Areview

1/2017

The military first, till the very last day 2

ACR in 2016 6

Field surgical team in Iraq 32



The 2nd Mechanized Company of Hranice completed three-week training at the shooting range Velká Střelná

Live-firing exercise



The theme of the exercise was a response to the dominant enemy, deploying infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) BVP-2, infantry soldiers and anti-tank hand grenades. Hard drill and unstable weather thus not only tested the old experienced soldiers of this company, but also trainees, for which it was often their first introduction to a live deployment of the IFVs.

The 2nd Mechanized Company of Hranice completed three-week training at the firing range in the Libavá military area. Its aim was to examine whether the soldiers were able to manage tactics of platoon, as well as live firing from the IFV BMP-2, with the best results in a given time standard. Hranice soldiers destroyed fleeting and moving targets, up to a distance of 2,300 meters, not only during the day, but also at night. Members of the company capitalized their knowledge and skills from specialized preparation and field exercises of the previous year and the trainees acquired the necessary skills. A great emphasis was placed on the decision-making process of platoon commanders and squad leaders, who among other things practiced issuing combat orders.

Actual themes

The organizers prepared attractive lessons, very close to a real combat, when the squad sitting in the BMP-2 vehicle was "attacked" by the fire from a civilian car. In this situation, the squad responded with the fire from a main gun of fighting vehicle and destroyed enemy. When the leader passed his report to superior, the squad was again attacked, this time by a mock terrorist group, with small arms. According to the guidelines dealing with the use of "proportionate force", as prescribed by doctrines on weapons deployment, the squad leader ordered the fire team to dismount and destroy infantry. The second part of a fire exercise continued with small-arms shooting. The soldiers first beat the enemy off

factsheet

The BMP-2 is a combat amphibious armoured tracked vehicle, manufactured in Czechoslovakia, under the licence of Soviet transporter BMP-2. The vehicle is designed to increase the mobility and firepower of mechanized units to destroy armoured targets and enemy manpower. Its armament consists of automatic cannon 2A42, calibre 30 mm, which is designed to destroy light armoured vehicles of the enemy, machine gun PKT, calibre 7.62 mm, and launchers of antitank missiles Konkurs. The BMP-2 has an installed device for protecting the crew from the pressure wave, penetrating radiation, radioactive fallout and chemical weapons. It is also equipped with a 902V system for firing smoke grenades (6 pieces). In Czechoslovakia, infantry fighting vehicles BMP-2 were serially produced from 1987 to 1989. A total of 344 pieces were produced, of them 280 combat vehicles were introduced into the former Czechoslovak People's Army (ČSLA).

by a resolute action and then gradually disengaged themselves from the fight, and with the use of covering fire they moved out form a tactically unfavourable area.

Cannon and also a machine gun

During the firing exercise, the soldiers exploited all weapons they had in the arsenal. Gunner-operators of the IFV were firing both from the cannon and a machine gun. During the attack, the infantry used BREN assault rifles, RPG-7 launches, machine guns and grenade launchers. "The level of training of commanders and gunner-operators of the IFVs went up noticeably. The intensive three-week training tested the ability of command and was able to make the most of the previous expericences. "This exercise I evaluate very positively," said the commander of the 2nd Mech Coy Captain Michal Rožňovský. The Military Training Area Libavá prepared for the soldiers its normal conditions, i.e. totally unpredictable weather, where snow alternated with rain and spring sunshine with strong winds nearly in a hurricane force. For veteran soldiers, however, it was no problem and a quick adaptation of novice trainees marked the successful completion of the first phase of a three-week fire exercise in day and at night.

Text and photos by Michal Voska



contents

Live-firing exercise	1
The military first, till the very last day	2
ACR in 2016	6
The Giant Mountains 2017	15
Paras with new types of bags	16
Support for an Iron Wolf	18
Shield	21
There was no time for fear	22
Women in the Czech Army	24
The Gripens over Iceland	26
Allied Spirit VI	28
Tábor's patrol won the bronze	30
Field surgical team in Iraq	32
New units of the Active Reserve	35
Heavenly dogs	36
He tasted the atmosphere at the start, the next year he would like to smell the finish line	38
CZ Bren 2	40
TATRA trucks for the Armed Forces	42
The last of the heroes on parachutes	44
A mission in white	46
Command can't do without a connection	48

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General Josef Bečvář: Modernisation of our armed forces is not a horse race; all projects have to be worked out dutifully.

The military first, till the very last day



The Chief of General Staff General Josef Bečvář has been in office for almost two years. So, the following interview marks the middle of his term.

General, you have been in office for almost two years, half of your term. What is your evaluation?
I would not like to speak about any sort of half. I am rather through the first complete year in which we launched realisation of the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept. After the Government authorised it in December 2015, we started the key realisation process in 2016. We knew beforehand what the year will look like, that we would have to work the legislation, its implementation and preparation for all major projects. I do not allude only to modernisation and armaments, but indeed to personnel management, changes in the command and control system, improvement of logistic support and defence infrastructure. Although it may look nervously on the media – that we still do not buy anything – it is not the case. We are on schedule.

Let us look at it from the other end, from the financial perspective. In 2014, we hit the rock bottom with the budget of mere CZK 42 billion. The 2015 MoD budget held CZK 43.8 billion and there was 47.8 billion in 2016. This year, the defence appropriations amounting to CZK 52.5 billion practically equal the sum we administered in 2009. The growth so far was primarily used to compensate underfunding in the previous years. But we will realistically have the capacity to realise major investments only in the years ahead.

What resolutions of yours have you managed to turn into reality and what will you have to concentrate on?
My best reward is to see that we are able to perform our international commitments – in the international structures, readiness forces and particularly on foreign operations. We have well managed to select, train and deploy soldiers for operations, including Afghanistan, Mali, Sinai, Iraq and other locations. Over the whole last year, we only received positive news from our foreign deployments. Knock on wood, I trust it will stay that way and there will be no major incident. On the home front, recruitment is clearly the greatest achievement. There was a major shift upwards in manning levels, although we still have units with relatively low number of posts filled. The third domain is the active reserve component. We have finally made an important progress there after several years of stagnation. I also highly value that we managed to find answers to questions associated with major acquisition projects and moved forward with them.

There have recently been extensive changes in the legislation affecting the Czech Armed Forces. What do those processes entail, and does it make any headway?
Absolutely. Otherwise we would not propose those processes. At 1 July 2016, amended defence legislation package came into force and the whole MoD immediately benefited. We have been able to use a different way of selecting personnel into active duty service and into the reserve, we have been able to promulgate new regulations, develop new concept of building the active reserve component and so forth. The new legislation definitely takes us forward in developing capacities for crisis management.

You enjoyed a good cooperation on the defence legislation, and you have been through the concept development – was it a challenging process for you?
It was definitely challenging, but the process is not over yet. We are faced with next tasks, particularly in realising the concept. And I do not mean it personally. It is challenging for the armed forces high command, and indeed for the whole General Staff. Every soldier and airman wants to be in action and work with some equipment. But the General Staff is the heart of the military and paperwork prevails here. But those are quite fundamental assignments we have to work through. Using this occasion, I would like to thank all the Czech Armed Forces service personnel involved in this effort. They are the force driving the military forward to new visions.

There was news recently that you were quite drowning in the paperwork, that it takes too much time...
But we have to count with that. There are no general officers on the globe running around with rifles in training areas. Our mission here is to work on operation or indeed strategic level and that is where we cannot do without administration and policy development work. All armed forces around the world have it that way.

There have been talks about building a new brigade in connection with the prepared increase of personnel strength. What should it look like, will it be light, heavy or special brigade?
I would not like to talk about a brigade; that is too early. I am pleased that the development of the defence strategy will involve an increase of the personnel strength of the armed forces, indeed of the MoD at large. As a matter of fact, we have the smallest military in NATO as compared to the number of economically active population at the moment. Only

Luxembourg is behind us. Our neighbours are also better off in that regard. It gives me a great pleasure that there are realistic and intensive considerations that the Czech Armed Forces must be larger in terms of strength. I will be happy if the security strategy mentions an increase by five thousand personnel. But the question is the composition of the five thousand personnel. We all have to calmly and without emotions go back to the year 2008 and 2009, when budgetary cuts took place and tables of establishment and units were cancelled and vacant positions were not filled. First of all, we will therefore return to normal organisational structures. The role of the Land Forces will definitely strengthen, that is for sure, but I would not like to say at this time how many battalions will be formed. It is critical not to omit the command structures, the air force and units outside the Czech Armed Forces. In the broader context, the Military Intelligence, Castle Guard and perhaps also the Military Police will need to be reinforced.

