using free time of children and young people,

have achieved the following understanding:

The Czech MoD is prepared to assist on transporting and distributing aid provided by the Movement to local, primarily children and medical organisations and institutions in locations where foreign deployments of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic operate.

The Czech MoD will provide assistance and aid to realising the Movement's projects that seek to foster the reconstruction of infrastructure and development of education, upbringing and child care in countries struck by wars and/or natural disasters.

The Czech MoD will become actively involved within the compass of its possibility in events held by the Movement to help create a positive public image of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic.

As a part of educating children, the Movement will strive to develop qualities such as friendship, mutual understanding, selfless help to others, modesty and diligence, which will enable them to stand "on own feet", thus helping to peacefully settle conflicts in the world.

The Czech MoD shall realise all cooperative activities with the Movement under the present Memorandum of Understanding through written implementing arrangements in compliance with terms and conditions given by the Czech law.

In

6 November 2010

RNDR. Alexandr VONDRA
Minister of Defence
of the Czech Republic

Běla von STYER JENSEN
President of
"On own feet - the Centipede"

Czech Omelette: Play to Learn



Plastic lids, discs, toy soldiers, picture pairs, pebbles – such non-traditional teaching aids are used in Afghanistan by Czech service personnel forming the Operational, Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) for training Afghan National Army soldiers.

For the first time in the modern history of the Czech Armed Forces, over fifty troops of the Czech 43rd Airborne Mechanised Battalion have trained an Afghani National Army unit - a Kandak, battalion-equivalent force with objective size of nearly 800 soldiers personnel, since the end of September earlier this year. "My unit has more than 400 personnel, the Kandak commander Lieutenant-Colonel M. Nadir (Wafa) says. In order to start operations in our assigned area in the Wardak province to enhance security and conditions for the life of local inhabitants, we must yet fill the manning levels and train the unit. And that is what Czech soldiers help us with," he elaborates.

The fact that it has not been and it will not be, as it shows after two

months of intensive training, an easy task for Czech soldiers at all, had been known to all of them prior to their departure from the Czech Republic. "Afghani soldiers have been great warfighters since old ages," says the commander of the Czech Omelette, as everybody



refers to the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team, Lieutenant-Colonel Ladislav Švejda and specifies: “Nearly 90% of the troops forming our Kandak are however absolute beginners who just completed their basic course only. In our training, we cope with their insufficient literacy. This fact is not a problem of just the Afghani National Security Forces, but it rather reflects the current situation in the Afghani society. In the military, these aspects have critical importance for combat decision-making. That involves reading and working with maps, the planning process and a whole set of additional activities.”



“This is when we have to approach training in a completely different manner than we are used and select forms enabling us to achieve our objectives. Afghani soldiers may not be trained in a style common to modern armed forces, so-called drilling, but we need to seek other ways. The motto that Jan Amos Comenius the teacher of nations coined - Learn to Play - has proven excellent for us here,” the Czech commander adds and points out ahead to demonstrate teaching aids that are rather untraditional for the military - plastic lids, toy soldiers, picture pairs and pebbles on the ground. “Given the language barrier, these aids make life much easier both for us and for Afghani soldiers,” Lieutenant-Colonel Švejda explains and demonstrates that right away with his soldiers in practising tactical skills.

An improvised plastic table footed on stones emerged in front of us, where every soldier has his plastic disc assigned. Prior to performing tactical activities in the field, company commanders, platoon and team leaders take turns to demonstrate graphically on the table all steps that will follow in the field in a moment. Every one of the on-looking

Afghanis immediately gets an idea of where to assume positions, what direction to proceed in and what they have to do.

“In over a month’s time, the progress that Afghani soldiers achieved with their zeal and competitiveness is truly visible,” Lieutenant-Colonel Švejda commends the Afghanis and also values the skills of their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Nadir. “I had to switch from English to Russian, but cooperation and communication with him is really good. He realises that we have something to offer to him and help him sharing our skills and experience,” the Czech commander says and walks off with his Afghani colleague to inspect another company of soldiers practising shooting infantry weapons.

Following a successful completion of an overall test, the so-called validation, the Afghani unit is to receive a baptism of fire in December, when they will move into Wardak province. Their Czech mentors will be accompanying them on their first mission. The airborne soldiers from Chrudim will stay with them in the Wardak province until mid-April to be relieved by their colleagues of the 7th Mechanised Brigade. Czech troops will stand by and mentor ANA soldiers until the unit is able to perform all their assignments on their own.

by LTC Jana Růžičková



General Petr Pavel: “Not using a chance for change is much worse than not having such chance at all”.



Encountering Confidence

Petr Pavel. It is his unique personality and high professionalism he has shown over thirty years of service in various assignments both at home and abroad that won him respect and recognition. General Pavel presently serves in the position of the Czech National Military Representative in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

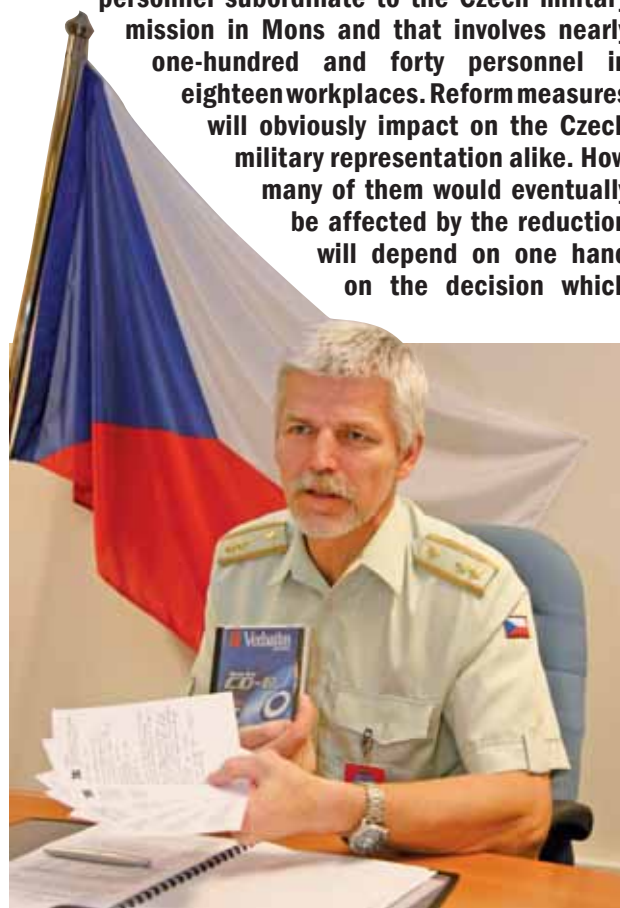
REFORMING THE NATO COMMAND STRUCTURE

General, the recent NATO Summit in Portugal is said to be ground-breaking including in relation to the NATO command structure reform? Could you elaborate?

First of all, there will be a major personnel downsizing: from the present over 13,000 to less than 9,000 and the number of headquarters will naturally decrease too. The structure will retain the two strategic commands, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk. The reform will primarily apply to the operational level. Out of the three joint operational commands today based in Lisbon, Brunssum and Naples, only two will be left. Among Component Commands, only CC-Maritime and CC-Air will be kept. The land operations command function will transfer to the NATO force structure level. Contrarily to the command structure that is financed from the common budget, the force structure is funded by individual NATO nations. Approximately till mid-2011, intensive talks will be taking place on various levels on geographic locations and tables of establishment. Final decisions will be up to political representations to make. It will not be an easy process at all, but if NATO nations want to achieve savings, particular interests must go aside.

To what extent will the NATO command structure review impact on Czech Armed Forces representatives?

I may only discuss military and civilian personnel subordinate to the Czech military mission in Mons and that involves nearly one-hundred and forty personnel in eighteen workplaces. Reform measures will obviously impact on the Czech military representation alike. How many of them would eventually be affected by the reduction will depend on one hand on the decision which



command to close down, and, on the other hand, on the quota the Czech Republic will be assigned out of the overall number of 8,950 personnel. Only then a series of discussions on filling individual posts would begin.

Will diplomatic leverage be the best tactics to employ?

I am not alone in this. Led by the First Deputy Chief of General Staff General Žižka, and working closely with the Foreign Activities Directorate, General Staff Divisions and Operational Commands, we have to identify echelons, specialties and specific posts we will be strongly interested in. As a matter of priority, we will seek to get Czech military professionals, including those senior ranked, as close as possible to operational experience, operation planning and control. We may not let this go unattended. We must set up an experienced negotiating team with a clear and realistic vision of what we want to achieve. The experience so far shows the very realisation of reform and filling the new tables of establishment will most probably take place during 2012. Since personnel rotations are usually left to complete at NATO in such cases, potential reductions will have a minimum impact on Czech MoD personnel currently serving staff tours in NATO structures.

Having said that, you gave some confidence to the incumbents, but their reassignment back to Czech Armed Forces and MoD structures is apparently a problem. Who else than these individuals with high professional and language qualifications should bring back expertise for the Czech MoD to use?

Employing those people has been a problem since when Czech soldiers started to fill posts in organisations abroad. That involves both military professionals in structures of international organisations and graduates of courses and schools in foreign countries. I have some experience with that myself. On the other hand, how can you be sure that individuals after a three-year staff tour abroad have better quality than those working at home, who have not served abroad yet?

The very fact that someone served a tour in Brussels, Mons or Geilenkirchen for instance does guarantee the individual is better usable or useful for the Armed Forces than anyone else.

Could you be specific on that?

We have to distinguish specific job responsibilities and have familiarity with the broader context. It is essential to make an unbiased judgement on what the individual in reality did there and what he or she has learned. Both national and international appraisals that we have not fully applied so far are used for that purpose. We have personnel at national representations and international staffs and there is a substantial difference in what they do. So if an individual worked in an international staff and served operational tours in Afghanistan, sometimes repeatedly, they have indeed a completely different experience than those having served at national representation and fulfilled support tasks for Czech personnel at that particular HQ. I intentionally do not say better or worse, important or marginal, just different. That must also play a role in judging their future usability. There are clearly measurable performance criterions in these two categories even at workplaces abroad and the way such criterions are met must determine those to get a go-ahead and to stay below the line. The CHOD gave a clear tasking in this respect that people returning from international tours should be assigned to posts at least as senior as they served before. Such tasking is however easier given than done. Indeed, if we do not have a working career management system back at home, we may neither have it for people coming back from foreign tours.

AFGHANISTAN DEVELOPMENTS

NATO's number one operational priority is Operation ISAF in Afghanistan. Much has been said about the process of handing over of the responsibility for security to Afghanis by 2014. What is your comment?





The 2014 timeline is to show the light at the end of the tunnel for the public. It is based on calculations that the Afghani National Security Forces will have enough trained soldiers and policemen by then to be able to take over the responsibility for security in their own country. There are provinces defined, especially in the west of Afghanistan, suitable for handover already today. The schedule of the process is however not publicised for tactical reasons. Despite all the problems, training of Afghani National Security Forces has proceeded according to the plan and is even slightly ahead of the mark. The year 2014 could see Allied combat operations brought to an end, but definitely not the support to Afghanistan, which will go on for years. It may be assumed that there will be certain involvement of Czech Armed Forces personnel for obvious reasons. Our service personnel have primarily fulfilled support tasks there, termination of combat operations will therefore not reflect directly in a withdrawal of Czech Armed Forces units. Naturally, that will be contingent on future security development and political decisions on what elements, in what sequence, in what areas and in what timeframes could be withdrawn.

Visiting the Czech Republic, NATO's top officials never forget to commend Czech men and women in uniform for their performance on operational deployments. Do you hear the same words of praise in Mons as well?

On one hand, our input and quality of services are assessed just above average as opposed to comparable countries. On the other hand, it takes a bit of modesty not to consider ourselves the central point for Operation ISAF to revolve around. The Czech contribution is adequate to the size of our country, but the question is whether we react to the requirements by our Allies with sufficient flexibility and pragmatism.

What do you imply?

In some instances, we have prepared elements for operations, whose deployment is mostly in our interest, but not so much in the context of the needs our Allies have. Obviously, it is impossible for many reasons to respond to many requirements in weeks or months. Like the Czech Republic, other NATO nations have longterm force deployment plans and defined timelines for approval procedures too. In addition to that, there is a range of national caveats or preferences arising from specificity of command and logistic support systems. Notwithstanding that, it is desirable to maintain certain degree of operational flexibility in responding to urgent requirements by Allies and changes in priorities based on operational developments. In the present situation, with training being priority number one, planners at NATO HQs and primarily operational commanders in the field find it much more valuable when states have the capability to provide several dozens instructors than a whole manoeuvre battalion, field medical facilities or a weapons locating radar. One today is worth two tomorrow applies in this case more than anywhere else. To strike the right balance among operational, logistical, economic, political and other aspects of deploying national forces and assets for operations is not easy at all and requires in-depth analysis and close cooperation among all actors.

What solutions are there?

In the short term, national contributions should closely match specific military requirements arising from Operation ISAF. The pressure will grow as forces progressively redeploy from Afghanistan on delivering the required capabilities. Sort of benevolence in how national contributions have been accepted so far will therefore quit. In the long run, it will be vital to carefully counterbalance inputs on one hand and outputs or effects on the other hand in all mentioned aspects of deploying national forces and assets while seeking to - in simple terms - get as much gain as possible for a little pain.

COOKBOOK VS. HYPE

General, you were additionally nominated into the commission of experts tasked to develop the Czech White Book on Defence. Do you know why?

With certain degree of sarcasm, I would say it is my fault to an extent. When there were talks about drafting the White Book and as news reached us of the options being developed for reviewing the Czech Armed Forces command arrangements, I offered involvement in the process of General Malenínský (SHAPE Deputy Chief of Staff Military Cooperation) and myself to CHOD, including because we will both be returning in summer 2011 and we are not indifferent to how the armed forces will look like. We have jointly prepared our own proposal of possible reorganisation in the context of essential savings for a broader discussion. I had the opportunity to discuss this option not only with the

Minister of Defence as a part of the initial tour he made to gain familiarity with the MoD Department, but also with the then NATO Assistant Secretary General Mr. Jiří Šedivý on several occasions. That might have been one of the reason why my name came up after he had become the chairman of White Book Commission and General (Ret.) Šedivý asked to be released from the working team.

Opinions voiced by experts and the public on the White Book vary quite a lot. What is your view?

There are many people, especially military professionals with many years of service, who have been through seventeen years of base realignments, closures and reorganisations, with whom any mention of a milestone causes distrust a priori. They have experienced ambitious soaring several times full of plans and hopes only to come back down to earth with a bump after shorter or longer flight, often lower than they had started from. In other words, it is like that zigzagging Czech-style for them. I understand there are two extremes in this respect. Some take the White Book as something like the golden calf or a cookbook they would receive completed and just open it to get magic recipes for all problems. Others regard the White Book another bubble that will burst over time and life will simply go on somehow.

Excuse me, but what about your private opinion ...

As always, truth is somewhere in the middle. In this specific case, the way to the goal sometimes values more than the goal itself. The overall atmosphere regarding the White Book development, new people and their official declarations plus some aspects of the process give certain hope that it could be better this time around.