People say that basing of our units is not really ideal. Do you have a vision, where the country should be mostly strengthened in territorial terms?
Stationing should truly be even, across Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia as well. Today we are rather concentrated in the eastern part of the country. The military has completely abandoned some parts of northern and western Bohemia. But we will not do much about the basing. Many airfields and bases were unfortunately abandoned. In some cases, those processes were too fast, under pressure and not fully linked with territorial defence and operation plans. During my term, the process was launched for the military to return into the Rakovník garrison. And I am pleased with that. We have progressively renovated the facilities there and I am confident it will be a home station for a battalion type of unit in the years ahead. There is also the Květná ammunition depot, which the armed forces clearly needs for ammunition resupply. Once the materiel presently stored there in connection with explosions in Vrbětice is removed, the armed forces will make use of the depot. In addition, we have returned into two smaller installations in Moravia.

Shortly after you assumed the post, you expressed your conviction that we will manage to recruit five thousand personnel for the active reserve component by 2025. Are you still so optimistic?
I am still convinced about that. Including in relation with the amendment of defence legislation, we moved toward that target by about two hundred reservists. At present we have almost fifteen hundred members in the active reserve. There is another run of training for recruits currently underway in Vyškov. I trust that in the future we will not count just individuals and that we will progressively manage to reach that number. The plan is very realistic and I appreciate the interest of the public.

An increased focus on active reserve represented one of your visions right after you assumed office. Why active reserve, why does it have such a high priority? Do you see it as the most appropriate option to build up the armed forces in the contingency of crisis?
I would like to correct the perspective that came about as a result of an intensive media campaign associated with the changes in the active reserve and the effort to attract the public's attention. My goal is to achieve a balanced development of all of our armed forces. But let us get back to the active reserve. It is correct that the active reserve has been largely neglected in recent years and it is undoubtedly an armed forces' component that can provide a valuable assistance in emergencies. Subject to government authorisation, it can reinforce the standing forces. It can be deployed both in the home territory and newly in foreign countries. We are building two types of active reserve units. The first type of units are assigned to the Regional Military Headquarters and earmarked to provide assistance in crisis situations that may occur in their region. For instance, they may reinforce the Police of the Czech Republic and the Integrated Emergency System. On the other hand we have active reserve units formed with combat units. Their mission is to take over some assignments and ease up operational tempo for the professional forces, which is relatively high today. So, I believe there is a great importance in strengthening the reserve component. We now have fifteen hundred active reservists, and when we will manage to complement additional three hundred this year, we would be close to two thousand. That is definitely not an insignificant number.

Despite certain adjustments in the requirements for medical and physical condition of the reservists, the fallout rate is said to be three out of four. The biggest problem for them are psychological tests. Are there any changes planned as well?
The new medical regulation has been in effect since November last year, so it is premature to judge the effect it will make. But we do not want to alleviate the requirements for mental fitness of applicants. Our demands are justified there. The new medical regulation is designed to respond to the current health status of the population and address matters we were unable to diagnose some years ago. We do not want to close the door particularly for high demand specialists. We have already identified individual posts in the armed forces structure that would potentially do with a lower medical classification. I guess everybody would agree that IT experts mostly serving in office environment could have certain medical alleviations. Contrarily, airborne soldiers will have to stay in one hundred percent condition.



If I understand it right, the scope of medical problems recruits display is also determined by the fact that medicine has made progress and is able to diagnose a much broader spectrum of possible medical shortcomings...
Absolutely. I can see myself how I was examined when I joined the military several decades ago and how medical diagnostics moved forward in the meantime. Thanks to it, doctors are able to go into much greater detail and provide better treatment for many diseases.

There are problems with the manning level of the active reserve units that are newly built at the existing regular units. While the interest is relatively high in some regions, the necessary personnel strength has not been reached elsewhere. Have you not considered to address the issue with a targeted local campaign?
The situation is not new and we have monitored it for some time on sustained

basis. We seek to create the conditions for the interest to be vectored. But there will always more and less attractive units. Our task is to explain to the applicants why service with the other units is also needed and show its enticing aspects.

We have the same issue with the professional force. In general, the manning levels are at 80%. But some units have not reached that level yet. The most pressing priorities are three: artillery regiment in Jince, air defence missile regiment in Strakonice and the building of a new logistic support battalion in Lipník nad Bečvou. Those are not bases in the middle of nowhere. Strakonice is a district town, Jince community is close to Příbram and also to Prague. Lipník is a part of the Olomouc wider city area. There are certainly options to increase manning levels in those and make them more attractive. We intend to create extra social support, such as sports fields and additional facilities for soldiers to feel truly well.

Is it possible in those cases to differentiate in recruitment bonuses, or possibly organise bigger campaigns?

Recruitment allowances are differentiated based on professions, but money is not the only incentive. As you rightly said, it is also about intensifying the campaign. We need to communicate those interest areas as part of recruitment for the information to reach possible applicants.

Acquisition processes are not really simple under current legislation. Many acquisitions begin to fall behind schedule. Are you not afraid that the major economic growth will slack in the meantime and defence spending will again be reduced?

I am confident that defence appropriations will not decrease. In the context of current global security development, we need to do everything for them to grow. Both defence personnel and technology are hugely underfunded. We already discussed personnel management. The situation is similar in armaments. We still use old Soviet equipment in many instances, which we need to replace. We have howitzers or BMPs in the inventory, with which our military trained in 1980. Those are pieces of equipment more than 35 years old, which simply does not meet today's requirements.

But acquisition processes are always complex. When I assumed this post, I was aware that 2015 through 2017 would be complicated years with much tedious administration, but projects simply have to be worked out in full. Specifications must be produced for all equipment first, fine-tune individual requirements and realise individual connections. The weapon systems have to be able to communicate mutually, be linked with the reconnaissance, surveillance and force protection systems, logistic support has to run efficiently and so forth. All those pieces have to fit together. It is out of reality to think that we would acquire helicopters, artillery pieces or APCs in six months. First we need to define the requirement and do the deconfliction. Then we define with the MoD Armaments and Acquisition Division what the market has to offer and make final conclusions.

The acquisition process itself is done by the MoD Armaments and Acquisition Division and determines the tendering method. It is completely unrealistic to think we could skip this process and bring in a new piece of artillery, armoured personnel carrier or helicopter is completely unrealistic. Even if something like that would be possible, it would not help. Then we would probably realise it does not match our requirements. Follow-up solutions are always extremely complicated and expensive. Not to speak about the fact that a true progress associated with increased funding will only materialise in this year and in the following years. I do not think we should be reproached for not having realised any major acquisitions last year. We accomplished many acquisitions we prepared and had funding for.

The role of the armed forces from the perspective of acquisition processes is to define the requirements, it is in good shape there in your opinion, it runs operatively and relatively fast ...

It seems to me occasionally as if we would be dragged by the media on a horse race. But that is not the case and everything takes time. If we speak about a howitzer, it is not a weapon just for Jince. It will serve the whole armed forces. It has to meet a range of additional capabilities and parameters, because it can be assigned into a NATO task force. It must have the capability of integration into command, control and fire coordination systems and be equipped with relevant communications. It must be transportable, have relevant protection and so forth. So we cannot buy a gun



factsheet

Josef Bečvář was born in Pilsen, Czech Republic, on 11 August 1958. After finishing Military Grammar School in Moravská Třebová he completed studies in artillery program at the Army College in Vyškov. He started his career as missile corps platoon commander and continued as a commander of fire battery. At the turn of 1980/90s, he served as senior officer of artillery staff in tank division and then as senior officer of the Military Police Directorate.
In 1993, he completed the French Gendarmerie information course in Melun. After returning to the Czech Republic, he became the deputy commander of the Military Police Command in Prague. From 1997 through 2004 he served as the Chief of Military Police. At that time, he also expanded his academic background with studies at the Joint Service Defence College in Paris. In 2004-2007, he was the Czech defence attaché in France. From April 2008, he served as the Deputy Chief of General Staff – Chief of Staff. In 2011, he again returned to Paris to serve for three years at the Czech Republic's defence attaché in France. At the beginning of August 2014, he became the First Deputy Chief of General Staff. In spring 2015, he assumed office as the Chief of General Staff.



and then figure out how to transport and use it. That is why the specifications are so demanding.

Because they relate with many other factors ...
Exactly. And this way we could speak about the helicopter and other major projects.

Soldiers of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade complain about having the same remuneration as members of non-combat units. Are there any considerations of an extra allowance for serving in such front line units?
Every military professional is presently remunerated in a transparent manner. Everything is clearly set and provable. A variety of allowances, many of them quite questionable, were cancelled. I cannot imagine how we would today discriminate combat and non-combat units. Combat units never deploy on their own. We have to complement with support and support service units, which also become combat units in that instant. So, they have to have the same training standards and be ready regardless of whether those will be comms guys, medics, logistics or Military Police. That is why we do not consider any differentiation at the moment. In addition, every soldier and airman has the possibility to be remunerated based on their annual appraisal or with an extraordinary disciplinary bonus. We naturally understand some units perform highly challenging and tasks, but we do not want to seek division into "combat" and "non-combat" units for the time being.

NATO adopted the cyber space as the fifth operational domain. Is there any realistic vision what a conflict in cyber space would look like?
First, this remit, according to the prepared legislation currently deliberated in the Chamber of Deputies, will fall into the basket of the Military Intelligence.

So it will not affect you ...
No, contrarily, it does relate to us. The cyber domain does not differ from other domains in principle. We expect the command and control system to be reorganised in 2018 and 2019 and it must be absolutely clear how this domain will be reflected in the Czech Armed Forces structures.

Those are processes, command posts and technology support going top-down and bottom-up between strategic and tactical level. Presently we only have the CIRC centre in Brno. Its mission is to identify security threats and incidents, their monitoring and analysis. The CIRC is in fact a watchdog of our communication channels. But that is only the passive part. The Armed Forces has to protect its communication and data systems comprehensively. That applies both in peacetime and on foreign deployments. Today we have task forces built on the basis of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade and the 7th Mechanised Brigade. Those forces also have to have incorporated components that will be active on realisation of cyber security.
We want to set the cyber domain components with individual command and control echelons and build real capabilities on them within five years.

Chiefly defensive missions are discussed in relation with cyber, but are offensive missions also on the table?
You would surely agree that it is good to start with the defensive part. The other question is how we get to offensive activities – the kinetic part of defence. We will reach that point at some time, but it will be matter of the next stage already.

You will reach the retirement age in this year.
Let us rather put it that my service contract ends this year, because I surely do not feel like retiring.

All right, your service contract ends this year; the minister granted you an exception and extended the contract by one year. Will you adjust your plans accordingly? What would you still like to accomplish as the Chief of General Staff?
I never thought whether I would leave or not. I always sought to work at full throttle. The military will be my highest priority till the very last day. I do not admit the idea that I would leave something out or that I would give in because I am here the last year. It is indeed impossible after so many years I have been in the military.

Efforts will slowly start to select your successor. Do you have any personal preference, someone you would recommend? Will you be involved in that process?
The acting Chief of General Staff is always involved in that process, but first things first. Moreover, the MoD proposal has to be endorsed by the Government and the President naturally has the final say. It is premature to give any more comments on that.

Is there any message you would like to convey to our soldiers and airmen?
I would like to thank them all, no matter whether they serve in the Czech Republic or on foreign operations. I was in Afghanistan and Iraq last year, and in Mali and on the Sinai before that. I visited practically all missions. Every time I return, I have a good feeling of a job well done. I thank them all for what they are doing for the Czech Republic. Not for the armed forces, I consistently distinguish that, because the armed forces is just a form of service to our homeland.

by Vladimír Marek,
photos by Vladimír Marek and Michal Voska

ACR in 2016

CZECH SERVICE PERSONNEL IN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY STRUCTURES

In 2016, a total of 213 Czech Armed Forces service personnel were assigned and posted in NATO and EU international military staffs, NATO and EU agencies and national representations in international military staffs in the locations in fifteen NATO nations and in Ukraine.

Czech Armed Forces General Petr Pavel has served his second year as the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. Rotation positions of Deputy Chief of Staff Joint Force Command (JFC) in Brunssum, the Netherlands, and the Chief of Staff of the Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC) Bydgoszcz, Poland, were newly filled in August 2016. The Czech Republic also filled the civilian position of the Dean of NATO Defense College (NADEFCOL) Rome, Italy.

Another involvement was realised in the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU), specifically in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Permanent missions and workplaces in foreign countries	Personnel
Permanent mission in Mons: Belgium, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Greece, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom	146
Permanent mission in Brussels: Belgium	60
Permanent mission in Norfolk: USA	7
Total	**213**



ENGAGEMENT IN READINESS FORCES, INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND OBSERVER MISSIONS IN 2016

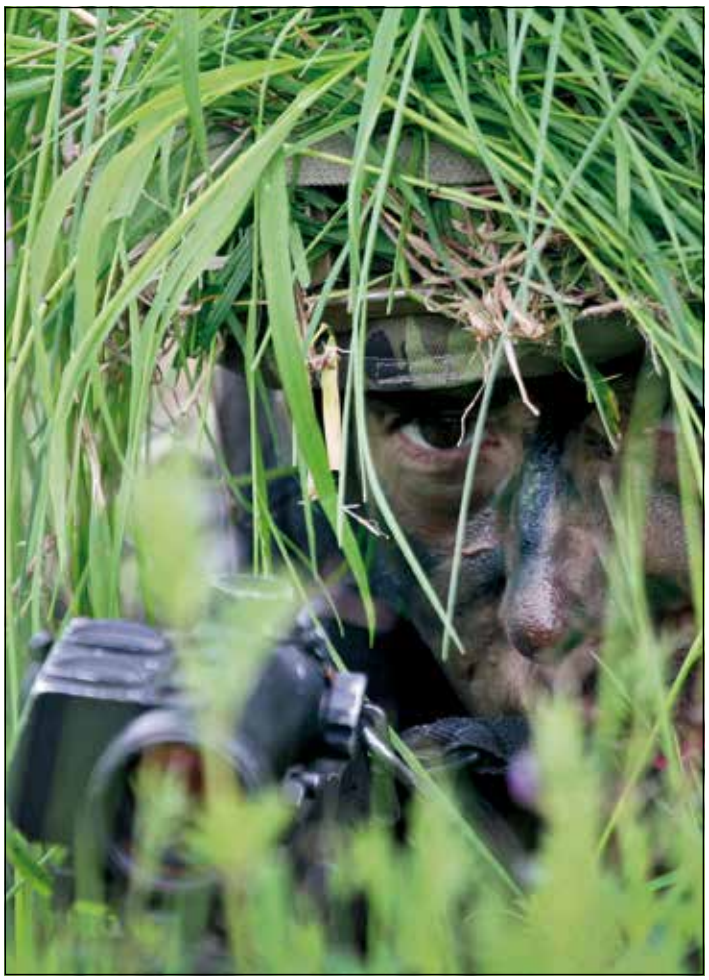
NATO enhanced Response Force (eNRF)

For eNRF 2016, the Czech Armed Forces assigned 816 personnel from 1 January through 31 December 2016. They formed an SOF task force (100 personnel), Special Operations Air Task Unit (100 personnel), airborne company (220 personnel), CBRN company (240 personnel), HUMINT team (6 personnel) and an engineer company (130 personnel). The forces were augmented with logistic support.

EU Battle Group

In support of V4 EUBG, the MoD assigned forces and assets totalling 850 personnel from 1 January through 30 June 2016. The Czech Republic assumed the lead nation role in the domain of medical and logistic support. Further, the Czech Armed Forces assigned a helicopter unit with four Mi-171Sh helicopters, C-295M CASA transport aircraft, EOD specialist team and the National Support Element (NSE). Over sixty Czech military professionals stood ready to serve in the Operation Headquarters in Krakow, Poland, and the Force Headquarters.

For the DEU EUBG, the MoD assigned forces and assets comprising 250 personnel from 1 July through 31 December 2016. That primarily involved an infantry force protection company, CIMIC/PSYOPS team, CBRN defence platoon, EOD team, MP team, additional specialists and the National Support Team (NSE).



FOREIGN OPERATIONS

In 2016, the MoD joined 12 foreign operations in the territory of Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iceland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, United Kingdom, Italy, Mali, Egypt, Iraq and the Golan Heights. In total, more than 860 service personnel were deployed for those operations.

Operation Joint Enterprise (KFOR), Kosovo

The Czech contribution comprised 13 Czech Armed Forces personnel including 3 members of the Deployable Communication Module (DCM), who served tours at HQ KFOR in the Camp Film City in Pristina.

Resolute Support Mission, Afghanistan

The Czech Republic was involved in the Resolute Support mission in the territory of Afghanistan in 2016 in the area of responsibility of two regional Train, Advise and Assist Commands: TAAC-Capital (TAAC-C) and TAAC-East (TAAC-E).

TAAC-C – Kabul: the forces listed below operated at Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA):

- Czech Armed Forces HQ TF RSM comprising 35 personnel charged with the provision of comprehensive support for all Czech units in Afghanistan;
- Air Advisory Team (AAT) of 40 personnel with the mission to support training of flight and ground personnel of Afghan Air Force on Mi-35 and Mi-17 helicopters;
- Field Surgical Team (FST) comprising 15 personnel as part of U.S. medical facility;
- Representations in HQ RSM, HKIA and BAF comprising 17 personnel;
- DCM (Deployable Communication Module) comprising 9 personnel.

TAAC-E: the Czech Armed Forces Bagram Airfield (BAF) Force Protection Company was deployed in Parwan province as part of TAAC-E. The FPC performed the assignment of providing security in their assigned area with total 169 personnel.

Further, a 20-strong detachment of the 601st Special Forces Group was stationed in Kabul with the mission to provide security to personnel and property of the Czech Embassy in Kabul including the Czech Ambassador's residence.