What leads you to such conclusion?

It is for the first time that the broader expert community have been involved in development of a key defence policy document. Any one of soldiers and defence civilians has been given an opportunity to express their comments and ideas through the SIS defence information system and the MoD website. That must be used in full. The present discussion is naturally centered on White Book, but given its scope, it is actually a discussion on the complete spectrum

of issues and challenges we live and breathe. And not to make use of a chance offered is much worse than not having it at all. Discussions on the Facebook and at the problemyvarmade.cz website show that there are thankfully quite a lot of people who have not resigned on having own opinion. Sadly, these two cases only resemble grumbling in one's backyard. A window of opportunity opened up for an objective debate on specific topics and most importantly the chance is that all reasonable ideas will receive attention of people having the ability to bring them to negotiation tables and then translate them into the documents at hand. Not only the White Book, but indeed for all documents building on it. Let us use every opportunity to get good ideas to where they should already have been a long time. Let us take top state and defence officials at the word as they expressed their complete support to changes at the annual MoD Commanders' Meeting. Backed with such support, let us come up with proposals. There are many things requiring neither extensive strategies nor costs running into billions. They frequently fall into the authority of people in various senior posts, who just lost courage and initiative over the years.

Do you have any magic formula to cure the hesitating MoD community into a team dedicated at heart?

I do not believe in miracles and dedication at heart may imply perhaps too much emotion and absence of reason for me. The important thing is not to delude oneself, not see things too rosy, not to be afraid of allowing matter-of-fact discussions, at least till the point of adopting a decision on the way ahead, to have a realistic picture of the state of affairs we are in, in order to know what we are facing on our way towards the goals we set in the White Book. We were rather used to concealing problems for many years instead of alerting to them. I recall what the commanding general at the command HQ in Brunssum told us ten years ago as we were preparing an extensive NATO exercise: he said he would appraise us based on the length of a list of shortfalls we would bring to his attention. It is not sustainable for superiors only to expect positive news and subordinates gladly fulfil their expectation for various reasons. Procrastinating solutions to problems known as well as those not fully surfaced yet only makes our lives more complicated in the future.

by Pavel Lang and Jan Procházka
photos by authors and Marie Křížová



Common Financing



NATO experts met in Prague to discuss effective use of available resources in the run-up to Lisbon. At the beginning of November 2010, the capital city of the Czech Republic was the venue to the Inaugural NATO Resource Conference held under the auspices of the Czech Minister of Defence Alexandr Vondra.

The gathering involving senior resource planning officials and experts from NATO nations and NATO Headquarters was characterised by several unique aspects. First, the Prague conference was historically the first or indeed inaugural debate of the kind within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. "Key issues of NATO common funding and future NATO resource management options have not been treated as comprehensively as is case now in Prague," stated Mr. Ivan Dvořák, the Czech Assistant Deputy Minister of Defence for Foreign Affairs - Director MoD Defence Policy and Strategy Division.

Another outstanding feature was the timing. The Inaugural NATO Resource Conference took place shortly before the crucial NATO Summit in Portugal (November 19-20th, 2010). "Some of the so-called reform packages submitted to heads of state and government for approval were discussed extensively in Prague. Partial conference conclusions were proposed for elaboration, or possibly for implementation," Mr. Dvořák expands and goes on to say that NATO has intensively engaged in effective management of common resources, especially because of the increasing requirements for funding specific capabilities in support of operations. "It is



essential to strike the right balance between NATO's military requirements and the authorised funding. While most of the NATO nations have restricted their defence budgets, prioritising gains on importance," he explains.

The Resource Conference was organised by the NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in close cooperation with the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) and the NATO Office of Resources (NOR). Acting as the host nation, the Czech Republic provided organisational support through the Czech MoD, which encompassed conference rooms, accommodation and messing for approximately two hundred persons. In panel discussion, speakers particularly emphasised the issues of the ongoing NATO resource reform, management of common resources and the associated capability development and delivery into the strategic environment.

RESPONDING TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Concrete amounts individual nations contribute are endorsed by all NATO nations based on political consensus and the compass of economic possibilities nations have. The Czech Republic's contribution into



NATO common-funded budgets, such as the military budget, the NATO Security Investments Programme or budgets of various agencies, organisations, programs and elements of NATO's military structure, are covered using funds from the Czech Republic's defence budget.

“Meeting of NATO officials responsible for common financing is naturally also highly important for the Czech Ministry of Defence,” said the first deputy minister of defence, Mr. Jiří Šedivý, who opened the NATO Resource Conference in the hotel Crowne Plaza



Prague and pointed out the discussion about using resources effectively was very topical, including in relation to the prepared White Book on Defence, which would become a principal concept and policy document about the future of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic (Deputy Minister Šedivý is the Chairman of the Committee for the Czech White Book on Defence). “The issue of stabilising and ensuring effectiveness of the armed forces while defence budget is being restricted does not have a key importance for the Czech Republic only. NATO must adequately respond to the impact of the recession alike. We are therefore intensively seeking ways how to make a better use of the resource we have available,” Deputy Minister Šedivý stated in a press point.

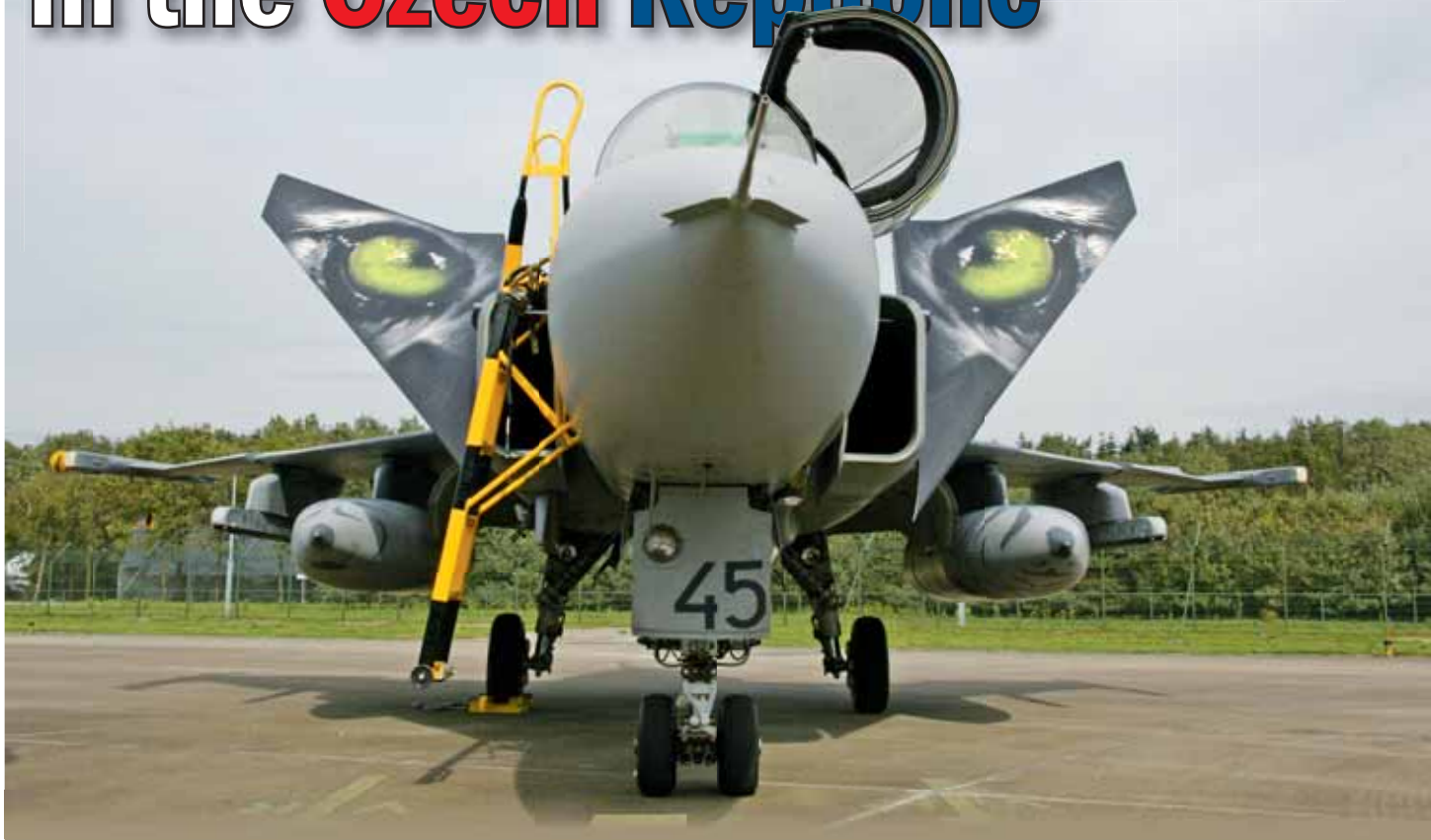
by Pavel Lang
photos by Jan Kouba



Double win for Čáslav: full membership in the NATO Tiger Association and attaining the prestigious best NATO squadron award



Silver Tiger in the **Czech Republic**



Organising of the annual Tiger squadrons' exercise, called the NATO Tiger Meet (NTM), went to the Netherlands in 2010. On 4 October 2010, "Tigers" from thirteen NATO nations arrived Vliegbasis Volkel for two weeks to improve joint operation procedures in planning and performance of NATO air operations on possible foreign-deployed operations.





The largest NATO air exercise in Europe starts by a muster with scenario building both on official ceremonies and traditional rituals. After welcoming remarks, national anthems of the thirteen involved states are played and their flags rise. Then, paratroopers land in tandem with tigers of various shapes and forms but especially with the prestigious Silver Tiger Trophy award that is presented at the end of NTM to the squadron displaying the highest professionalism and the "tiger spirit". A combat shout follows by the commander of the host 313th Squadron, Lieutenant-Colonel Marten Hendriksma: "Tiger Tiger Tiger", which then graduates on the third repetition with the command: "Get Back". The international community instantly lay themselves on their backs and dozens military professionals flicker their hands and legs lying. Playing bugs on their backs, they make the atmosphere of the upcoming air fights more relaxed and show that this professional association of elite NATO air units having a tiger or another big cat in their unit crest enjoy both tense situations "above" and collective fun "on the ground". By the way a rich social program has been a regular part of NTM for quite some time.

FIGHTING AT SEA

The slogan of NATO Tiger Meet? Harmonisation of pilot tactical training to achieve more effective cooperation in all types of air operations. Speaking in plain terms: increase personnel interoperability regardless of nationality of given NATO air unit, ranging from planning to assessment of air victories.

The 2010 NTM also comprises several types of missions. The key one is a COMAO (Composite Air Operation) air operation which involves a large grouping of various types of aircraft. Flight days divide into morning and afternoon shifts; in reality two blocks with more than two hours each. The Czech Republic engages with two or indeed four JAS-39C/D Gripen multirole fighters and one Mi-24/35 Hind attack helicopter. In today's morning phase, two Gripens will be performing a reconnaissance flight and then engage in a practise air fight with other types of NATO aircraft. The afternoon mission is scheduled to start at fourteen hundred. Time instantly becomes the critical factor for everybody, because all procedures must be performed exactly in the order of seconds. The slightest unpunctuality, from taxiing to take-off to landing on runway, may hamper on the performance of operational assignment.

At the threshold of the 3,000-meter runway number two-four, four French Mirage 2000 aircraft



line up stepwise. The first machine gets rolling with a deafening roar, coincidentally it is one with a perfect tiger camouflage. His colleagues from the Escadron de Chasse 01/012 in Cambrai follow in short intervals. Some sixty seconds on, Belgian F-16s, then German Tornados, Turkish and Norwegian F-16s, Hungarian Gripens and Dutch F-16s take off in sequence. Four Czech JAS-39 Gripen fighters go in the eighth wave. The last to get airborne off runway two-four are tactical aircraft of Greek and Polish Air Forces. After an hour's time, silence eventually prevails at Volkel airbase. Not for long though. It is choppers' turn, specifically a Hind from Náměšť nad Oslavou airbase and Italian AB 212 machines of the 21st Gruppo based in Grazzanise.

"Having taken off, I turned right climbing to about six kilometres and got on the train of aircraft. Flying the determined route at speed around 800 kilometres per hour, we flew into a zone over the North Sea, in reality a designated space between the United Kingdom and Norway. Exactly fifty-two minutes of flight from Volkel airbase," says a pilot of the 211st Tactical Squadron, First-Lieutenant Pavel Pavlík, nicknamed Speedy.

According to the scenario, blues clash on reds in aerial fights. "This time we were blues and played the Offensive Counter Air (OCA) role. We provided a fighter escort to our bombers and cleared reds from their way," Major Roman Svoboda (Romuch) describes their operations over sea and goes on to say: "We had about forty aircraft on our side and there were about fifteen reds. But they have the advantage of having extra lives. Contrarily to us, because when there is simulated shoot-down of a blue aircraft, the game is over for him," the experienced Čáslav AFB pilot smiles and underscores that not everyone wanting to do so may become involved in the twenty-two minute clash. "Everybody here flies these missions. You have to meet the requirements of exercise directing authorities determining your role in the mission. The good thing is that we rotate. In next air operations, I may play the red and act as the "food chain" for blues," Romuch explains.

Not only both Czech pilots, but indeed all flight personnel here unanimously agree that mass aircraft flying together in a single pack considerably increases training effectiveness. "In domestic conditions, we



practise four versus four or six versus six missions, whereas NATO Tiger Meet exercise increases those numbers several times. Here we fly most diverse and complex scenarios embracing all aspects of contemporary hi-tech fighting. Moreover, they build on real-world lessons our NATO colleagues learnt on foreign deployments," Speedy emphasises. It should be noted that the role Čáslav AFB fighters play in NTM is based on their professional assignment back home. They primarily focus their flight training on the air-to-air role, not on air-to-ground missions.

A series of debriefings follows after the whole pack of aircraft land. Flight data gets downloaded from the machines and all crews review air battles on the screen, while debating tactics and evaluating mission effectiveness. To that effect, the 211 tactical squadron borrowed the ACMI (Air Combat Manoeuvring Instrumentation) registration system from their Belgian colleagues.

CZECH GRIPENS? THEY MADE IT!

Members of the 211th Tac Sqn had striven for full membership in the elite NATO Tiger Association for two years. Two Tiger Meets with a large NATO air operations exercise had taken place during their probationary period: in France (2008) at naval air force base Landivisiau (hosted by Flotille 11F) and at Kleine Brogel in Belgium (hosted by 31st Smaldeel) a year later. They actively participated in both, fulfilling so one of the membership conditions. It should be noted that





there are three types of NTA membership: honorary, probationary and full. NTA membership must be reconfirmed in annual meets and in case the decision may not be postponed to the next NTM, the authority is delegated to the so-called Tiger Council.

The full NTA members had a discussion about accepting the Czech Air Force 211th tactical squadron into their ranks already on the first evening. The Czech Air Force personnel responded aptly: they were wearing sleeve badges with a big question mark indicating the outcome of voting was completely open-ended. "It came to me that those twenty minutes of waiting for the verdict of full members were longer than the mandatory probationary period," the commander of 211th Sqn, Lieutenant-Colonel Jaroslav Míka (Gyro) recalls. The door finally swings open and he is prompted into the briefing room. Applause resounds as the commander of the host unit LTC Hendriksma (Jimi) congratulates LTC Míka on the achievement. On the fourth day of October, 211 Tac Sqn Čáslav officially becomes the twentieth squadron of the NATO Tiger Association and, together with Náměšť AFB 221st Helicopter Squadron, is the second Czech Air Force unit boasting full membership in

the elite community of NATO squadrons. The Čáslav AFB contingent, comprising eight pilots and fourteen ground personnel, reacted instantly - replacing their badges. It is correct to say that the new "Full Member" insignia suits them immensely. "We got it - a great delight on our side. It is a big bonus to what we do; it is going to pull the squadron even more together. Military flying is about teamwork and no soloists will ever make it far. Lead-in flight training will not change in terms of tactics, but our team spirit will be much stronger. That is what every commander extremely values," LTC Míka says.

The acceptance into the professional "Tiger" club is also a good message for the Deputy Joint Force Commander-Commander of ACR Air Force, Brigadier-General Jiří Verner, who arrived to Vliegbasis Volkel. "I regard it a convincing proof that we are full-fledged NATO members and that we rank among leading tactical and helicopter units."

One of the NTA's unwritten rules is that tiger squadrons must have a "tiger" machine in their inventory. The Volkel airfield apron showed once again that there is no limit to the imagination of authors depicting tigers in various forms. Although a property





of the Swedish Royal Air Force, the Czech Gripens also follow the suit. "We have the 9819 double-seater and 9245 solo machine with tiger insignia here. There is a self-adhesive plastic film on the airplane tail depicting a sabre-toothed tiger skull and two with the tiger's green eyes on canard wings," the chief engineer of the 21st Czech Air Force base Captain Robert Zobač describes and adds that squadron members designed the graphics and then the plastic films were produced and installed by a commercial contractor plus subsequent "cosmetic" trimmings (varnishing and sticking of the polyurethane film) were performed according to instructions by Sweden. In case of an order to remove it, hot air would do the job of restoring the airplane into original condition.

P. S. The plastic film does not affect the JAS-39 Gripen flight properties and to acquire it, costing in the order of ten thousands Czech crowns, the 211 Tac Sqn personnel again grabbed at their pockets.

YEARS AMONG THE CREAM OF THE CROP

The Czech Náměšť AFB based Mi-24/35 helicopter squadron attained full NTA membership nine years ago. The squadron was accepted at the 2001 Tiger Meet in Belgium. In the following year, the personnel of the then 331st Attack Helicopter Squadron scored a big success. At the NATO Daring Eagle 2002 exercise in Beja, Portugal, which included the NTM, the 331st Sqn won the Silver Tiger Trophy, becoming the first helicopter unit to hold the prestigious award and the first best squadron from the former Eastern bloc. The tag on the Silver Tiger Trophy with engraved inscription: 331. SQN CZAF 2002 stands a clear proof of that.

Although this year's attendance by Czech combat helos in the Netherlands was affected by

vis maior (participation with just one machine and, moreover, not in tiger camouflage, owing to technical malfunction), the eleven-member team of the 221st Squadron (seven flight and four ground personnel) proved their class. "Although assigning only a single machine and therefore being limited in performance of our operational assignment, we did become a part of big air waves," says the commander of 221 Sqn, Lieutenant-Colonel Rudolf Straka (Dolfa), and elaborates on the priorities of their combat missions. "Our missions rather concentrated on practising close air support to land forces in coordination with forward air controllers and on rescuing aircrews in distress."

THAT IS A BOMBSHELL!

The 211st Tactical Squadron had just become a full NTA member, and a big surprise came up. For the first time ever in the forty-nine-year history of the NATO Tiger Association, a newcomer won the most prestigious tiger elite award – the Silver Tiger Trophy, manufactured by London-based Mappin & Webb silversmiths in 1977. It has been a matter of fact since mid-October, that the best "Tiger" squadron in NATO has number two-eleven and is based at the Čáslav AFB in the Czech Republic. "During the award ceremony, we had not even shared our impressions of being ranked among best three operational squadrons and suddenly we are told: And the winner is...211th tactical squadron, new full member from the Czech Republic. It came like a bolt from the blue. It is a proof that our teamwork beyond our normal job responsibilities makes sense and an confirmation that we have a well-aligned flight training system at our squadron," LTC Míka states and underscores that in the closing evaluation of all competition categories the 211 Tac Sqn primarily dominated by its high professionalism. "We did not have any special preparation for the accompanying competitions. But the first achievement – the acceptance as a full NTA member – pulled us so much together and gave us such a kick that we were flying on the winning wave to the very end," Gyro says Gyro and places the Silver Tiger into one the squadron's showcases to stay there for a year at least...

P.S. 644 operational missions were flown at the NATO Tiger Meet in total!

by Pavel Lang and Jan Procházka



Double Accolade for Čáslav AFB Fighters



On the eve of the Czechoslovak Independence Day, the Minister of Defence of the Czech Republic, Mr. Alexander Vondra, bestowed highest Czech defence decorations on selected veterans of war, prominent personalities of the Czech Republic, MoD personnel and Czech Armed Forces military professionals. The premises of the Military History Institute Prague saw five National Defence Crosses, eight Golden Linden of Minister of Defence decorations and twenty-three Crosses of Merit of the Minister of Defence, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Class bestowed.

Orders of the Minister of Defence of the Czech Republic on personnel management matters brought a double delight to the Čáslav-based fighter squadron. First, the Minister of Defence decorated Lieutenant-Colonel Jaroslav Míka, commander of the 211th Tactical Squadron the 21st Tactical Air Force Base Čáslav, with the Golden Linden medal, and then his squadron number two-eleven was decorated with the Cross of Merit of the Minister of Defence, 3rd Class. The explanation was

brief, but telling. In the October exercise of "Tiger" squadrons, the NATO Tiger Meet, the Čáslav-based squadron, a part of the NATO Integrated Air Defence System (NATINADS), won both the full membership in the prestigious NATO Tiger Association and the travelling Silver Tiger Trophy as the highest professional award in evaluation of overall performance.

by Pavel Lang



Premiere flying by Czech Mi-24/35 attack helicopters in the U.S. Army training area in Hohenfels



Blue Hammer Striking

U.S. Bell UH-1 Iroquois utility helicopter was hit with fatal consequence. The heavily damaged machine crashed in a dense forest and the aircrew of two suffered serious injuries. A special operation forces team deploys to recover them from behind enemy lines.

Extracting injured pilots from an enemy controlled territory: that was one of the many scenarios of the international named Blue Hammer, which took place in the vast areas of the U.S. Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) located in proximity of Hohenfels community in southern Germany. A threesome of Czech Mi-24/35 attack helicopters of the "Tiger" 221st Helicopter Squadron the 22nd Air Force Base Náměšť had a premiere appearance there. Over the period of two weeks (October 12–26th), the twenty-two member team of the Czech Armed Forces, together with special forces teams from the U.S., Poland and Slovenia prepped for combat operations in Afghanistan.

RESPECT FOR HINDS

The Náměšť AFB helicopter squadron personnel transferred to the U.S. JMRC in Germany both on the ground and by air. But they had been undergoing an intensive preparation back in the Czech Republic for some time. "It took over 30 days from the planning conference till the transfer flight. There were really many phone calls and emails. Talks with the U.S. side covered every detail of common operational effort, including personnel and equipment logistic support," says Captain Radek Mičulek, a Hind pilot, and lifts his Mi-24/35 chopper off the runway at Náměšť AFB.

After an eighty-minute flight, all three ACR Air Force machines find themselves close to Hohenfels. The

arrival to designated helipads in JMRC is performed according to predefined procedures that must be strictly observed. The activities of units exercising there, including live fire exercises, are indeed numerous and planned in a highly detailed fashion. The slightest variance may have tragic consequences.

The Hinds attract a high attention from the very beginning. Some American soldiers have heard of them already, but many have not seen the machines yet. The respect for Czech attack helos even grows when the Americans are told what weaponry the Mi-24/35 have and what type of sorties they are able to fly.

PRE-AFGHANISTAN TRAINING

"Following a couple of initial training days, we practically found ourselves in the battlefield amidst ongoing warfighting. Nothing was played, no one acted. It was not an illusion of a place several thousand



kilometres away, but a true Afghan reality, worked out into fine detail in a sophisticated manner," CAPT Mičulek explains.

Special Forces commander formulates his intent on daily basis. Mission planning starts then. Everyone involved contributes their part, indeed their capabilities, in order for the operational objective to be achievable. A high premium is placed on safety and effectiveness. Several interoperability briefings follow. At the every end, the mission timeline is approved, including contingency options. "It was not exceptional for mission planning to last up to twelve hours. Although it was a standard process for us, it still very much differed from what we do at home. Here, operations were much more comprehensive in terms of interoperability and conducted based on real-world scenarios elaborated into a very fine degree of detail," states CAPT Petr Slíva, a helicopter captain, and reviews further positive aspects. "We gained much information from pilots who flew operational missions in war zones. Their experience is both applicable for our flight training and valuable for personnel serving tours on the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) at the Kabul International Airport training Afghan National Army pilots and ground personnel."

Some might say the 221st Helo Squadron flight personnel exercise with special forces at Hohenfels was perhaps too "combat-style" for the upcoming training tour they will serve in Kabul. Pilots from Náměšť have a different opinion. "Be it so-called training or combat mission, you still operate in a war zone. The likelihood of attack, no matter whether you fly from Kabul or from Sharana base, is permanently there. We regard exercise Blue Hammer a valuable training that will definitely be useful," they concur.



CARRYING SOF

The afternoon training objective is to eliminate an opponent in the Grafenwoehr area. The mission is assigned to a team comprising U.S., Polish and Slovenian special forces to be inserted by a Lithuanian Mi-17 supported by Czech Mi-24/35 Hinds. "We will cover the Hip from above and then escort it back to the base once the action is over. We will fly two Mi-24/35 attack helicopters carrying four special forces each. Upon securing the area of interest, we will drop them and they will perform their assignment," one of the helicopters captains describes the upcoming activities and adds that they will also fly Close Air Support (CAS) missions coordinated with Forward Air Controllers (FAC).

All activities are monitored by evaluators. Each mission ends up with a debriefing comprehensively reviewing the action and providing unlimited time for observations any person involved may have made.

As a matter of fact, the efforts by Czech helicopters were partially affected by adverse weather conditions. It was not possible to realise all planned close air support sorties. "We were on standby on the ground in such cases. The exercise operation center could assign us a mission any time and request that we plan it within several next hours," Captain Mičulek argues and specifies that safety was a the highest priority for them alike. "We worked with special forces personnel, who have special training. Nevertheless, they neither pushed us into any extremes nor did they try us. They knew our professional limits and respected them."



FEMALE TECHNICIAN

In addition to three three-member aircrews, nine members of the 221st Helo Squadron ground support service took part in the exercise held in Germany. "The ground personnel perform standard activities; it is nothing exceptional. Helicopter manufacturer defined mandatory works in preliminary, preflight, interflight and afterflight maintenance and that must be done on any continent," says the commander of the 221 Helo Sqn Technical Flight, Captain Robert Hejtmánek, and points out two minor differences: English speaking environment and working in field conditions.

They preventively brought along some spare parts and cans with oil from their home base in the Czech Republic. They did not have to tackle any major trouble with the equipment. "The helicopters hold fast. I hope this will go seamless till the end of the exercise," CAPT Hejtmánek says and knocks wood for good luck.

The weather is not really nice but the preflight must be done. The group of specialists walking off

includes a young woman. The preflight preparation could not be performed without her. Warrant Officer 1 Magdaléna Černá, nicknamed Mayda, is an Mi-24/35 attack helicopter mechanic. By the way, the two-twenty-one has already two ladies serving in this prestigious technical post. "I have been interested in aerospace technology already from my childhood," says the pretty looking soldier and describes her path to the Hind. "I studied the military secondary school and then was assigned to the Přerov helo airbase with focus on airfield technical support. When the Hinds were moved to Náměšť nad Oslavou AFB, two technician posts were vacant and I seized the opportunity immediately. I have done this job for two years and I would not change, also thanks to the perfect team we are having at the squadron," WO1 Černá says. There is no time for more. The aircrew approaches the helicopter to take off for another mission.

by Pavel Lang and Jan Procházka
photos by Jan Kouba



Nearby Grafenwoehr, Germany, the Czech 7th PRT contingent personnel had a pre-deployment exercise with U.S. Army before going to Afghanistan

Scenario Steady, Outcome Open-ended ...



"My intent is to work with the 4-70th US Army to plan and carry out a search operation in Zebra and Cougar areas with minimum impact on local population. The objective is to prevent opposing forces from continuing to act against the population in the area of responsibility," one of the exercise directives states.

The intent Colonel Miroslav Hlaváč, the commander of the 7th PRT unit, had was quite clear, but its performance had many snags in it. The first challenge was to persuade the commander of the U.S. Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) that Czech service personnel will be prepping themselves along with their U.S. colleagues as a part of their training before deploying for Operation ISAF. "We did not want to exercise here mainly acting as Afghani National Army personnel anymore as we did in the past, but to act as partners, i.e. to operate jointly with U.S. forces in individual played operations," Colonel Hlaváč explained and went on to say: "Discussions were not

easy at all times and required some patience. The acting Commander JMRC understood my requirements and accepted them in full. Although we and the U.S. forces miss the Afghani National Army in here, we will be able to cope with that."

FEATURING MILES

To know the way around the network of field roads and rugged terrain in the Grafenwoehr U.S. Army training area is not easy even for local experienced public affairs officers. When we finally arrived to our meeting point with Czech soldiers of the 4th Rapid

Deployment Brigade, specifically the 43rd Airborne Mechanised Battalion based in Chrudim, a strict command by a U.S. Army Major thwarts our plans for interview and making some photos. “Do not go beyond this point, the unit has come under attack. There are fatalities and casualties. Response team have been called in and a chopper is on the way to pick casualties,” we are told clearly and as we begin to realise that training here is truly live.

It was not a pleasing look. There are injured lying in the grass, gun powder smell is everywhere and one of the American paramedics has just applied physiological saline into one of the soldier’s vein. Not like life, but really – a needle, feel the vein and send it there. Just hold the bottle at necessary height, with the “physio” as paramedics say. While casualties are provided necessary aid and fatalities have been loaded on vehicles, other soldiers search the area and assume defensive formation. The assault is harsh, leaving two vehicles immobile, two fatalities, three casualties. The MILES laser simulation training system makes no compromise.

According to force protection company commander, first-lieutenant J.P., they face such scenarios on daily basis. “We must be prepared for situations like these, especially the mobile observation teams who will operate outside the base whilst in Afghanistan. The theme of the rehearsed operation is nearly settled, but the outcome is open-ended. You never know either here or in Afghanistan, whether you do not come under attack, whether some improvised explosive device is planted at the road, and we do not know how the local inhabitants would accept us. Will they be cooperative, or not? Will we be welcome, or not? Here we have a unique opportunity to practise



all variants, work with U.S. forces and rehearse cooperation with the staff as well,” first-lieutenant J.P. tells us in hurry.