ASICIPPN, Iceland

The Czech Republic was involved in the provision of air policing coverage to Iceland by deploying four JAS-39 Gripen aircraft (plus one backup fighter) and a total of 66 personnel. Including the stand-up and stand-down phase, the Czech task force was deployed at Keflavik airbase from September 25 through November 7, 2016. The operational assignment was performed from October 5-31, 2016.

Operation EU ALTHEA (EUFOR), Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Czech Republic participated with 2 officers who performed tasks associated with training the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina at operation headquarters at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo.

Operation EU NAVFOR ATALANTA, United Kingdom

The Czech Republic engaged in the operation with 2 officers and one senior non-commissioned officer who served at the Operation Headquarters (OHQ) in Northwood, UK.

Operation EUNAVFOR MED, Italy

The Czech Republic was involved in the operation with 2 officers posted in the Operation Headquarters (OHQ) in Rome, and 1 officer at the Force Headquarters (FHQ) located on an Italian Navy aircraft carrier.

EUTM-M, Mali

The Czech Republic was involved with a Czech Armed Forces EUTM Mali Task Force comprising 41 personnel. Three senior NCOs were assigned to Operation Headquarters in Bamako and 36 persons were assigned to provide protection to the Headquarters EUTM-M in Bamako and convoy security. Four instructors provide assistance on training Malian Armed Forces in the frame of a German Infantry Training Company in the Koulikoro and Sikasso training centres.

Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), Arab Republic of Egypt, Sinai

The Czech Republic was involved in MFO with 3 officers posted at HQ MFO and an air unit with C-295 CASA aircraft comprising 15 personnel. The air unit provided transport of persons and materiel among MFO camps, Cairo and Tel Aviv, transport of governmental and liaison representatives of the parties to the peace treaty, and partially also the Search and Rescue (SAR) and air MEDEVAC. In addition, they performed verification and observer flights.

UNDOF, Golan Heights

The Czech Republic was involved in the mission with 3 officers assigned to the operation headquarters at Camp Ziouani.

MINUSMA, Mali

The Czech Republic engaged in the mission with 1 officer posted at the headquarters in Bamako and by deploying a special operations forces unit comprising 25 personnel that operated from a camp in the Gao region in the north of the country.

Air Advisory Team (AAT), Iraq

At the end of June 2016, Air Advisory Team comprising 35 personnel deployed in the territory of the Republic of Iraq with the mission to provide training and mentoring to the Iraqi Air Force flight and ground personnel on L-159 aircraft. The AAT is stationed at Balad Air Force Base.

Field Surgical Team (FST), Iraq

On 5 December 2016, the field surgical team comprising 17 personnel deployed in the territory of the Republic of Iraq to operate in the structure of a U.S. ROLE 2 field medical facility with the mission to provide specialised surgical care, perform specialist activities in the domain of resuscitative surgery, anaesthesiology, peri-op care and medical evacuation.

OBSERVER MISSIONS

In 2016 nine Czech Armed Forces military observers served tours in four UN peace missions.
MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of Congo) – 3 personnel
UNMIK (Kosovo) – 2 personnel
UNAMA (Afghanistan) – 1 personnel
MINUSCA (Republic of Central Africa) – 3 personnel



TRAINING FOCUS AND PRIORITIES IN 2016

The training of Czech Armed Forces focused on meeting the Czech Republic's membership commitments to NATO and EU, commitments in the domain of regional defence cooperation and last but not least on maintaining and developing the existing capabilities of individual components for the spectrum of operations in both symmetric and asymmetric environments. Exercise Hradba 2016 was organised as the largest exercise ever to train the active reserve component.

An integral part of the Czech Armed Forces training were 145 exercises with international partners, of which 94 took place outside the Czech Republic and 51 in the home territory. Those exercises were one of the key tools for the achievement of the necessary readiness of MoD forces and assets for the defence of the Czech Republic and Allies and an essential component of preparation of assigned forces for operations and for NATO, EU and UN standby readiness forces. Exercises with foreign partners also help increase force interoperability, practically verify the achieved level of integration and also offer a benchmark for effectiveness of Czech Armed Forces training and capability development.

MAJOR EXERCISES WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS IN THE HOME TERRITORY

CJ CBRN Defence TF Exercise

Conducted on May 23 – June 9, 2016, this was a certification exercise of the Headquarters of the CBRN multinational battalion with the Czech Republic as the lead nation. The battalion was assigned to the NATO Response Force in 2017. The exercise also trained 40 foreign members of the battalion.

SABER STRIKE

Held on May 27–30, 2016, the exercise was designed to increase the capability of individual Czech Armed Forces and Military Police components in planning and supporting transiting convoys of Allied forces (US ARMY 2nd Cavalry Regiment) via the territory of the Czech Republic, practice the capability of the provision of logistic support to Allied forces and perform a joint training and experience sharing between U.S. Army and the Czech Land Forces. The U.S. forces transited the Czech territory to take part in NATO exercise SABER STRIKE 2016 in the Baltics. The efforts to support the movement involved 800 Czech Armed Forces servicemembers.

AMPLE STRIKE 2016

The exercise was organised on August 30 – September 20, 2016, to integrate forward air controllers with tactical fixed and rotary wing aircrews in performance of close air support. The exercise saw the participation of 1,022 Czech Armed Forces service personnel and 292 foreign armed forces personnel.

CLEAN CARE 2016

Held on September 16-23, 2016, the exercise objective was to perform joint training for CBRN defence forces and medical units on consequence management following the use of weapons of mass destruction. The exercise trained 77 Czech Armed Forces servicemembers and 53 foreign trainees.







MAJOR EXERCISES WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS OUTSIDE THE HOME TERRITORY

EUROPEAN SPIRIT

Taking place on April 18–29, 2016, this was a certification exercise of a European Union Battle Group with standby in the second semester of 2016. It was held in the territory of Germany, which was the lead nation for the EUBG at the same time. Assigned components of the Czech Land Forces, Military Medical Agency and the Military Police comprising 154 personnel took part in the exercise.

BALTIC EYE

On May 9-16, 2016, and on July 11-18, 2016, this exercise trained pilots for NATO Air Policing and harmonised the Czech Air Force and Lithuanian Air Force operations on the provision of defence to an airbase and assigned airspace against the opponent's air assault assets. Organised in Lithuanian airspace, the exercise saw the participation of 60 service personnel of the 21st Tactical Air Force Base with four L-159 ALCA aircraft.

KHAAN QUEST

Conducted on May 15 – June 6, 2016, the exercise in the territory of Mongolia focused on training commanding officers and specialists of reconnaissance units in particular for operational deployments in difficult climatic conditions. The exercise was a part of predeployment training the Czech Armed Forces service personnel underwent for operations in EUTM Mali. Fifty service personnel of the 53rd Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Battalion and the 7th Mechanised Brigade were assigned to that training event.

MOUNTAIN FLIGHT 2016

Held from May 25 through June 10, 2016, in France, the exercise was designed to train helicrews in flying in mountain terrain including formation flights and practising operation and tactical procedures for foreign deployments. Missions were flown with three Mi-171Sh, an Mi-17 helicopter and two Mi-24/35 rotary wing aircraft of the 22nd Helicopter Air Force Base and 24th Transport Air Force Base with a total of 61 aircrews and personnel.

TOBRUQ LEGACY 2016

The TOLY16 joint tactical exercise trained ground based air defence units from Lithuania, Slovenia, Latvia, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and the United States took place in the territory of Slovakia from September 17 through October 1, 2016. A Czech Air Force task force comprising 180 personnel represented the Czech Republic. Service personnel of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment formed the core of the task force. The exercise objective was to increase interoperability of NATO GBAD forces.

SLOVAK SHIELD 2016

Organised on September 25 – October 16, 2016, this was an annual military training exercise for Visegrad Four countries organised pursuant to the Joint V4 training strategy. U.S. and German forces also joined the exercise. In the years ahead, the exercise will be hosted by V4 countries on rotational basis. The Czech Republic will organise the annual V4 exercise in 2019. In 2016, the Czech Armed Forces contributed into the exercise a 130-strong unit from the order of battle of the 7th Mechanised Brigade.

TOXIC LEAK I–V

An exercise series held in the Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence training and test centre in Zemianské Kostolany, Slovakia, to hone the skills of CBRN defence specialists in the presence of live chemical warfare agents, it took five times seven days and saw the participation of 75 Czech Armed Forces service personnel.

MODERNISATION

Land Forces – the 2025 Land Forces Development Concept was developed on the basis of the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept. It defines basic requirements for combat forces, combat support and combat support service forces in 2020 and 2025 and lays down individual steps leading to the achievement of the planned capabilities.