LIVING LIFE LIVE

Common training at Grafenwoehr has many benefits for Czech soldiers and provides them with nearly real-world picture of what happens in the Afghani environment. The positive aspects include rugged terrain, but especially villages and locations built exactly according to Afghani examples. And what would it be for an Afghani village not to have Afghans living in there?

Dusty roads, stands with goods, a mosque, women in burkas, men in long togas just repairing something on the road, and a donkey carrying some packs complete the scene. And when you are finally able to get directed to the house you are looking for, where the local “mayor” lives, you would find him seated behind table blissfully smoking his shisha. Does he not understand you? Never mind, you have got an interpreter with you, so the talks may start.

You contemplate for a while whether this is an exercise or reality. A credible picture of Afghani environment is maintained also thanks to hundreds of native Afghans, Turks and other foreign nationals playing most varied situations with absolute fidelity and perfectly, especially during negotiations with local shura, the elders of the community.

Omnipresent and relentless evaluators play a role there, sometimes in a crucial manner. They watch how you move in the field, where you park your vehicle after you arrive to the village, how you are able to communicate with local inhabitants. It just takes a slight mistake and you would read in the final appraisal, for example, that you parked your vehicle so inappropriately, that you could actually look inside qalat with women inside. This minor offence to local habits may entail





a change in negotiations and interaction with local leaders. And sure it does ...

The role of American evaluators with rich operational experience from Afghanistan and Iraq is not just static – they do not stand on spot and take notes. It just takes a hand signal, a simple, inconspicuous and virtually imperceptible move and the course of negotiations with local representatives changes radically. The evaluators intentionally make situations more dramatic and wait.

“The negotiations are very demanding. You commit a verbal offence and previous agreements may instantly be foiled,” first-lieutenant J.P., who had served a tour in Afghanistan before, says without exaggeration. “We never know how we manage to persuade the locals about the cooperation and aid we are offering. Often it is not a regular communication, but rather diplomatic talks and it is only up to evaluators and those playing Afghans, whether you are able to convince and win them over.” You have to be careful every move you make. One of your colleagues turns clumsily, a jug with water tumbles down by mistake and you got a problem. “It is tough, but life in Afghanistan is tough too, both for the local populations and for ISAF forces,” the force protection company commander argues.

NO END TO TRAINING

Ten-day exercise of nearly two-hundred and forty personnel of the future Czech 7th PRT unit at the U.S. base in Germany was a part of their comprehensive prep. “We did not send the whole unit to Grafenwoehr,



but mainly its manoeuvre components and the staff,” specifies Colonel Hlaváč, the commander 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade. “We are at certain point of training and we have to prep in steps. At the closing exercise in December later this year, the unit will already be complete.”

Given the number of troops on exercise, they brought along to Germany only a limited quantity of combat equipment: Land Rover 130 Kajman vehicles, Tatra trucks and Land Rovers. Although Czech soldiers in Afghanistan use Dingo and Iveco up-armoured vehicles, the commanders do not see any problem in using different types of military equipment. “The objective here is to harmonise teams, practise tactics, gain essential cooperative experience of working with our American colleagues,” the commander says. “Does not really matter what gets us there.”

It is exactly this type of experience, especially lessons from operational tours, which are invaluable for commanders and all soldiers. “Nearly eighty per cent of the unit scheduled for deployment in Afghanistan at the beginning of 2011 have been through operational tours either in the Balkans, Iraq or Afghanistan,” Colonel Hlaváč states providing the final assessment of his unit’s preparedness. “We all keep learning. There might not be a weak point in the unit, a weak link, because that would endanger the whole team.”

by Pavel Lang and Jan Procházka
Photos by Jan Kouba



Sky Under Control



Fifteen minutes. That is the limit for Gripen fighter pilots to take off and eliminate an attack – targeting nuclear power plant for instance. But the fighters from Čáslav do not know on their own that there is a suspect aircraft flying in the Czech airspace. All information about who is flying over our heads and what they intend rests only with a single Czech Armed Forces unit: the 26th Command, Control and Surveillance Brigade based in Stará Boleslav.

Three hundred and fifty service personnel of the 26th C2S Bde recently underwent a crucial exercise verifying whether the unit was able to perform all missions associated with air defence in compliance with NATO standards in peacetime, in crisis and in conflict. The exercise also involved twenty fixed-wing and rotary wing aircraft, including six Gripen fighters.

Over thirty evaluators from Belgium, Hungary, Germany and Slovakia observed not only how the 26th Bde personnel were able to read the airspace, assess it and provide solutions, but also whether they were capable of defending their command post against external attack on the base.

The Czech 26th Bde is a part of the NATO Integrated Air Defence System (NATINADS), which works on principle that every NATO nation is responsible for providing its own air defence and reports the situation in its airspace to the superior echelon. All assets assigned by NATO nations to NATINADS fall under the single command of the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Operations. SACO exercises control via several tactical command centers; the Czech Republic is assigned to the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) in Uedem, Germany. According to the commander 26th C2S Bde,

Colonel Zdeněk Postulka, the benefit for the Brigade in being integrated to the system is that they learn about potential danger earlier and fighter pilots with Gripens have more time to respond. The Gripen pilots are also able to pursue their targets outside the borders of the Czech Republic thanks to NATINADS. "That however has to be based on treaties and must be adequate to





the situation," Colonel Postulka expands on so-called Cross Border Operations.

Daily duties the 26th Command, Control and Surveillance Brigade performs focus on preventing enemies from attacking critical infrastructures on national territory, Colonel Postulka says. The Brigade has a whole range of means to provide graduated response, including the Gripen fighters. His soldiers monitor the Czech sky using radars located throughout the Czech Republic's territory on 24/7/365 basis. They are concerned with suspect conduct by both military and civilian airplanes. "The data is then transferred as a recognised air picture to the command post in Germany. If a target acting at variance with its flight plan or suspiciously shows up in the airspace, we deploy active assets assigned to NATINADS: in our case two Gripen aircraft from Čáslav, which within fifteen minutes from take-off either escort the target – in case of loss of communication – or eliminate it," Colonel Postulka explains.

According to Col. Postulka, the exercise was not just about monitoring and controlling aircraft in airspace.



The 26th Bde personnel also had to prove that they were able to provide both comprehensive logistic support to all Brigade operations and security to personnel serving at the command and control post. "Our units responsible for defence and security of the base had to demonstrate their ability to respond rapidly to contingencies such as unauthorised access or attempted forced entry by lightly armed soldiers," says Lieutenant-Colonel Zdeněk Kohlmann, the brigade chief of staff explains and adds that the Brigade has three rapid response teams available for such contingencies.

How the exercise turned out for the 26th Command, Control and Surveillance Brigade will be known soon. "Hopefully we pass the test. Anyway, it is a decisive exercise for us to demonstrate all capabilities across the spectrum of missions and the evaluation must conclude that we are able to support and perform the essential mission we have: to provide for security of the Czech Republic's airspace as a part of the NATINADS system."

by Olga Haladová



A Bear on Military Police Service



A couple of high mobility vehicles rushed in on the dusty road. Military Police officers jumped out and set up a provisional check point in several seconds. They deployed spike strips, and vehicles parked across the road bristled with assault rifle barrels.

Everybody was looking at that moment to the point where the road bent over the horizon. They acted on intelligence that one of the local insurgency leaders, suspect of having committed a whole number of war crimes, would be travelling along this road with his men. The first chilly expectation passed as quickly as it turned up. Checking the car that suddenly popped up on the road only identified individuals living in the village nearby. The wanted persons were in only the third car driving down the road. When the search began, all three men tried to make a getaway. One of them managed to jump into a car and start off. But he overlooked the spike strip on the side road. With empty tyres, he did not make it far and was taken by one of the teams on lying in ambush concealed. Another one was caught by an MP dog. The last one of the three ended up on the ground, immobilised by a special net shot from an assault rifle. "This equipment has not been used routinely in the Czech Republic. But the Police generally seeks to introduce to service as many non-lethal and general compliance means as possible. Apart from nets, that includes Tasers for instance," Captain Zdeněk Koreczki comments, who is the highest-ranking Czech officer in the multinational battalion staff (deputy chief of staff) in exercise Black Bear held in Gasinci, Croatia. "The operation was performed to high professional standards. We managed to create the impression that it was a completely routine road check. We took the persons under warrant by surprise thanks to that and apprehended them without any major problems."

CRISIS IN DIBBIA

Polish and Croatian Military Police personnel also joined this specific exercise episode. The core of the multinational battalion is formed by Polish Military Police officers. They built one of the two operation companies and some support elements. Other nations, i.e. the Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Croatia, contributed a platoon and filled the battalion staff with their personnel.



The idea to build a Multinational Military Police Battalion was conceived at the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002. After preparatory work, the year 2008 saw the newly formed unit on its initial exercise in Poland. Last year, the Czech Republic was the venue, specifically the Březina Military Training Area at Vyškov. Since the multinational battalion was established, the commander post has rotated among the contributing nations to fill in regular intervals. This time the 181-strong military police force on exercise was headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Marek Gryga of Poland.

The exercise scenario built on a crisis in a fictive country of Dibbia, where its totalitarian system collapsed, unrests ensued and the following coup d'état made it a safe haven for criminal gangs and terrorist groups. Most state institutions collapsed, forty thousand inhabitants were killed and additional eighty thousand lost their homes. People fled to the neighbouring state of Corrin, which however resulted in further nationalist problems as demographic border between the two countries did not match the state borderline. Following a series of attacks on UN civilian personnel and non-governmental organisation, the international community decided to deploy forces to restore order, rule of law and institute democratic government. The operation was assigned for NATO to perform. The Multinational Military Police Battalion became a component of that force. The MNMPBAT was stationed at Delta forward operating base and sent patrols and performed other assignments, such as law enforcement operations, road checks, personnel and convoy escorts, criminal investigation, search operations and naturally training, mentoring and assistance to the local police.

"We primarily strived to evaluate police stations. In practice, our unit visited the post and sought to get the widest spectrum of information possible on training standards, equipment and, for example, communication skills police officers had. Our intelligence section



gathered and fused all the data, which we used for establishing training centers afterwards," Captain Zdeněk Koreczki says.

CZECHS AND SLOVAKS CONTROLLING CROWDS

Nevertheless, apprehending the war criminal and transporting him to Camp Delta did bring the whole affair to an end. Shortly after the convoy arrived the base, a crowd of locals gathered at entry gate demanding the person to be released. People were increasingly aggressive and started to endanger both base facilities and security of the personnel on the gate.

There was no other choice than to call the response unit in. The tight cordon of MPs with shields, resembling a turtle, managed to stop even the most aggressive individuals from attacking. The police proceeded forward unstopably, backed up by an armoured fighting vehicle. Stun grenades were eventually employed too. The whole area in front of the Camp Delta base was successfully cleared in the end.

It was not by coincidence that the response unit comprised only Czech and Slovak Military Police personnel. "Just some national units in this exercise declare the same capabilities. Only Czechs and Slovaks may perform crowd control operations. Others are neither authorised nor trained for that," Captain Koreczki explains. But it was not the first direct attack on the base. Already before, a local truck driver attempted to get in an explosive device comprising of several TNT charges in a food container at twenty-



two hours. A thorough check by Czech MPs on entry gate detected the attempt.

The base got under a mortar attack just a couple of hours later. One of the shells hit housing premises. Polish MPs responsible for protecting Camp Delta immediately secured strategic posts. Then they searched the whole area and assessed damage. They found three dead bodies in one of the shelters and an unexploded mortar shell. An EOD specialist was immediately called to render the munition safe. Investigation identified the victims as members of the logistic support unit.

"Each activity was evaluated individually, plus there was a closing comprehensive assessment in addition to that. The exercise scenario was rather demanding. We could not form any reserve forces with the units we had available. We even had to task the personnel who would normally be entitled to having a rest after night duty. After some three or four days, everybody was so tired that we needed to decrease our tempo and restrict ourselves only to planned activities," Captain Koreczki explains.

"There were not any problems with the operation units, but we had to focus on harmonising the staff workings. We would be unable to make progress without that. The general reason is that the Military Police does not have such extensive operational planning experience."

CERTIFICATION IN TWO YEARS

The key issue for the MNMPBAT's deployment were communications. Every participating nation had its own capability, but there is a need to set up a joint system to work seamlessly on operational deployments.

The military police forces involved began to use the American Harris system. Back-up connectivity is still based on Motorola radios. Before actual deployment, the Czech unit would need to be equipped with suitable vehicles meeting specific resistance requirements, both against IEDs and possible attacks by opposing forces. "I believe the most important aspect of this exercise is that it provides us an opportunity to operate and practise according to joint operation procedures. Basic stuff is very similar everywhere, including the response to an improvised explosive device, to being



shot at, possibly calling MEDEVAC. Units only have different drills," Lieutenant Karel Zifčák, a Czech platoon leader evaluates their participation in the exercise.

If everything goes according to the plan, the MNMPBAT should attain certification in 2012. If successful, the whole force or just some of its components could deploy for an operational tour in 2013. Afghanistan is the most frequented country in that regard, but that will need to be mandated by individual participating state governments.

Exercise participants were indeed able to try the certification process out during the exercise, because the evaluators judged their performance based on certification rating. "For the time being, there are not specific certification procedures in place for the Military Police, so we seek to become involved in the process and address possible shortcomings," Captain Zdeněk Koreczki adds.

The MNMPBAT mission is to do military police operations; it should not duplicate mechanised units by any means. "I do not know whether the whole battalion would deploy; but some of its components definitely have a high value. We have considerable lessons from Iraq, where we rotated twelve contingents. We are able to prepare training for Afghani or any other police officers in a similar manner," argues Colonel Pavel Fejfar, the Czech national representative on the exercise. "The Poles intend to make the MNMPBAT a part of the Multinational Corps Northeast based in Szczecin, Poland."

That should be on the agenda of NATO Military Police Chiefs' Conference in Rome, which will be followed on by the working panel in Copenhagen, expected both to prepare the next year's plan and discuss assistance on certification, because that is not business for four nations only, but for the whole NATO. "One thing is however for sure now: the next year's exercise Black Bear will be held in Lešť, Slovakia."

by Vladimír Marek

Photos by Vladimír Marek and Jiří Hokův



There was shooting every night



“Our contingent travelled on train via six countries. We arrived Macedonia at eleven p.m. I immediately went to see the commanding general, who said we would have to wait before we get a convoy number assigned. So it would be at least ten days before we get down to Kosovo,” the commander of the first Czech KFOR contingent Colonel Karel Klinovský recalls.



“So I summoned my people and we agreed we would not wait for anything and start the following day in the morning on our own.” The Czech convoy got halted on the borderline by French gendarmerie requiring convoy number, but they eventually let them go across Kosovo even without the number. On three o’clock in the afternoon, Major Klinovský reported to the British commander in Podujevo.

The Brit told him, right, you are here, but when will the unit arrive? When told to look out of the window where the convoy was parked, the Brit could not believe what he saw.

The Czech contingent was assigned to a damaged school in Gornji Sibovac community and authorised to adapt the building for soldiers to stay the six-month tour. When that would be done in about ten days, commander was to report again. “I replied to him that at nine hours in the evening all soldiers will be accommodated, will have warm meals and shower with hot water. When the

Brits saw it in the evening, they did not want believe their eyes.”

The Czechs were given two weeks to take over the operational assignment which comprised monitoring a forty-two kilometres section of the administrative border line. They walked it already during that weekend. A soldier with handheld mine detector led the way, followed by another one with satellite navigation. He kept directing the front guy, ordering him to walk to the left or to the right, indicating whether they were already in Serbia, or still in Kosovo. “Sun was shining then, the sky was azure. We sweated





all over. But on Monday, we were already prepared to fulfil our operational assignment. We managed to save about four weeks' time that way. Soldiers normally prep six months for a tour; we only had six working days," Karel Klinovský describes the first moments in Kosovo. "Till the end of October, we lived in relatively provisional conditions on the base. I told my soldiers to wake me up only when commanding generals would phone. Once I returned from the ABL at three in the morning, and at five the duty officer shook me saying I had a very important phone call. A Colonel was calling from Prague. He claimed he had sent us some five videotapes with popular Czech movies. Our colleagues deployed in Bosnia had been waiting for them and we were allegedly delaying them. I had to laugh: we neither had a TV nor video at that time. People back home did not have a clue how we were living down there. We received first housing containers only before Christmastime, and had been living in tent shelters before then. War was over by then, but peace has definitely not prevailed yet. There was shooting every night."

The first Czech contingent was even visited by the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Wesley Clark. He then went to see Sekiraca, a small Serbian enclave. He told our troops on that occasion to forget about all other tasks and make every effort to keep those eighty Serbs living there alive.

"We were the only available security for the local Serbian population. They were very open to us, friendly, you could not help it. We tried to aid them every possible way. We provided medical aid, when someone travelled home, they brought sanitary items, cleaners or other goods not locally available," Karel Klinovský pictures. "We got invitation to visit them on the Orthodox Christmas. It was a big feast, tables literally sagged with food. Yet it came strange to us somehow. Then we got it. They grew and produced everything on the table with their own hands. And gave us absolutely everything they had. It nearly brought tears to our eyes."

There were many burnt-down Serbian houses at the Batlava Lake at that time. Herds of pigs gone wild roamed all around. As Moslems, Albanians do not eat pork. "We agreed with the mayor of Sekiraca that we would catch them and bring them in. Serbs promised they would give some tractors and other agricultural machinery in turn. We arrived to Batlava at four o'clock in the morning together with British troops and announced a pig-hunting contest to fill the containers we brought along," COL Klinovský smiles. "When four soldiers flung a camouflage net over a pig weighing close to two hundred kilograms, the net would usually carry on, dragging three or four bodies in monkey suits along. But it was even worse when the frightened animals tried to seek asylum in houses owned by Moslems. But we had success nevertheless. We beat British soldiers, I believe, ninety to twenty. We brought the pigs to Sekiraca where people had been waiting for the exchange already. They brought tractors, machinery, and even cows. Everything was covered by the BBC, and CNN arrived on the next day. We did not think the British command would also invite the press."

by Vladimír Marek

Photos by Vladimír Marek and MoD PIC



Into the Finale at Full Throttle



A group of Czech KFOR troops with assault rifles on their backs crosses the Ibar river using the Austerlitz bridge, entering the northern part of the Kosovska Mitrovica. They are threading their way through sidewalks swarming with people going from work, proceeding at a promenade pace. In spite of that, they just crossed the boundary separating two completely different worlds.

With population of about a hundred thousand, Kosovska Mitrovica was the cause for bloody nationalistic skirmishes for many years. While the northern part of the city behind Ibar River is populated solely by Kosovar Serbs, southern neighbourhoods are the home to Kosovar Albanians. We have the possibility to see on our own that those are two completely different areas. While Euro is the official currency in Kosovo, the shops we are passing by accept only Serbian dinars.

Perhaps the best selling products are Serbian national symbols in various forms and shapes and T-shirts cheering up local patriotism. There are billboards and banners everywhere presenting candidates in the recent elections in Serbia. As a matter of principle, the northern part of Kosovska Mitrovica does not engage in election campaigns in Kosovo, but the more actively becomes involved in elections in



Serbia. It was the events in this multinational city in the north of Kosovo that spurred large-scale disorders in 2004. Alienated crowds of thousands also gathered at both ends of the Austerlitz bridge during the recent elections for the Serbian Parliament and after the UN International Court of Justice in the Hague affirmed Kosovo's independence.

PROVOKING WITH A TOY

The Czech patrol reaches the end of the main boulevard, turns around and starts riding slowly back to the bridge. "We are for eight days in Kosovska Mitrovica; tomorrow we are scheduled to depart back to our Sajkovac base. In case of any problems, our mission has been to provide support to the EULEX Police (the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo) that oversees public order," explains First-Lieutenant Zdeněk Novák, a Czech 16th KFOR contingent platoon leader. "We have three platoons here, each at a different alert. We have only encountered minor problems that mostly took place on the Austerlitz bridge. There were provocations on both sides. For example, a Kosovar Albanian tried to pull out an object looking like a weapon at the first sight. But it turned out in the end it was only a toy. We may not intervene in such cases, we only monitor the situation and report our findings to EULEX personnel. We may only respond in case of necessary self-defence."

Czech troops have been requested by the Multinational Task Force North as reinforcement. The French command say they are a considerable contribution, even though the authorisations of Czech troops are restricted here. When patrolling in the Czech contingent's area of responsibility, they are authorised to halt vehicles, and if they do detect something illegal, they may search the vehicles. They do not have such powers in the North of Kosovo.

Czech service personnel arrived to Kosovska Mitrovica with standard patrolling equipment. Apart from that, they brought along crowd control equipment

for the contingency of unrest. But they store the CRC equipment at a base in proximity, where they are on standby. First to respond would be the Kosovo Police, then EULEX police officers and Czech soldiers would be the last to call in.

The patrol is threading its way among outside cafe and restaurant seatings. The people seated there react mostly positively. People realise that international force is here primarily for the sake of their security. "It is no problem for us to walk down a street full of shops amidst people. Most of the locals display friendly behaviour towards us. It happens sometimes on either side that they shout something at us. But it is nothing serious," 1LT Novák concludes.

WITH POLES AT ABL

Deploying some units to the North of Kosovo does not entail any slacks in the performance of operational assignment in own area of responsibility. The Czech soldiers monitor the administrative border line in regular intervals using Pandur armoured fighting vehicles, whose offroad mobility is extraordinary and they do not inflict such damage on local roads as tracked vehicles do. This time however, there is convoy of light offroad vehicles accompanied with two quadbikes. It is a joint Czech-Polish patrol with the objective to make Poles familiar with its geography and situation of check points, in addition to actual monitoring. Polish service personnel should be involved in guarding the ABL after Czechs depart.

The convoy passes a difficult terrain and makes stops every now and then. The team leader Staff Warrant Officer





Radim Kubáň uses maps and satellite navigation to point out essential landmarks for the Polish commander. "We are tasked to watch for border violations or other illegal activities, such as illegal woodcutting. We report those cases to the Kosovo Police immediately. We have to secure the area before the Kosovo Police arrive," he explains to Polish soldiers. He comes from the region of Northern Moravia, he speaks pretty good Polish, so there is no language barrier in this case. "It is more difficult to find your way around at night. We got stuck several times already and had to recover vehicles mutually. That naturally delays the patrol."

Poland is represented by a reconnaissance platoon

using quadbikes. Obviously, these all-terrain vehicles should prevent them from having any problems with the difficult terrain. "This joint preparation with Czech soldiers is aimed at gaining information both about the area of responsibility we will be taking over and about potential risks involved," platoon leader Lieutenant Bogdan Stavriňak says. "The cooperation we have with Czechs is very good. Their attitude is completely professional. Our stay on the Czech base is also very well supported in terms of logistics. Everything was perfectly prepared already when we arrived."

His Czech counterpart, SSG Radim Kubáň is also satisfied with the cooperation between the units. "We have not had much time to get to know each other better. We have not managed to talk about where our units come from and what their missions are. I hope we will be able to find a moment to do so. The Poles will have a seven-day training on our base, and we will be with them for two days off that."

BREAD FOR FREE FOR 12 MONTHS

The only contingent of the current 16th Czech Armed Forces contingent in Kosovo to survive the contingent's withdrawal in October earlier this year was the four-member liaison and monitoring team with the mission to observe current political, social, security and economic situation. The team gather information both in official meetings with local authorities and they also speak with people in the streets and in the country. Information gained that way gets recorded and reported to superior echelons. The





Czech area of responsibility will be taken over by the Multinational Task Force East. Czech soldiers have had long-standing contacts there, especially in the area of Podujevo. It is definitely not advisable to break them and start from scratch. It would take a long time for Allied forces to map the whole area again and establish necessary links. The decision was therefore made that the Czech liaison and monitoring team would stay to work in support of MNTF-E.

At this time, the team was on a meeting with the representative of Ashkali community and chairman of the committee for minorities, Mr. Shaban Ahmeti. Pursuant to authorisation by the Czech Government, the Czech Embassy in Kosovo began to finance construction of a bakery in a neighbourhood where Ashkalis live. The project is designed both to foster minor enterprise and local employment and to fill the gap in the market. The building is already constructed, now the technology is awaited. Shaban Ahmeti is content with how the construction proceeds; he was interested whether the alleged promise that his community would get bread for twelve months free of charge was still valid. "This is something I never heard of; I will have to consult with the embassy. Certain misinterpretations sometimes occur with a view to a language barrier and cultural differences," the team chief Lieutenant Miroslav Mžourek responds swiftly. "It goes without saying that the bakery is not the only project we are taking care of. There are other ones funded by the multinational task force command, involving various supplies ranging from school aids to power generators helping to overcome frequent power blackouts, especially in wintertime. The Czech contingent organises other activities, providing assistance on sewage system renovation, road repairs, veterinary treatment etc."

TRAINS BACK HOME

The Sajkovac base recently saw a run-up to the termination of operational assignment and preparation for departure to the Czech Republic, when primarily the workshops and

with them the whole support company worked in top swing. First they needed to prepare vehicles and materiel for the redeployment, or for mothballing. They installed power wiring and racks into one of the containers to store car batteries under permanent charging voltage to keep them ready for immediate use on the vehicles. Spare part stocks passed a major reduction. If not requested by the Multinational Task Force that took over the base in October, the spare parts travel back into the Czech Republic. The original quantity of forty-one containers was reduced to twenty that way.

"We will transfer the vehicles on road from Sajkovac to Kosovska Mitrovica, where they will be loaded on rail. It was about thirty-five vehicles and trailers altogether. Terms and conditions for rail transport are similar to those in the Czech Republic, with the only difference that the train weight limit is only five hundred tons," specifies Major Karel Kopecký, the chief of logistic support. "In addition to that, we sent home forty housing containers from Grlica railway station, whose transport there was pretty demanding. We only had a Tatra 815 truck and three Tatra multilift container transporters to accomplish the task. If there was any failure, we would have a problem meeting the timeline for loading from September 10th till 15th. Apart from that, six BMP-1 armoured personnel carriers arrived from the Czech Republic into Kosovska Mitrovica. We had to transport them to Camp Sajkovac."

Vehicles are secured on rail cars in a standard manner using Euro ratchet straps. Military materiel may not be transferred directly via Serbia, so it will travel through Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. "We were providing escorts for the whole transport. Besides, there were people from the Czech Cargo railway company and a member of the Military Movement Control Branch from Stará Boleslav," Major Kopecký explains.

by Vladimír Marek



Sirens sounding over Zlato Polje



Eight years ago, in November 2002, the NATO Summit in Prague saw the decision made to build the NATO Response Force (NRF). The NRF concept was approved in June 2003 and the first rotation was introduced in Brunssum, Netherlands as early as October 15th, 2003. Forces forming fifteen rotations have been progressively trained and on standby for deployment since then. Preparation of another rotation is presently coming to head, and their training especially in the domain of CBRN defence sees an involvement of experts from the Joint Chemical, Biological Radiological and Nuclear Defence Centre of Excellence based in Vyškov, Czech Republic.

JUST TAKES A LITRE OF CHEMICAL

Themes of situations played as a part of integration exercise of the Slovenian 18th Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion prepared for NRF-16 were based on lessons and analyses of various NATO operations. "It is highly unlikely that situations involving for example the use of nuclear

weapons by a paramilitary group would occur in areas of possible NRF deployment," Lieutenant-Colonel Jaroslav Borek of the JCBRN Center of Excellence puts us in the picture, who acted as a training advisor during the exercise in the Zlato Polje training area in Slovenia. "There are rather assumptions of possible abuse of specific chemical warfare agents; depots housing industrial contaminants and toxic material may pose

risk too. Sources of potable water are often endangered. From the viewpoint of objectives we follow, mass diseases and animal kill also complicate the situation. All of that, plus many more, are the risk factors that the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion personnel may be faced with and must be able to respond to them quickly, correctly and effectively."

The principal goal of the integration exercise that took place at the beginning of November 2010 and saw the participation of the Slovenian unit as well as their colleagues from French, Polish and Hungarian CBRN defence units was to test interoperability in performance of radiological, chemical and biological defence missions. A three-day exercise played as a conflict between two alienated states – Kalcija and Turmalija – comprised a series of episodes. "Situations emerged on deployment of the NATO Interim Forces (NIMFOR), when battalion members had to prove their ability to react correctly and provide force protection in terms of CBRN defence," Lieutenant-Colonel Borek said and elaborated: "For example, a barrel was discovered in the harbour and its contents had to be precisely identified. Consequence management effort followed upon the activation of so-called dirty bomb, after it had contaminated the area with a radioactive agent. Soldiers also sampled dead animals and it was also challenging to mount the right response to the finding of salmonella, which could potentially be highly dangerous for the forces."



All those episodes were not conceived at random; they always built on lessons learnt in various conflicts and operations. Lieutenant-Colonel Borek, who served a tour as a senior CBRN officer at NATO command in Brunssum over the past three years and whose portfolio also included evaluating capabilities of units deployed for Operation ISAF in Afghanistan, described a situation when it took just a single bottle of highly toxic chemical and many students in an Afghani girl school had problems, thankfully only with breathing. "Just a litre poured into a duct ending at the school could have tragic consequence."

The Zlato Polje training area luckily provided space sufficient both for deploying a decontamination line, but also for helicopter with a SICRA team to operate. Offroad vehicle drivers, doctors and nurses from the MEDEVAC team were also in action several times.





All activities performed by Slovenian, French, Polish and Hungarian soldiers were continuously monitored. “In reality, the training mentor role is not to walk around with a stopwatch to assess whether sampling team members take samples from a dead cow or from contaminated soil correctly, because all involved units hold national accreditations. What we wanted to see was the ability to perform CBRN operations with focus on interoperability among individual elements. We watched whether the multinational battalion personnel were able to communicate jointly, issue clear and plain orders. For instance, we watched whether signals and commands were passed from top down the chain correctly, whether maps were maintained properly. We have always shared our observations with the unit at the end of the daily mission.”