Mechanised units – efforts have continued to acquire a new tracked AFV platform and introduce it to the inventory of the 7th Mechanised Brigade. Steps have been taken as part of acquisition project to acquire 62 units of wheeled armoured fighting vehicles in the command and control, and communication variants on the Pandur and Tatra platforms. The MBK modular combat systems and C4ISTAR systems were introduced to the inventory and the process of their introduction in the Czech Armed Forces units continues. A new generation of CZ BREN assault rifle with 11" and 12" barrel was acquired in the quantity of 2,600 pieces and additional advanced handheld weapons. The process of replacement of individual ballistic protection systems has been prepared for realisation.

Artillery – efforts continued on the 152mm Model 77 DANA self-propelled howitzer modernisation project and acquisition of new 155 mm guns. The MKPP replacement project was submitted for launching a public tender and realisation. Research and development projects continue according to the plan.





Engineer service – as part of modernising the capabilities of improvised explosive devices and materials identification and disposal, 100 units of Miniature Mine Detectors (MIMID) were acquired for EOD and combat engineer units.

CBRN Defence – for detection, identification and monitoring capabilities, the AL-3 analytical lab was acquired (a U.S. FMF project) plus specific additional special equipment and instruments. Efforts have continued to realise the project of modernising the equipment used by radiological and chemical reconnaissance units to replace the obsolete SICRA vehicles with the S-LOV-CBRN and LOV-CBRN II vehicle system.

Electronic warfare and reconnaissance – several acquisition and development projects have been successfully completed such as the mobile electronic warfare system (MKEB II), modernisation of the RUP – FM – M electronic warfare system to deliver direct electronic support and protection of the Czech Armed Forces as part of task forces in the area of deployment.

In the reconnaissance domain, the project of C4ISTAR architecture systems acquisition continued to achieve ISR capabilities, the PS RECCE portable sets were procured for reconnaissance teams of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion. The ISWM research project was successfully completed as one of the key software integration solutions for the integration of ISR sensors with Czech Armed Forces manoeuvre units.

Tactical air units – preparations have been successfully underway for the JAS-39 Gripen aircraft to obtain an air-to-ground capability. The United States Government also approved an export of the LINK-16 technology and the datalink will be integrated into all Gripen aircraft in the Czech Republic. A contract was signed for the conversion of three single-seat L-159s to double-seat version and military tests for the L-159 ALCA aircraft were successfully completed.

Ground Based Air Defence – by making a prototype in modular set-up completed the defence research project of developing the prototype interface for expanding interoperability capabilities with elements of the ground based air defence forces automated command and fire control system. Its goal is to ensure the flow of directives, orders, commands, reports, messages and air picture for the performance of NATO missions outside the territory of the Czech Republic.

Signal Corps – a contract was signed for the delivery of 4 units of airfield surveillance radars with deliveries scheduled to start in the first half of 2017. The contractor was selected for 8 units of the 3D Mobile Air Defence Radar (MADR) with the contract signature scheduled in the first half of 2017. Efforts are underway for infrastructure renovation and preparations at the radar sites.



REORGANISATION

The year 2016 again saw the Czech Armed Forces perform the missions according to the directive authorised by the Government of the Czech Republic:

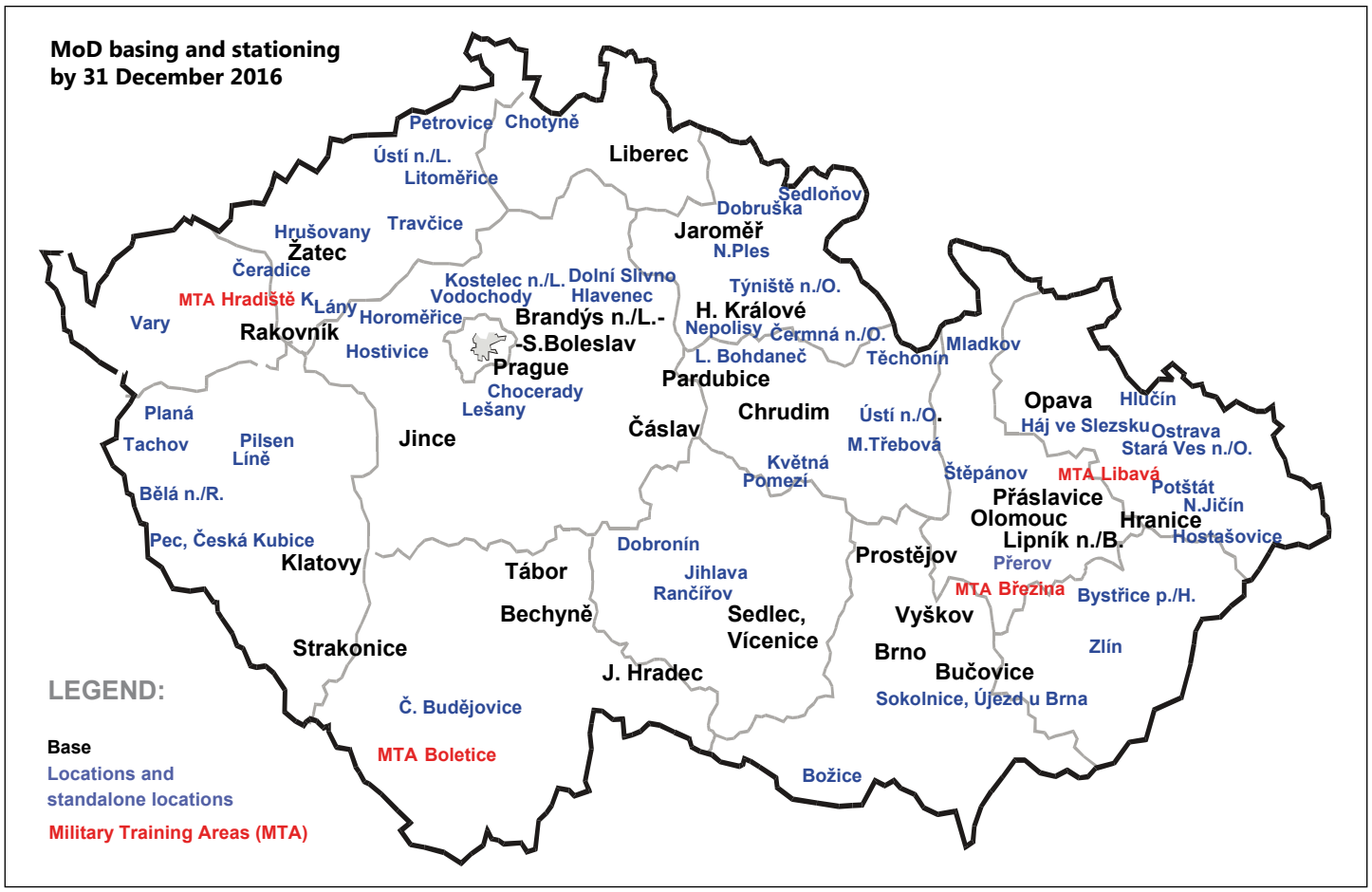
The Czech Armed Forces Development Concept, Czech Armed Forces structure and personnel strength of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, which set forth the scope and manner of achieving capabilities, organisational structure of the armed forces and the minimum total number of military professionals to meet the current and future assignments of the military, and realised the tasks for the creation of active reserve component based on amended defence legislation. At the conclusion of 2016, components of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces underwent organisational redesign based on the Czech Government Resolution No. 859 on systemisation of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces.

By 1 July 2016

- Based on the amendment to the Act No. 585/2004 Coll., on the Liability to Conscription and its Ensuring (the Defence Act), amendment to the Act No. 219/1999 Coll., on the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, and the Act No. 45/2016 Coll., on the Service of Reserve Soldiers, measures were realised to the effect of establishing active reserve components in the organisational structures of the Regional Military Headquarters (service authorities according to the Act No. 234/2014 Coll., on Civil Service).
- In connection with the policy documents endorsed by the Government of the Czech Republic – the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept and the Czech Armed Forces structure and personnel strength of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic – the following components were reorganised: the Personnel Agency, Garrison Command Prague, Czech Armed Forces Central Band, Military Band Olomouc, Logistics Agency, CIS Agency and Military Medical Agency, Military Geographical and Hydro-meteorological Agency, 601st Special Forces Group, Land Forces Command, HQ 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade, HQ 7th Mechanised Brigade, 13th Artillery Regiment, 14th Logistic Support Regiment, 15th Engineer Regiment, 31st Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Regiment, 53rd Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Regiment, 103rd CIMIC/PSYOPS Centre, 26th Command, Control and Surveillance Regiment.
- The Special Forces Support Centre was formed with the primary mission to provide close combat support as part of Special Operations Task Forces and support information and psychological operations.