His job was however not over yet. “Once we get back to the CBRN Center, our duty is to develop an in-depth report on the exercise and generalise the observations we have made,” Lieutenant-Colonel Jaroslav Borek explains, “we have experts to collect and evaluate these lessons identified. If there was a random problem, such as poorly maintained maps, we just take note of that. However, should it turn out the map problem is recurrent and affecting multiple units, our staff take it as signal to generalise that lesson. Since we are a NATO international military organisation, it is incumbent on us that we make sure it gets reflected in NATO training documents.”

ATTRACTING ATTENTION

“The November certification of the Slovenian Armed Forces 18th Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion for assignment into the NATO Response Force system has been one of the largest exercises in the Slovenian territory,” says Colonel Václav Pasák, the Czech Defence Attaché in Austria, Slovenia and Switzerland, and emphasises that the



involvement of Czech-based JCBRN CoE experts definitely helped strengthen the cooperation between Slovenian Armed Forces and the Czech Armed Forces.

Although his characteristics of mutual cooperation is not really extensive, he states that it brings many positive benefits to both armed forces, especially in academic training and field training in mountain environment. “Same as the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, the Slovenian Armed Forces has undergone a major restriction in recent years and therefore has faced similar challenges,” the military diplomat explains and adds that Slovenians regard high readiness of rescue units aiding civilian population during natural disasters as a high priority. “There is a considerable know-how in the Czech Armed Forces in this regard, which is what our NATO colleagues are positively interested in.”

The importance of the integration exercise also showed in the audience attending the VIP day. Besides accredited military attachés, combat episodes performed by NRF-16 were watched by Slovenian political leaders and defence officials as well as senior officials from some of the NATO command headquarters.





position on possible accession in a matter of weeks," the JCBRN CoE Director Colonel Zdeněk Čížek says and goes on to say that in case affirmative, the U.S. accession would be endorsed by a steering committee comprising one representative from each of the sponsoring nations in their spring meeting in 2011.

"There is a discussion presently underway whether it would be possible to expand standing signatories at some COEs and in some specialties with Partnership for Peace states," COL Čížek specifies and underscores that the door of the JCBRN COE is open for

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Nineteen. That is the current number of the NATO Centres of Excellence (COE). Each of them has a specific specialisation, and apart from being expert advisory institutions for command authorities they also develop Allied concepts, doctrines and standards and provide training and education to NATO specialists. The COE chain covers diverse subject-matter areas ranging from cold weather operations to naval mine warfare.

After the Czech Republic had indicated interest in creating a WMD defence and chemical support organisation, the decision needed to be made about where to locate the installation. Development of JCBRN Defence COE in Vyškov, Czech Republic started six years ago when the national NBC defence training center was formed to be later reorganised into the existing organisation.

The key moment was the signing of the so-called functional relationship and operational memorandum of understanding by eight NATO sponsoring nations (Czech Republic, Italy, Romania, Greece, Slovakia, Slovenia, Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom) at Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk in October 2006. On the last day of July 2007, the JCBRN CoE was accredited by the North Atlantic Council as the NATO Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Centre of Excellence (NATO JCBRN Defence COE) and was simultaneously activated as an International Military Organization (IMO).

Other NATO nations soon began to take interest in the activities of the first IMO in the Czech territory. Poland acceded in September 2008 and Hungary a year later. "I expect the U.S. to communicate their official

any NATO nation. No doubt that the membership of important players in CBRN defence such as the US, UK or Germany is a great challenge for other NATO colleagues while providing a guarantee of quality of the COE.

There are about sixty full-time staff in the JCBRN COE. "The organisational structure allocates specific posts to individual nations," LTC Ivan Križka of the CoE Training, Exercise and Education Department points out and states that eighteen posts are earmarked for experts of nine Allied armed forces. "Germans and Hungarians have the largest representation. Not all of our personnel are military professionals; we also have civilian specialists here," LTC Križka adds and lets us take a look behind scenes. "The COE is sponsored on multinational basis. All of the signatories contribute their part into the common budget according to a quota given in the MoU. The number of personnel is the key aspect."

There are several facts proving that the credit of JCBRN Defence COE in Vyškov increases. The most general one is that, after demanding beginnings, the JCBRN COE became a recognised partner for WMD defence. The JCBRN COE's active input in exercises certifying units for the NRF attests to that.

by Pavel Lang and Jan Procházka
photos by authors and NATO JCBRN Defence COE



Once Again Leading the NATO Response Force



After four years, the Czech Republic is again becoming the lead nation to build and command the Multinational Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion.

In 2011-12, the battalion will be a part of the NATO Response Force (NRF) task force.

The unit's final objective structure and its training system were on the agenda of the initial planning conference that took place in the city of Liberec on September 8-9, 2010. The core of the multinational task force comprises of the 311th Chemical, Biological and Radiological Defence Battalion; it will be on standby comprising of forces from Belgium, Hungary, Poland and the U.S. to launch response operations in the case of incidents involving radioactive, chemical

and biological agents and industrial contaminants anywhere on the globe.

"The multinational battalion started its activity upon this planning conference, and we had another conference in November to discuss the preparation the headquarters and subordinate units must pass to achieve required operational capabilities," said the deputy multinational battalion commander, Major Ondřej Havel.

The MNCBRN Battalion will achieve its initial operational capability on 1 January 2011. The unit





will achieve its full operational capabilities upon its certification at 1 July 2011. The unit will be on a twelve-month standby to perform specialised missions at 5-day notice to move after activation order by the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).

As a part of NRF, NATO nations CBRN experts were involved in the support provided to important international events. In 2004, the provided CBRN defence to the 28th Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece, NATO Summit in Istanbul and the 2006 NATO Summit in Riga, Latvia.

The Czech Republic has been the lead nation for this effort twice already, in 2004 and 2007. Since 2003, the 31st CBRN Bde has assigned CBRN detachments up to company-sized force into the NRF.

By CPT Vlastimila Cyprisová



Hippos over the Silk Road



Mi-171Sh helicopter lifts off the Kabul airport's sun-scorched concrete, but does not climb sharply this time. It seeks its way to Logar with a creeping flight with roofs just a couple of metres beneath. Changing flight direction abruptly, it reminds of a hare pursued by a pack of hounds. It is unbelievable how this helicopter, for whose robustness the Přeřov AFB based unit selected a flying hippopotamus in their unit crest, suddenly turns into a springer.

“The flight tactics seeks to avoid locations posing potential risk to the machine, aircrew and persons onboard. That applies not only to certain areas, but especially altitudes at which most incidents occur. We decide the type of flight tactics based on intelligence,” Captain L.B., the pilot of the 3rd Task Force Hippo contingent, comments the situation. The most frequently chosen options include tactical flight at altitude 50 feet or at flight level 1,700 ft., which already largely reduces the effectiveness of insurgent infantry weapons. Before the departure for the mission, our pilots got valuable recommendations from their British colleagues. The Brits developed the best tactical procedures based both on their operational lessons and practical tests.



EYES BEHIND MACHINE GUN

Kabul outskirts are left behind; we have passed the most risky area. Several minutes of flight on, we are getting above a scarcely populated territory. The chopper climbs. The engine roar is suddenly cut by a short burst shot from the starboard door-mounted machine gun. Another burst follows. Machine guns on the aft and in the rear begin echoing. These helicopter weapon systems should also decrease the risk. They however do not answer fire by insurgents; it is just a weapons check.

The gunner at the starboard machine gun is the commander of the aerial gunner team, WO1 J. F. It has not been a long time ago that he served with a mortar company in Přešovice.

When the military occupational specialty of aerial gunners was established in the Czech Armed Forces last year, he applied for the selection and he made it there.

“I do not regret at all having decided together with other gunners to make this step into the unknown. It is a prestigious job. The gunner’s mission is primarily to protect the aircrew against an attack and answer enemy fire.

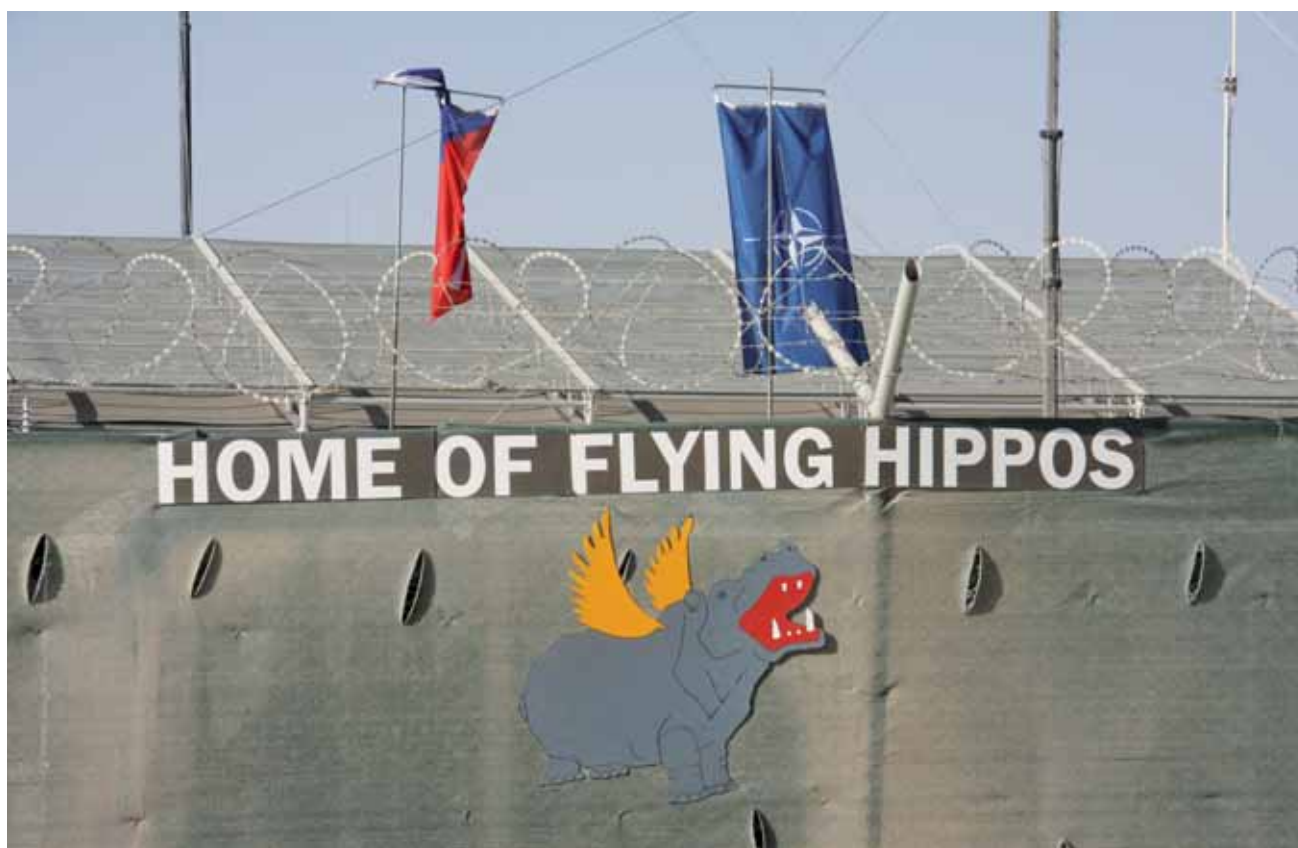
Helicopter captains use us on landings in unknown areas and in rugged mountain environments. The gunners have eyes where pilots cannot see,” Warrant-Officer 1 J. F. explains. “We continuously monitor our arc of fire and watch for indications of enemy activity.

For example, that may involve dust raised by firing an antitank guided missile. There are also objects in our field of view, which could potentially conceal enemy fire systems. Machine guns covered with tarp may be mounted on the platform of a pick-up truck. We also have to watch out for weapons concealed in rocks or other hideouts. The PKM machine guns we have here are very reliable. It was a good choice.”



TOO HARSH REALITY

The second helicopter that is covering us at the moment at four is piloted by the heli unit commander, a veteran with operational tours in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Major Robert Papš. “We have not encountered a direct engagement. But coalition aircraft get under attack here frequently, there are casualties and fatalities. That is reality. This tour differs from the previous ones I was involved with the degree of conflict intensity. That also entails the level of threat coalition forces face.





But we perform missions exactly according to what we are assigned, without any shortcomings or extraordinary events. At least that is what our national assessment and the coalition force assessment tells.“

The unit is said to be prepared very good for the mission, so nothing took them by surprise. Not even extremely hot temperatures in the summer, when they have to fly as well.“The high elevation and temperatures prevailing here in July and August naturally affected helicopter performance. But we have counted with that. In 2008, I was here to map out what we would be up to. So I had familiarity at least with climatic and geospatial conditions. Our activities are based on coalition and U.S. procedures and standards. It is a regular rhythm for the service personnel of those countries,

they train accordingly. Our procedures are somewhat different; indeed, they are not elaborated as much into that level of detail. We had to adapt progressively to some differences in mission planning, support and reporting,“ Major Papš says. “We have flown both day and at night. Such piloting is more difficult in terms of the rugged terrain profile and its readability. Low level flights with restricted illumination involve the highest risk. Although the number of night missions was lower than those performed at day, still no flight can be underestimated here.

This is not the way from Přerov to Prague. Each operational flight can be classified as a combat mission; no matter whether resupplying forces on a combat outpost or a transfer flight to Kabul or Bagram airport.“

A TASK FORCE FALCON COMPONENT

Helicopter unit with roughly one-hundred service personnel is a part of the U.S. Task Force Falcon. Twenty flight personnel divide into four aircrews flying with three Mi-171Sh machines. In addition to carrying troops and materiel for Regional Command – East, they are also responsible for casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) and visual reconnaissance. “We have also transported underslung cargo, which is not really a frequent mission back home. Moreover, we unloaded it in an area 2,700 metres above sea level. There is a manual for such missions in the Czech Republic, but we have to observe a whole range of factors,“ Captain L.V. explains. “Afghanistan is interesting by its very environment. It is an exotic country. Lessons we gain flying from these elevations are also important for us.“



Warrant-Officer 1 J.F., the gunner team commander, concurs with that. He thinks mountain flying is a bit extreme, but very interesting by all means. He will surely enjoy telling memories of how they dropped allied troops in remote hardly accessible spots. If there is time, he also finds interesting to watch how Afghans live from the height of several feet or several hundred feet.

REPAIRS ON SPOT

We land at the edge of Sharana Forward Operating Base. The best landmark for us in this case is the big yellow hangar members of the Czech Přeřov AFB built at the end of the last year. Mechanics have strived for many years to have such a mobile facility. The hangar has shops with excellent tooling and it provides a dust-free air-conditioned environment. Even after a successfully completed mission, it is not over for the heli unit yet today, because there are many other occupational specialties comprising it.

Tactical operation element, intelligence team, support component, logistics and naturally a team of mechanics are all required to provide their input to the performance of operational assignment. Mandatory maintenance is in progress at the moment in front of the hangar. Mechanics are removing the rotor blades. For the first time ever in the history of the Czech Air Force, they are able to provide all maintenance and checks directly on spot in field conditions. Thereby, they save time needed for transporting helicopters back to the Czech Republic and indeed the funding required.

“We have performed the mandatory maintenance after fifty completed flight hours three times, two times after one-hundred hours and also the 1,000-hour maintenance. In addition to that, we have provided all repairs, which were really malfunctions similar to those occurring when flying back in the Czech Republic. In most instances, replacement of various blocks would do the job,” says the deputy commander for ground technical support, Captain P. Z. “Helicopter reliability is relatively high here. The demanding environment notwithstanding, it does not oscillate much from the average we are used to at home. High dustiness only impacts on rotor blades that sustain a higher attrition. When we did our predeployment prep in Israeli deserts, the sand ground engine vanes there. Here, nothing like that happens. Perhaps the sand there was more grainy, plus here we operate from rough gravel, whereas in Israel we landed on sand, which may also be a factor.”

On sunset, Sharana base gets veiled into the dark velvet of night. Complete blackout is one of the measures taken to prevent rocket attacks. There is big poster in the Czech House comprising of photos showing the heli unit activities. It also includes the inscription: 11:08 22. 9. 2010 1,000 hours over Afghanistan. Several months have passed since then and the inscription is no longer valid. Czech pilots have added dozens of flights to that quantity in the meantime. Early in the morning, shortly after three a.m., technicians would start preparing helicopters for flight again.

By Vladimír Marek
Photos by Vladimír Marek and WO1 J. F.



Flying Hippos Have a Soul Too



Combat missions, difficult climatic conditions, stress, wear and separation from family. Those are some of the load factors our military professionals are faced with in Afghanistan. Ninety-nine members of the 2nd Czech Armed Forces ISAF Heli Unit contingent - Flying Hippos also served this demanding operational tour, for whom the Forward Operating Base Sharana in the Paktika province became their home from April till July 2010.

The mission of the 2nd Contingent Heli Unit was to provide additional air mobility - so they carried personnel and materiel in support of coalition forces in their area of operations, both day and night using NVGs, and they also transported casualties without medical assistance onboard (CASEVAC).

"On arrival, soldiers had to deal with the change of climate and primarily with a completely different working, private and security environment," says Captain Helena Sováková, the psychologist and press and information officer of the Czech Heli Unit. "Upon their arrival to Sharana and gaining familiarity with the

rules of service on the base, everyone strived to get the information how many cubic metres will their home have whilst there. My home is where my bed is, soldiers say in exaggeration and protect their living place framed with photos of the their families and good luck gifts as their most precious gem."

PREDEPLOYMENT PREPARATION

The whole contingent, including the ground personnel, passed the basic psychological preparation as a part of their predeployment training, including the

ground personnel. The ground personnel practically do not get out of the base and the risk for them to become engaged or taken captive is not as high with them. Flight personnel – pilots, flight engineers and gunners, who contrarily face such a risk, underwent a special recovery course for extracting personnel from enemy controlled territory at the Training Command-Military Academy Vyškov in addition to that. Both courses take a week and focus on survival in distress and danger, including simulated captivity. Course participants practised model stress situations under all circumstances, for example after night training, with sleep deprivation and other stress factors. "It was very demanding for them, but at the same time they got valuable experience and the possibility to rehearse the action dry," CAPT Sováková explains. "They saw and learned on their own how their bodies and brains react to some crisis stimuli. It is very important to train not only harmony with arms and equipment, but to get under your skin also the associated psychic stimuli. Knowledge of one's strengths and weaknesses, the ability to work with them, to remain cold-blooded in tense situations, all of that can be acquired as a part of training."

ON ALERT AT ALL TIMES

"Anytime the helicopter gets airborne to perform another flight mission, the crew passes certain form of so-called combat stress. Although all missions are planned into detail beforehand, observing all regulations and rules, no one knows how the flight would actually develop in terms of security and safety,"



Helena Sováková continues. "It is one of the stressors unconsciously affecting military professionals. All of them are experienced professionals, but every single one of them would tell you every flight is unique, unrepeatable and requires maximum concentration."

Following on the tradition established by their colleagues who flew wearing the blue British Royal Air Force uniforms onboard bombers and fought in World War II, new members of helicopter aircrews are aerial gunners. At the first sight, their job looks pretty simple. They "just" fly on a helicopter, watch the area in their field of view and shoot in case of danger. Sometimes they may have a feeling themselves, in case they do not respond, that they are not as utilised as pilots are. That is however a big misunderstanding. They find it completely natural to wear full special tactical vest with protective plates, weighing nearly twenty kilos, and their heads are protected with helmets equipped





“I have been on a couple flights with the aircrews taking some photos. From the passenger perspective, I perceived both a high professionalism in their behaviour but also a calm and pragmatic communication, which both boosted my feeling of safety,” CAPT Sováková recalls. “From a psychologist perspective, it was important for me to have personally experienced the conditions that the aircrews work in. It helped me get a better understanding of their feelings and I knew exactly what they spoke about when discussing their duties. We had four helicopter captains, four pilots, four flight engineers and eight gunners, all of them comprising an excellent team. In duty, they gave the impression of an orchestra precisely in tune.”



AS TIME GOES BY

Crisis situations that people do not have under their control, that they may not influence and are independent of their conduct, are mentally highly strenuous. It can be war, captivity but also a stay in an unstable country. “The first month during an operational tour is always marked by adapting to the new environment and people not only inside the contingent but also with the many facilities on the base. The second month is about getting settled into the new digs, when everybody has already developed a new modus vivendi,” the psychologist elaborates. “But if you live with another person every day in a single room and

with headsets allowing them to communicate among the aircrew. On night flights, they are using night vision goggles fixed on a special mount on the helmet. This set adds another kilogram to cervical spine load. They keep their weapons – the .30 cal PKM machine guns – combat ready all the time and have ammo boxes placed within reach. They are constantly on alert, kneeling and leaning out of the helicopter. Sand and dirt fly around the gunners as they are coping with the helicopter’s changing position in flight and pay maximum attention to the situation on the ground. On positive target identification and when cleared by the captain, the gunners must be able to eliminate the target on the ground. All of that entails a big mental load. The helicopter captain is always the mission commander, who works under biggest stress and other factors among the crew, he decides on how the mission is performed and bears responsibility for mission accomplishment. He decides on tactics to be used and safest flight based on intelligence. Helicopter captain must be able to pilot the machine perfectly in all situations possibly occurring in flight.

the environment around you is poor for stimuli, what happens is that masks begin to fall so to say. Then it is important how openly people communicate and how well they are able to listen to opinions of the others. To what degree they are able to accommodate each other and, what is important, how they are able to accept criticism of their own conduct. That is where empathy, tolerance, humility, grace, courtesy, friendship, fair-mindedness and other come into play.”

“Soldier in the field on his own, although armed to teeth, will not live longer than two minutes, if his comrades do not cover his back“. And that applies both outside base and to living inside. Crisis situations prove who can be relied on, and shows that a comrade choosing the right words in the right moments can also cover your back that way when it has not been your day.

The captain’s responsibility is not over even after landing in unknown terrain; he is responsible for organising the helicopter evacuation and potential combat activities.



The way we take care of our bodies physically, we should care for our souls alike.

“Psychology is still veiled with secret for many. Even today, I am occasionally told: you are a psychologist, so I should be careful about the way I behave and what I say. There are still people having a rather negative attitude on psychologists and may regard those communicating with psychologists as displaying sort of a failure,” CAPT Sováková says. “In the military, psychologist rank among supporting occupational specialties, meaning they use their specialist knowledge and skills to make jobs easier for their colleagues – the warfighters.

We are no know-it-alls and we do not resolve problems of the others, but we have a better understanding of the principles guiding communication, how human psyche functions, we may take a different perspective on various situations. Military professionals have the hallmark of tough guys and gals, but they also have a sensitive soul, their joys and worries, are trained to resist excessive mental and physical loads, but everyone of us has an Achilles’ heel.”

STRESS CONTROL THROUGH SPORT

Body regeneration after mental strain is extremely important for its future performance. It pays off to degrade the accumulated stress continuously and focus on prevention, which may be done in a variety of forms. Based on their previous experience, everyone knows what helps them best. “Someone first needs to take a rest and to have a good sleep. The next choice is books, good movies or computer games. Others prefer to get their bodies tired in gyms or they do some jogging, play a football or volleyball game. But sports is clearly



in the lead,” Helena Sováková states. “Endorphins or “hormones of happiness” get released during muscle load causing a good temper, invoking pleasing feelings and muffling pain. It is sort of a drug people’s addiction to is desirable.” And how do psychologists recuperate? “I am only human too. If I would need to address a vocational problem, I have a possibility to reach-back to liaison psychologist or colleagues I may always rely on. And as every soldier finds a group of people he or she feels good with and with whom he or she can be more open, I am no exception to that,” the psychologist says. “Sports positively rank among my favourite recuperation strategies. Playing tennis or badminton, you can put the negative energy you have accumulated into every stroke, or for me the most universal is “jogging with Dan”.

Headset on and Dan Landa songs – all the stress falls off me already in the first metres.”

by Jana Deckerová
photos by Jana Deckerová
and CAPT Helena Sováková



The Sharpshooter Alchemy



Contests of top military snipers usually do not appear in periodicals on front pages as faces of people behind sights are subject to strict secrecy and they do not indulge themselves in publicity either. So, perhaps just a few people noted the achievements by the members of the sniper team of the 41st Mechanised Battalion based in Žatec.

"I personally cannot imagine winning in such contests without an extra bit of good luck. Competition among professional snipers is so tight that the end result is a matter of the slightest little thing. It does not depend only on knowledge, current state of mind, condition, but also equipment and a whole range of other factors," one of the winners of the prestigious competition of Czech military and police snipers, Staff Sergeant P. L. explains.

However, to get into this elite marksmen category, one must prove extreme dedication and invest a longterm effort. Military snipers train in various weather conditions practising shooting at most diverse target types and sizes, ranging from three-dimensional, such as balloons, to metal plates, standard pop-up targets and to so-called phototargets showing photographs of persons with indicated lethal zones. Those are discernible only from close range, but if the shooter looks through his sights from a distance, he does not see the outlines of vital zones. The shooter must determine lethal zones based on physiognomy and hit them. The sniper profession is primarily about experience and correct estimation of the influence the ambient environment will have on the bullet in flight. "Shooting calibre 308 Win. over long ranges, it is necessary to realise that the bullet descends rapidly.

It just take a slight mistake in determining the range, temperature, elevation etc. and you simply miss the target," Staff Sergeant P. L. explains. "Wind may be another tumbling stone. When the bullet loses its dynamics, air streams affect its trajectory to a large degree. It does not suffice to determine windspeed in metres per second; decimal position plays a considerable role in this case. Moreover, when you measure windspeed at the point you will be shooting from, it does not necessarily mean it is the same all the way through. Even airstreams flowing in varying directions are not exceptional. It often happens that





the wind blows in completely opposite direction at the target. It is simply an alchemy.“

GET TO SHOOT

It is naturally critical for snipers to hit the target precisely. If he is making approach to his position for two day and it takes him even longer to escape after the shot, the sniper cannot afford to miss. Shooting itself is just the icing on the cake. However excellent a marksman one can be, if not good at tactics and all other necessary skills, he will not get to the position and will get to shooting. Those having all skills necessary for sniping in good balance achieve the best results.

Although the path military snipers follow to get to top professionalism is winding, they have made progress in recent years, particularly thanks to people willing to help. One of such persons is Captain Karel Kratochvíl from the Secondary Police School in Holešov.

Snipers from Žatec entered into contact with him three years ago. Thanks to Captain Kratochvíl, military snipers enjoy the possibility to take part in sniper contests held by the Police of the Czech Republic, but also to participate in courses for snipers which are very inspiring in many respects.

They also have a very good cooperation with Military Police officers Richard Maška, Jaroslav Böhm and Boris Rek. These gentlemen organised a sniper course in spring earlier this year, which has been unmatched in the Czech Armed Forces so far.

“Something like that was missing. Courses held by the Police of the Czech Republic are good, but they focus on police

snipers nevertheless,” Warrant Officer 1 L.S. notes.” The training took place at Boletice in this case and lasted ten consecutive days. The course was highly intensive given the demands of this profession and the aim to share as much information and lessons as possible. We had shooting training, tactics, topography, medical training and all the other subjects closely affiliated with this profession. The shooting training did not cover only sniper rifles, but also the Mod. 58 assault rifle and pistols, which we must have mastered alike.

When on move, we usually have our long rifles in a bag.

With the rifle, we would hardly be able to successfully defend ourselves in contact.“

The Dukla Pilsen sports organisation has been very accommodative to the needs of the sniper team from Žatec. At the Pilsen-Lobzy range, the trainers assist them on training with smallbore rifle that represents an alternative for them to long rifles. Watched by the best coaches, snipers chiefly practise positions and triggering. “We achieve considerable savings in terms of sniper rifle ammunition, which we cannot really spare. A smallbore shot costs just one Czech crown. We also practise pistol shooting there,” Staff Sergeant P. L. adds.

SOMETIMES CLOUDY

The attitude towards snipers in the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic can be described in meteorology terminology as sometimes cloudy. There are still quite a few commanders not really knowing what to do with this profession exactly. But in other





countries, it is a completely different cup of coffee. Recent developments in warfighting and the need for specific tactics in the modern battlefield prove the high importance of this occupational specialty. "For instance, the most demanded/lowest density assets in Afghanistan are forward air controllers and snipers. Some of our commanders' mindset may have progressively changed over time thanks to that," WO1 L. S. elaborates, who spent with his colleagues seven months in the Province of Logar, Afghanistan, in 2009. "During our tour, we had the possibility to compare with U.S. Army snipers, because we operated in support of U.S. forces. There was also a sort of feedback. The U.S. commander personally thanked us at the end. He said he was surprised how high standards we had."

Czech snipers were primarily involved in providing cover to mobile observation teams. In most instances, they occupied an elevated point to watch over the road the convoy was to go along.

The Americans request such cover for nearly any movement out of the base. Snipers are generally still required to be able to respond to any situation, to improvise and think cold-blooded. This job cannot be done by people who wait to be told to do this and that and go there.

They have to operate standalone, in pairs or in team. The nature of our missions usually requires that a support element accompanied the sniper, which naturally places higher demands on the team's overall mobility and the sniper's ability to direct the support team. Movements to areas of deployment are not just on foot, but combined, using vehicles and/or helicopters.

"In Afghanistan, we had a great opportunity to experience various sniping tactics and gain valuable lessons, particularly thanks to the contingent



commander COL Petr Procházka, who was truly committed to developing this military occupational specialty," Staff Sergeant P. L. states. "Anyone of us for whom this job became a lifetime profession does not hesitate to invest time and effort, and possibly get some special individual equipment on their own. In order to maintain required standards, snipers should fire some twenty-five hundred to thirty hundred rounds a year.