By 3 July 2016

- Based on the Act No. 585/2004 Coll., on Liability to Conscription and its Ensuring (the Defence Act), amendment to the Act No. 219/1999 Coll., on the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, and the Act No. 45/2016 Coll., on the Service of Reserve Soldiers, active reserve components were established in organisational structures of the Garrison Command Prague, CIS Agency and Military Medical Agency, 601st Special Forces Group and Special Forces Support Centre, MP Command Olomouc, organisational components of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade and the 7th Mechanised Brigade, 13th Artillery Regiment, 14th Logistic Support Regiment, 15th Engineer Regiment, 31st Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Regiment, 53rd Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Regiment, 21st Tactical Air Force Base, 22nd Helicopter Air Force Base, 24th Transport Air Force Base, 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment, 26th Command, Control and Surveillance Regiment, Pardubice Airfield Administration and the Training Command – Military Academy.



By 1 January 2017

- By the virtue of its Resolution No. 859 dated 21 September 2016, the Government endorsed the post systemisation of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces in accordance with the Section § 7 Article 5 of the Act No. 219/1999 Coll., on the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, as subsequently amended.
- By the virtue of Resolution No. 829 dated 21 September 2016 the Government of the Czech Republic endorsed the proposed systemisation of service and working positions of service authorities in the Ministry of Defence, based on which reorganisation was performed of the Regional Military Headquarters.







The Regional Military Command in Ostrava tested the skills of reservists to face a bad weather

The Giant Mountains 2017



The move in difficult mountain conditions under a tactical theme, improvised roping, transporting an injured soldier, or to bed down in a burrow. All this had to be managed by the Ostrava reservists during this year's survival exercise.

"This winter in the Giant Mountains prepared for reservists new experiences, superior snow conditions and harsh temperatures, which is ideal for this type of training. At the Regional Military Headquarters Ostrava, winter exercises of a similar nature are done by the reservists every year. For such training, there is an ideal environment in the Jeseníky mountain range, or the Giant Mountains, offering quality facilities and the attractiveness of training in form of harsh climatic conditions. That's why we return in those locations cyclically. This type of training is very demanding on the mental and physical condition, and even if this year's survival exercise was attended also by new trainees, all training was mastered successfully, mainly because the unit works as a team. Above all, I put emphasis on the autonomy of completing the task. The company has an experienced commander and it is only up to them how they allocate capacities, how they will plan a route, arrange necessary equipment and create the conditions for the overnight stay," said Colonel Jaroslav Hrabec, who stood at the birth of a "survival exercise" for the Ostrava reserve.

For mistakes must be paid

In these conditions, even a small error in route planning or during the orientation on map would cost a lot of strength that may be lacking in performing other tasks, testified one of the leaders, whose team went astray from the planned route and every extra metre cost an extra energy, but unfortunately the reservists arrived at the designated place after dark, which made building burrows to stay overnight much more difficult. Not only that it is a special training in which Ostrava reservists prepare themselves for the implementation of tasks in crisis situations, in harsh conditions, but the experience can be also used in everyday life to save the others. The ability to fasten basic knots, to pull out a person from a hardly accessible terrain, respond correctly to a falling avalanche, to improve topographic orientation in the field and provide first aid, all this can be used practically any time.

Waiting for rescue

To lie in an excavated burrow, to be covered by mass of snow, where you were not able to move, with darkness around, to feel the lack of oxygen in air pocket and then a long wait till you would be extricated from the avalanche, that was the way of activity, in quotation marks, in the avalanche simulation, when the soldiers knew that help would come in a moment. Soldiers also gained theoretical experience what it was like in a real avalanche, when they lost self-control, when the compressed snow made impossible to create a pocket, every minute is like an hour, not to mention the feeling that the rescue had to come in a few minutes, otherwise you would suffocate to death or hypothermia would occur. "If you overcome steep slopes, you have to be informed about the state of the weather, structure of the snow and you must have an avalanche probe and avalanche shovel with you," sounded from the lips of experienced instructors.

Valuable experiences

Instructors also presented soldiers valuable experiences needed for rescuing a wounded person. During the following task, when the reservists had to rappel down from a steep slope to rescue their wounded team-mate, they had already known the concept of Dülfet's seat: to fold and tie on the transport stretcher UT 2000, and then to create a simple pulley by means of ropes, snap-hooks and a flat loop. What is most important and what instructors constantly reminded was the necessity of a constant communication and the fact that the commander must have everything organized well ahead.

Text and photos by
Warrant Officer Martin Ogořálek, Michal Voska

All this year, the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade will be retrained for a new type of load-bearing system, NSV-12

Paras with new types of bags



One of the main tasks of paratroopers is among others also a tactical airborne drop. Earlier this February, for the first time in history, the paratroopers of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade began to retrain for new types of parachutist kit bags (NSV-12). The retraining will take place throughout this year, till all paratroopers of the brigade will have completed it. They will fly in different types of aircraft, they won't miss even an airdrop at night.

Late last year, paratroopers got new parachutist kit bags, which are used to transport the personal materiel of paratroopers. At present, soldiers of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade are familiarized and retrained to be able to parachute with them. These airborne containers have a minimum content of twenty kilograms, but they can be, depending on the type of operation, filled up to a maximum of sixty kilograms.

Paratroopers must go through an intensive two-day schooling, where they will learn how to pack a parachutist kit bag, what this bag should contain, how to fix a respective weapon and they are also familiarized with the technique of a jump with a kit bag. "If the paratrooper jumps without a load, it is against the jumps with parachutist kit bags diametrical difference that needs to be properly trained," Captain Milan Němec informs.



Drilling for greater safety

"These parachutist kit bags are characterized by the fact that they are no longer positioned behind a paratrooper, but in front of him, which permits much easier handling the bag, while falling to the ground," Captain Němec states and adds that another novelty there are even new types of reserve parachutes which have not a release device from the side, but from the top, which allows immediate opening the reserve parachute, in case of any difficulties.

The actual cargo bag is basically a pocket into which a paratrooper packs his gear and equipment needed to fulfil the task. He packs his belongings into a kit bag and at the end he adds a weapon, either long or short. Initial parachute jumps will be only with a short weapon, so that the paratroopers could learn how to manipulate with a kit bag. Gradually, they will learn even how to handle long weapons.

"This system is a bit complicated for paratroopers, with straps and rigging everywhere, everyone has to drill it in detail, so that everything could be done correctly," says Warrant Officer Jiří Kupčík, one of the drill instructors of parachute training. "Initially, for some of them, it takes the whole day, for some two hours, we must be constantly with them, fix them up, check each stage of the packaging, remove errors and explain them why things are done. Finally, they will learn all so perfectly that everything will be put together very quickly."

Kit bags dropping

After proper reinstruction, at first paratroopers will continue to practice on airborne training grounds, where they will be hanging in the "swings". Then they will practice throwing away a parachutist kit bag. The parachute jump from a specified type of airplane, with a parachute harness assembly and fastened kit bag, is carried by a paratrooper in an established drop altitude.

At the moment the kit bag is separated from a parachute harness assembly, anchor rope will be released gradually, the kit bag falls down first to paratrooper's ankles," Kupčík notes. "Then the bag will hang under a paratrooper and after its drop it will begin to release due to its weight, on the entire length of an anchor rope, it hits the ground first, only after that a paratrooper will land."

Thanks to a fixed rope, the kit bag can be quickly found even at night and transported materiel can be speedily transferred after the airdrop from the drop zone to a point, where it can be set up in a short time, because of anchor line system with adjustable buckles, allowing very quick unpacking. After that follows the performance of operational tasks."

Before jumping, paratroopers train each phase on the ground. For that purpose they use respective simulators. "Everyone here can try everything as a dry run," says





instructor, who carefully monitors every move of paratroopers and immediately after the jump he makes an assessment, eventually to eliminate possible errors.

The weapon immediately available

"The holsters for guns in new parachutist kit bags are designed so that a paratrooper could, if necessary, use his weapon immediately, without the need to unfasten the straps of a kit bag," Captain Němeček explains ready to use weapons system.

In any case, the magazine could be packed both with a short gun as well as a long weapon—a sniper rifle. "Then the rifle sticks out of this backpack almost forty centimetres," instructor Jiří Kupčík explains. "With long weapons the paratroopers will jump later, first they have to drill with those short that do not exceed bags and are mounted in a case inside."

New reserve parachutes

Reserve parachutes are for paratroopers also new. It was the using of a long weapon that could arise improper handling with a reserve parachute releaser, placed on the side.

"For the paratrooper with a wrapped long weapon, located on the side, it could be difficult to reach the release knob, supposing a failure might occur," says Warrant Officer Kupčík. "This new reserve parachute has the advantage that a paratrooper himself chooses which hand is used for the release. The releaser itself has a short cord, and thus it also prevents the possibility the cable be jammed. The cord was hard to pull out in old parachutes and therefore these new ones, in cases of emergency, will contribute a lot to greater security of our paratroopers."

Instructors in action

Before the paratroopers board a particular type of aircraft, they must prepare materiel and parachutes for the final inspection.

"This is again a moment when the instructors come to check the entire parachute set of each individual," Jiří Kupčík continues. "They check the main and reserve parachutes, the way everyone packed his backpack in harnesses system, if everything is fixed, whether the carbines are not twisted."