We are having substantially fewer this year, which is not really ideal. But so-called dry training and smallbore gun shooting can make up for it a lot. Ballistics, wind and other affairs may however only be trained live. All the high-quality sniper prep and training will then prove useful in protecting own troops in extreme conditions in Afghanistan."

by Vladimír Marek
Photos by author
and the 41st Mechanised Battalion



Introducing military components

Prepared for the Worst



Aeromedical rescue service helicopter touches down on the helipad at the Biologic Defence Center (BDC) in Těchonín, Czech Republic. A patient suspect of carrying extremely contagious exotic infection is loaded from the helicopter into a transport box and taken to the intensive care unit. Medical personnel in pressure suits take the patient over and bring him into the specialised hospital's ICU ward.

Such spectacle could be seen in every live action. But it does not necessarily need to relate to potential attacks involving weapons of mass destruction or bioterrorism, but rather those linked with infectious diseases and stopping them from spreading among the population. The Armed Forces of the Czech Republic has an effective force biologic defence system and Bio Defence Center (BDC) Těchonín is the primary ACR specialised medical facility. It includes an infectious hospital for quarantining and treatment of persons with extremely dangerous and exotic infections at Bio Safety Level (BSL) 3 and 4 as well as labs to identify selected biologic agents.

TOP SECRET AREA A TIME BEFORE

This military installation in Orlické hory mountains was a secret area before 1990. It is not the case anymore. Following 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S., a major turnover occurred and biologic defence

became a widely discussed issue, both in the expert community and in the public. The MoD was faced with the assignment to form a high-mobility bio response unit and set operational a specialised medical facility to provide for quarantine and treatment of infected patients. Both assignments were accomplished. "We have teams equipped with adequate assets and capable of deploying in areas, including in foreign countries, where biologic weapons are suspected to have been used," says Lieutenant-Colonel František Bílek, director of the Central Military Medical Institute (CMMI) based in Prague, a superior echelon to the BDC. "The Bio Defence Center has been through a two-year test operation, which confirmed its operational readiness. Since May 09, the Bio Defence Center has been in full operation. Apart from routine preventive activities, the BDC also provides training, schooling and practising for military and civilian experts from the Czech Republic as well as from other NATO nations and also performs examination of soldiers upon their



return from operations in region posing a risk from epidemiologic viewpoint.“ LTC Bílek also stated that BDC was a part of the National Integrated Rescue System and involved in Allied biological defence cooperation within NATO. “The Armed Forces of

Poland, Austria and the Baltic States have indicated their interest in using the BDC capabilities and/or in close collaboration. Appropriate legislation must be adopted in this regard,” Director CMMI explains.

BDC experts already do have cooperation in place with the Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences. They focus on testing the application of newly synthesised substances for curing selected viral and bacterial infections. “For the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, such cooperation could considerably enhance capabilities in the domain of prevention and therapy of especially dangerous infections, with importance exceeding the military domain. Especially in case when prophylaxis is problematic or non-existent, such substances could be used to the benefit of protecting of military professionals and the civilian population,” LTC Bílek specifies and highlights the fact that cooperating with a renowned scientific organisation of the Academy of Sciences will undoubtedly also raise the prestige of both CMMI and the BDC.

DOMINANT “ZERO-TWO”

The military installation in Těchonín was just recently busy with construction. The BDC splits into two phases. Main buildings housing diagnostic labs and safe hospitalisation of persons with highly virulent infections were renovated first and then other buildings on the premises were scheduled.





“The construction investment plan has been realised roughly to eighty per cent by now. There is no funding authorised to complete remaining projects,” the Bio Defence Center Chief Lieutenant-Colonel Michal Kroča says and is only sorry that the science and research building has not been renovated. “However minor, any delay in biological defence research and development puts us substantially behind.”

Undoubtedly, the specialised infection insulation unit located in building zero-two has claimed the biggest investments from the military treasury. “For the cases of emergency, there are nearly forty hospital beds at highest bio safety level available here. Moreover, we have ninety additional beds for potential carriers of infectious diseases. There is no other medical facility in the Czech Republic that would have such a quarantine and treatment capacity for infected patients,” the BDC Chief states.

Some might say why should we have such an expensive facility only for contingency, as we do not suffer from Ebola, anthrax, tularaemia and viral haemorrhagic flue for example? “I would consider gambling not to be professionally ready for such type of emergency that may in reality occur anytime and anywhere. The Armed Forces of the Czech Republic is the only agency nationwide to have an operational and fully resourced specialised organisation with experts in infections, who are able to provide treatment not only of infected individual but a group of persons as well,” LTC Kroča argues.

Excellent equipment and cutting-edge technology would be useless without high-quality personnel, whose ranks have largely thinned down however. That is attributed to permanent reductions of MoD personnel. The last cut in January 2010 made redundant thirty-one per cent of employees.

“It is on the verge of becoming inoperational. We are seeking alternative ways to provide for the unit’s smooth operation in case of its activation. One of the sources, particularly in terms of specialist personnel, is the Hospital Base in Hradec Králové, which we have a close cooperation with. We also entertain the idea of building a specialised reserve component,” the BDC Chief expands.

Lieutenant-Colonel Kroča has no doubts whatsoever about professional preparedness of his subordinates. He is confident that experts from Těchonín would accomplish their assignment even in a real-world mission. “The CBD has erudite personnel with in-depth knowledge of infection treatment. The staff are aware of the hazards and have adequate technology available. They undergo monthly training practise in near real-world conditions. This drill progressively reduces the risk of potential failure.”

by Pavel Lang
Photos by Jan Kouba

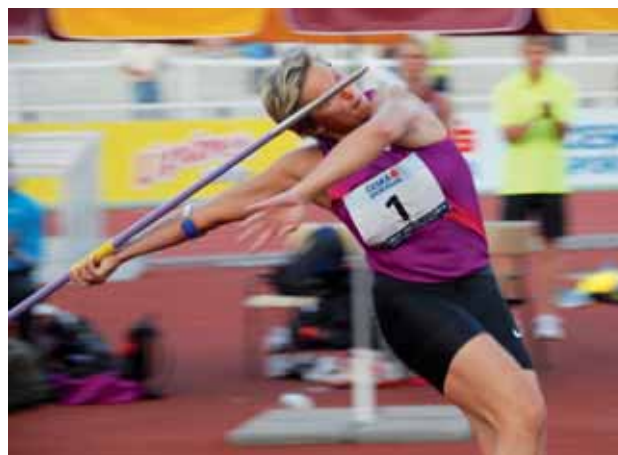


DUKLA's most successful



This year's collection of 97 medals (29 gold, 21 silver and 40 bronze) that DUKLA Army Sports Center athletes won in the Winter Olympic Games, World Championships, European Championships, Junior World Championships, Junior European Championships, military world championships and universiades has become the largest ever. The most successful year was the year 2003, when Dukla athletes returned from competitions as owners of 91 medals (32 - 27 - 32).

Throughout 2010, Czech military athletes collected 4 (2-0-2) medals in the winter Olympic Games, 25 (8-5-12) in world championships, 34 (14-8-12) in European championships, 12 (3-1-8) in junior world championships, 6 (0-2-4) in junior European championships, 8 (4-3-1) in CISM Military world championship and 8 medals (2-3-3) in the Universiade. They won 147 Czech champion titles (114 senior and 33 junior ones) and set 2 junior world records, 7 Czech junior and 3 Czech senior records. Of the total number of 97 medals in Olympic and non-Olympic sports, they won 29 in senior and 6 in junior category of Olympic sports.



MILITARY ATHLETES OF THE YEAR:
A SPEEDSKATER AND CROSSCOUNTRY
SKI RELAY TEAM WITH OLYMPIC BRONZE
MEDAL

The DUKLA Army Sports Center takes stock annually of its sports achievements: the 2010 awards were presented on 27 October 2010 in the Congress Hall of the Armed Forces House in Prague in the 15th edition of the Military Athlete of the Year poll.

Double Olympic gold and single bronze medallist speedskater Martina Sáblíková was voted the athlete of the year 2010, and three crosscountry skiers, Jiří Magál, Martin Jakš a Martin Koukal who were involved in winning the Olympic bronze in 4x10KM relay, won the teams' category.



year in the medal history



Although no longer wearing Dukla colours after six years from July 2010, speedskater Martina Sáblíková clearly won the poll in individual athlete category. She won three Olympic medals and additional medals from the world championship, European championship and the World Cup as member of the Dukla Army Sports Center. Her message from Berlin, where she prepped for the new season, read: "I very much value the award and the votes I got in the poll and I would like to thank very much indeed to all people at Dukla ASC for that."

In a poll involving 87 coaches, experts, DUKLA ASC staff and journalists, she was credited with 665 points in total, defeating the second in the row – European champion, winner of all rounds of this year's World Cup, skiff racer Ondřej Synek, who also could not take over the award personally at that night, because he was competing in the world championship in the New Zealand. In the finals on November 6th, 2010, he then won the world champion title, wrapping up his highly successful season.



Only the athlete ranked third – European bronze medallist and Diamond League winner javelin thrower Barbora Špotáková – actually came up to the stage for the award. She received congratulations from both world javelin legends, eighty-eight-year-old Dana Zátopková and Barbora's new coach Jan Železný.

The fourth spot went to national skydiving team member and world champion Jiří Gečnuk. Pentathlon champion David Svoboda ended up fifth. European champion in skeet, Jan Sychra, was ranked sixth. When announcing the seventh place, the audience learnt the great message that pistol shooter Lenka Marušková had shot to the silver medal in the world cup sport pistol finals in Munich just a couple of minutes ago. The eighth position went to the world championship bronze medal holder, track cyclist Milan Kadlec; Pavel Churavý, who was ranked fifth in the Olympic Nordic combined competition, was voted ninth. European double canoe racing champs Jaroslav Volf with Ondřej Štěpánek got the tenth spot.



Small teams category was dominated by the Vancouver bronze-winning crosscountry relay team. DUKLA members Jiří Magál, Martin Jakš and Martin Koukal were involved in winning the bronze Olympic medal; the fourth one was Lukáš Bauer, then an Olymp club racer, who however transferred to Dukla at the beginning of summer. The world championship silver-winning modern pentathlon team - David Svoboda, Michal Sedlecký, Ondřej Polívka - ended up second. Their colleague Libor Capalini who terminated his superb career this year and dedicates his efforts to bringing up pentathlon youth, received the DUKLA sport knight's sword. Bronze in the team category went to the K-4 kayak racing team that won bronze medals in both World and European championship, comprising Ondřej Horský, Jan Souček, Daniel Havel and Jan Štěřba.

Having won the junior world champion title in New Zealand earlier this year, talented snowboardcross rider Eva Samková was voted the best junior athlete.

The award ceremony was also attended by Defence Minister Alexandr Vondra, who said he highly valued 90 medals that DUKLA ASC athletes won at Winter Olympic Games, world championships, European championships and junior championships.

"I am very pleased to be amidst you, at least for while, amidst the legends of Dukla and Czech sport. The only kind of sport I actively pursue is that I keep running between the Government and the Parliament. I very much value the outstanding results you attained, clearly proving that to achieve all that is possible in sport, people must attempt the impossible. It is only the end of October, so these achievements do not need to be the last ones," he said and expressed his wish that sport representatives of the armed forces be able to make their mark in the next year as well despite the restricted budget. He also valued the work of coaches and all those involved in providing support to 160 Dukla athletes at DUKLA ASC.

DUKLA 2011 CALENDAR: JAN SAUDEK FOR THE THIRD TIME

The Dukla wall calendar was photographed by the renowned photographer Jan Saudek. On the eve of the Military Athlete of the Year award ceremony, a press conference was held to introduce the tenth edition of the Dukla calendar in attendance photographer Saudek and some athletes featuring on the calendar. The Saudek Calendar III is likely to be the last one. "People say all good things come in three. I do not think though that it would be a height of my career as no calendar of mine is, but I believe it would be appropriate to finish now," Saudek said strictly in response to being convinced about additional editions in the future.

Forty-one athletes and six children appeared before the lens. Whereas last year the photographs were taken outdoors, posing before the famous "mouldy" wall

in Saudek's studio came back for this year's edition. The first photograph of the Olympic bronze-winning crosscountry ski relay team came into being shortly before Lukáš Bauer's transfer to Dukla, which was why the idea of Three Musketeers and the fourth d'Artagnan came up. The last photo depicted sport queens: three Olympic medallists Barbora Špotáková, Lenka Marušková and Štěpánka Hilgertová, and it was taken as late as in the middle of September, after Štěpánka Hilgertová returned from the world championship in water slalom.

The invitation to pose for the calendar was also accepted by ex-world champion in shooting at moving target, Tomáš Caknakis, who is handicapped following a serious injury, Jan Železný with his javelin youth, golden Olympic decathletes Roman Šebrle and Robert Změlík, kayak four and men's eight flatwater racers, modern pentathletes, cyclists from Dukla Prague and Brno, downhill ski racer Ondřej Bank and snowboard rider Šárka Pančochová. The December page features a photo of kids of successful athletes heralding DUKLA's future.

Javelin legends Dana Zátopková and Jan Železný, director of DUKLA ASC Colonel Jaroslav Prišćák, photographer Jan Saudek as well as Defence Minister Alexandr Vondra took care of officially launching the calendar during the evening. "I hate pouring liquids over prints the more as they are so beautiful," he said carefully tilting a glass of champagne. At the beginning of the launch ceremony, Mr. Saudek got a white jacket with from Dukla with printed photographs from the last calendar he made. So, whereas most of us would have the 2011 Dukla calendar hanging on the wall next year, Mr. Saudek will have the photographs on a jacket hanging in his wardrobe.

by Ivana Roháčková

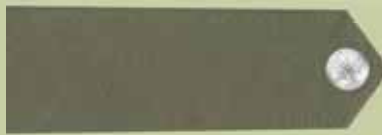


New rank insignia of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic

effective January 1, 2011



Enlisted



PRIVATE (PVT)

OR-1



PRIVATE FIRST CLASS (PFC)

OR-1

Junior Non-Commissioned Officers



CORPORAL (CPL)

OR-2



SERGEANT (SGT)

OR-3



STAFF SERGEANT (SSG)

OR-4

Senior Non-Commissioned Officers



SERGEANT FIRST CLASS (SFC)

OR-5



MASTER SERGEANT (MSG)

OR-6



WARRANT OFFICER (WO)

OR-7



SENIOR WARRANT OFFICER (SWO)

OR-8



CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER (CWO)

OR-9

Junior Commissioned Officers



LIEUTENANT (LT)

OF-1



FIRST LIEUTENANT (1LT)

OF-1



CAPTAIN (CPT)

OF-2

Senior Commissioned Officers



MAJOR (MAJ)

OF-3



LIEUTENANT COLONEL (LTC)

OF-4



COLONEL (COL)

OF-5

General Officers



BRIGADIER GENERAL (BG)

OF-6



MAJOR GENERAL (MG)

OF-7



LIEUTENANT GENERAL (LTG)

OF-8



GENERAL (GEN)

OF-9

Happy New Year
2011