Then there is a further briefing for soldiers. Subsequently the soldiers put on their harness and equipment sets and instructors again check whether everything is all right. Again there is a briefing. Then the unit calculates how many flights will be done and at what height.

"The briefing lies in the fact that we reinstruct them again, how to fly, how to land, what they should do when collide in the air, when they land on the problematic terrain. They get necessary lessons about the rules what to do, if there any accident happens,



what are the procedures to call for help," the instructor enumerates rules.

And then comes boarding the aircraft, however, with full "fighting load". It is very easy to say, but paratroopers know what's going on. "The hardest thing is to proceed a few meters with full loads to the airplane and get on it," almost all paratroopers say with one voice. It is said, the heavier parachutist kit bag, the more secure is the jump by itself. Because of this heavy kit bag, we could simply lie on the air. "It is important to watch the kit bag, so that you do not land directly on it, because ankle injuries might occur. Next you wrap a parachute, take out a weapon from the bag, and finally you together with your kit bag will reach the designated spot."

"Forward!"

In the aircraft there are always two instructors—jumpmaster and assistant jumpmaster. "The jumpmaster is usually in the door, he is also responsible for airdrop point," explains the role of instructors on board of an aircraft Warrant Officer Jiří Kupčík. "He also determines where a paratrooper jumps; he must be in the door and calculates a landing point by the wind."

Then the jumpmaster checks all personnel, if they stand as they should. "That's why they are always two instructors on board; the second one always supervises all activities. They control whether the soldiers correctly anchored line cables and once they are above the point where they have to jump, every paratrooper separately is given the command, "FORWARD!". The rest depends only on a paratrooper," says Jiří Kupčík.

Text and photos by Jana Deckerová

The members of the 74th Light Motorized Battalion brought a lot of experience from a nearly three-month exercise "Training Brigade 2017" in Lithuania

Support for an Iron Wolf



Aggressor army occupied some of the Lithuanian villages. The Lithuanian armed forces began to prepare for pushing the enemy out from their territory. In this context, in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, we established the Company Task Force of the Army of the Czech Republic. For the needs of the "Training Brigade 2017" exercise in Lithuania, this task force was formed by members of the 74 Light Motorized Battalion of Bučovice, reinforced with specialists mainly from the logistics field. Their assignment was to assist in the liberation of these areas.

While on the horizon it sounded like gunfire at Verdun, Czech and Lithuanian units made contact with the boundary objects and gradually began to struggle into the village. Despite a strong opposition from the enemy, several Czech light armoured vehicles Iveco managed to get at the village square. Their crews immediately supported further infantry advance. While the Czech infantry attacked the building directly in front of them, Lithuania's progressed quickly out of the woods on the left wing.



Difference between the Profs and the Cons

At first glance, there was the obvious difference between professional soldiers and conscripts. At this stage of the struggle, for Lithuanians there was the most important to overcome quickly the space between forest and village. The lack of tactics was substituted by sharp and intense fire. Despite the risk that the ammunition would be exhausted soon, this kind of fury resembled a little storming the Winter Palace in Petersburg. In any case, their effort and great enthusiasm couldn't be denied. The Czech soldiers proceeded slowly, sheltering more, using the rough terrain, supporting one another by firing short bursts.

"To cooperate with Lithuanian conscripts was a new experience for us. We established a professional army more than twelve years ago, so our soldiers have not experienced something like this before. It was interesting. Those guys have a completely different motivation, they work differently. Just because of them, the Lithuanian army managed without any problem to fulfil the tables of organization and equipment. Mostly they are not the persons who were compulsorily drafted. The Lithuanian army prefers voluntary service. And therefore they have has set up a number of interesting incentives, told us about his freshly acquired experiences from cooperation with a Lithuanian unit, marked with the Iron Wolf, Captain Miroslav Maixner, commander of our Company Task Force.

Strengthening the defence goes to the finish

The Lithuanian army has gone through significant changes during the past quarter century. After instituting the independent Lithuania in 1991, the army was formed basically on green field sites. Significantly,

they were emigrants who served in the US Army and returned home that contributed a lot to its formation. The lack of sources in the forces was solved by the purchases of discarded Western materiel from second-hand. This materiel should replace that of the Soviet origin. The decisive factor in defence of the country became as fast as possible moving towards NATO. It was completed in 2004. Four years later, Lithuania introduced a fully professional army. It should have had about fifteen thousand members, including two and a half thousand civilian employees. This establishment, however, despite all the efforts, was never fulfilled. And so, after the events in Ukraine and the occupation of the Crimea by Russian military, Lithuanian political representation approved another major decision. In 2016, they renewed military service, lasting nine months. Therefore they managed to meet planned numerical strength without any problems. Moreover, they have a relatively large reserve force, consisting of about one hundred thousand reservists. Currently, the Lithuanian army completes intensively its weaponry. The most recent acquisitions include the purchase of sniper rifles SCAR-H PR from FH Herstal and 88 armoured vehicles Boxer from the German-Dutch producer. Vilnius is thus ranked among the countries that meet NATO's commitment to spend 2 percent of gross domestic product on the military. The Lithuanian defence doctrine predicts the defence of its own territory for 72 hours. Then, on the basis of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the country ought to be reinforced by its Allies. To promote the defence concept, in the near future, four Alliance battalions are going to be deployed in this region. One of these will be stationed directly in Lithuania. Even V4 states decided to contribute to strengthening this country's defence.

We have kept the word

Meanwhile the Czech and Lithuanian infantries cleaned one house after another from the opponent. Soldiers thoroughly checked whether the stricken adversary was actually definitely put out of the fight. But advancement to the centre of the village still claimed some casualties. First of all it was necessary to take care of wounded soldiers and provide them with first aid. As soon as basic life functions were stabilized, they ought to be transported to the field hospital, as quickly as possible. The Czech company there had armoured ambulance Iveco, capable of providing and transporting the wounded even under fire. From one of the occupied buildings four soldiers were approaching, with a wounded man on a stretcher. The actual loading took only a moment.



The "Training Brigade 2017" exercise in Lithuania, in which participated our soldiers, started at the beginning of January this year. Its plans, however, began to be thought over even several months earlier. "I'm very glad that the idea, which was born about a year ago during our presidency of the V4 countries, was successfully implemented. At that time, we had thought, we could contribute with similar activities, but the summit in Warsaw began, where an idea of the four battle groups was came into being. We said that this was nothing against anything, because these matters could run parallel. Then we divided the year 2017 into four quarters. The Czech Republic joined to the first," said in this regard Defence Minister Martin Stropnický. "I am pleased that we have kept their word and at the beginning of January we were here. For what I know, training activity is very intense. I think that for our soldiers, this is something entirely new. Many of them were in Afghanistan, Mali and other missions. This is entirely something else. And not only in terms of terrain or climate."

Shooting with the tactical task

Even the mere transportation of our soldiers and equipment to Lithuania represented considerable experience. Loading on the Bučovice station required one day. The train, consisting of 24 freight cars and 4 passenger cars, set out for journey from Bučovice on Sunday, January 8th. At the Lithuanian Sestokai train station; there were waiting for our soldiers the unloading of 38 pieces of military equipment and subsequently about 350 kilometres long movement on their own, to the Kairiai training area near Klaipeda, on the Baltic coast. Accompanied by the Lithuanian military police, the armoured vehicles managed to cover this distance in eight hours. They arrived to their destination on Jan. 11, after midnight, at 02:00 am. It was a great check-up, above all, of drivers.

Afterwards, in the training area, our soldiers practiced step by step the entire spectrum of operations. A large part of the training was focused on defence. To be most effective, it was associated with digging in units. Overall, our soldiers dug up to 1,500 foxholes and almost 1 km of connecting trenches. "Considerable space was devoted as well to shooting. We practiced it not only as individuals, but also as a squad and later also at the level of platoon. There we connected shooting and tactical preparation together. Soldiers fulfilled certain tactical tasks and were firing live ammunition. In terms of training, we were subjected to the Lithuanian battalion, but in terms of leadership, we were responsible to the 74th Light Motorized Battalion HQ. All reports and other important issues we dealt with the commander of the battalion Bučovice. On the contrary, all matters relating to training, such as defining training plan, we solved together with the Lithuanians. In this respect, for me the most important partner was the commander of the 3rd Coy Captain Justina Bolys, and battalion commander Major Jagminas Anpinis," explains Captain Maixner. "Especially for our young soldiers it was interesting there. They could practice the activity in difficult climatic conditions. We had a fairly large frosts coupled with high humidity. In addition, there was a strong wind from the sea. So the perceived temperature usually ranged from minus 10 to minus 15 degrees. In these conditions, we got a chance to train directly on the Baltic coast."



They will use it in a mission



Some of our units were asked to simulate the enemy. Once the task forces got into their territory, they were ordered to attack them from all directions. "The cooperation with the Lithuanians proceeded without problems. There were no big differences in individual drills. In addition, both they and we worked there as compact units, so potential differences did not pose any problems for us. The Lithuanian platoon consisted mostly of conscripts. Of course, they were at a lower level of training than our members who had served in the military for many years. They just learned everything. They were similar to recruits who regularly complement our unit," stressed platoon deputy commander Sergeant First Class Jan Malík. "The training area is technically similar to ours. There were firing ranges, multipurpose range complexes, and other training facilities. The advantage, of course, was the surroundings which was new for us."

Even the Chief of the General Staff of Armed Forces of the Czech Republic General Josef Bečvář expressed satisfaction with the activities of our company Task Force during the exercise in Lithuania "This is not just some kind of declaration of Alliance commitments. We trained here really intensely. What was practiced there, this unit will use in the next year, when it should be deployed in a foreign mission. All will surely pay in the coming months."

On March 20, after almost three months, we had to say goodbye. Both locals and soldiers were very friendly and helpful all the time. Civilians were waving every time, when our soldiers went out of a training area. They were apparently very happy that practiced in Lithuania. We have no choice but to believe that the next year our soldiers in connection with the deployment in Alliance Battle Groups will return not only to Lithuania but also in other Baltic countries.

Text and photos by Vladimír Marek





Certification exercise for the mission in Afghanistan tested the ability of soldiers

Shield

The scenario with many incidents and tense moments meant for soldiers demanding preparation of actual situations that they may meet during the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. The task of the 8th Guard Company, Bagram Air Field (8.SR BAF), is namely the protection of Bagram Base, but also an escort of VIP persons and their transport.

The certification exercise of the 8th Guard Company BAF (Bagram Air Field) in Operation Resolute Support tested the unit's ability to perform operational tasks in the area of deployment in Afghanistan, in particular to ensure the protection of Bagram Base. The managing staff consisted of members of the Training Command-Military Academy Vyškov, Support Battalion Vyškov, 103rd CIMIC/PSYOPS Centre Olomouc, 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion Prostějov, representatives of the 6th SR BAF (4th Rapid Deployment Brigade Žatec), nearly 30 members of the Active Reserve, and soldiers from Regional Military Headquarters (KVV) in Hradec Králové and Liberec respectively. Next to instructors from Vyškov, there is also the British Training Advisory Team which contributed significantly to the training, as a number of its mentors have extensive experience from the deployment in Afghanistan.

Actual themes

The theme of military exercises is always based on the current situation in the place of deployment and it is based on fresh experiences of the previous units. The basis is to prepare soldiers for all situations that may arise. Members of the 8th Guard Company were occupied with dozens of events, ranging from ordinary traffic accidents, incidents when the car hits an improvised explosive device, to patrols' zeroing from small-arms and attacks by suicide bombers. Part of the test was the ability of platoons to make contact with the local population in their own area of responsibility, to deal with the main representatives of the villages and also to accompany VIP persons, to which also contributed to the knowledge of the members of URNA (Rapid Response and Antiterrorist Unit of the Czech Republic Police) who also participated in the training. The preparation took almost seven months and was divided into several phases: from the recruitment of personnel, instructing individuals-specialists, weapons' crews, to the equally important logistics.

Knowledge of local customs

Second Lieutenant Jan Fus, who lead the certification, mentioned in particular the seamless coordination, but also benefits for soldiers in form of challenging scenarios. "Due to the coordination of the entire team, demanding preparation covering several months, cooperation across the military, it is possible to prepare the members of the Guard Company for all situations, including transporting wounded by MEDEVAC that was possible in cooperation with Náměšť Base to include in the scenarios," he said. Thus the soldiers practiced not only the move of the wounded, but also gained extensive knowledge of the local culture and environment. The temperature differences between day and night can be up to several tens of degrees, which together with ballistic protection and weapons, weighing tens of kilograms, is not easy to endure. For the soldiers it will be a difficult task. In addition to overcoming physical difficulties and adaptation to climate, they must know the local culture. A big role is played by tribal leaders, who are to a certain extent, especially in the eyes of local people, above the laws of Afghanistan. It is also important to know the local religion, as approximately 99 % of the population is officially Muslim.

factsheet

The 53rd Regiment of Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare consist of main organizational units, containing the Headquarters and the Staff of the regiment, Centre for Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), and various battalions. The organizational structure of the regiment is complemented by support elements (Logistics Company, Command Company, Regimental Aid Station and garrison support element). In Opava garrison, there are located the Command and the Staff of the 53rd Regiment, Headquarters of the 532nd Electronic Warfare Battalion, and some of its troops, individual companies. Other units of this Electronic Warfare Battalion are situated in Tábor garrison. Prostějov Garrison is home of 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion. Other components of the regiment are stationary reconnaissance posts—Božice, Velký Zvon, Kříženec, Tachov, Nakléřov and Osoblaha.

Text and photos by Michal Voska

Heroes of ordinary days

During emergency, the crew of the helicopter Mi-8 demonstrated decisiveness and courage and prevented potential injuries

There was no time for fear



That day of 14th December last year, there was over the Czech Republic dreary weather. Cloudy and overcast with showers or light rain. Temperatures were above zero. But this was not true for the crew of the helicopter Mi-8 that with its aircraft took off from Prostějov and headed towards Prague, Kbely Airport.

"We flew at a height of 3.000 feet. The territory, across which our flight route led, was afflicted by local frost. Before we could leave this area, there was most likely an icing at the entries to both engines. When we started to descend into warmer layers, the loosened ice extinguished suddenly both engines," describes the affair Captain Marek Bohuněk, captain of the helicopter.

Engines luckily started up

On board at that time there were thirteen people. The crew stayed cool. It is in these cases the most important. They immediately started procedures for emergency situations. "First of all, we had to stabilize the helicopter for autorotation. We tried to keep the revs and speed. The flight engineer immediately began launching first the right and then the left engine. It worked. Both motors successfully started," Captain Bohuněk recalled.

But before it, the flight attendants had to take care of the passengers. The advantage was that on board of a helicopter, there were almost exclusively people from the defence department. They were mostly members of Special Forces. And so with the transport by helicopter already they had a considerable experience. On the contrary, for one of the flight attendants it was almost an opening night. "It was my second training flight. With me, there was a workmate who taught me. That's why it was easier for me. I felt strong support from her," Sergeant First Class Martina Kulová recalls. "We've noticed, of course, that the motors failed. Subsequently there came an instruction from the crew that there would be an emergency landing. Fortunately, at that time all passengers were in their seats and fastened. So we gave them just the instructions to take a safety position for emergency landing. In such a case, passengers must be primarily fastened, next they lower the heads between their knees. Because we finally managed to start the engines, when the helicopter set down, the emergency landing did not take place, nor did an emergency evacuation. So for us, it was actually all over."

They practice this on a simulator

At the moment, when the combustion chamber goes out during the flight, according to the regulations you need, as quickly as possible, to start the process of emergency cranking up the engines. It will of course require a certain time. When there is no force that would propel the main rotor, the engine begins to slow down and consequently there would be a loss of speed of the main rotor. "It's the same as if the plane suddenly could lose its speed. The helicopter loses stability and decreases in high speed to the ground. In parallel with the attempts to stabilize the aircraft, it is necessary to report to the air traffic controller and set code 7700 on the transponder. That's what we did. Everything happened so fast that you have no time for any feelings. The whole thing took about one and a half minutes. For several years we have been practicing similar situations on a simulator. We have everything perfectly drilled. So if something like this really happens, you respond literally automatically. The fear comes later, when everything is already finished. It will return only after landing, even after a pause of two or three days," Captain Bohuněk explains. "That does not mean that a man is somehow restricted. Immediately, for the following day, we planned performing emergency procedures during the flight. This lesson was practiced, as if nothing had happened. Something like this is very important, a man thus prevents any fears of flying. The helicopter is a machine that has certain rules and regulations. There are natural laws that work, and our feelings have no effect on them."

This is confirmed by a novice on the board, Sergeant First Class Martina Kulová. "Even this experience did not deter me from further flying. You are after such an experience a little stressed, but you have to overcome it."



Merit badges

Immediately, after the incident occurred, the crew headed the helicopter by digital maps into an area where it would be possible to carry out the autorotation landing. It was a large field without obstacles, where they could touch down without problems. And there the helicopter really landed. "If it would be impossible to start the engines, we would have tried to continue gliding towards this very appropriate place, and there we would have made an autorotation landing," Marek Bohuněk explains. After landing, we checked all the systems. Approximately after two days, a helicopter without passengers flew back to the base at Kbely. The instruction in this case allows a technical flight. They usually pick up a really good crew, composed of people who are qualified for helicopter testing, and after an examination conducted by a technical team, the helicopter flies to the base. In this case it was above all a check-up of the engine, fuel analysis and other matters."

In this type of helicopter, the incident of such kind was second confirmed in the Czech Republic. In the categories of incident, serious incident and air accident, that was the middle level. They immediately declared a ban on the flying of the helicopters Mi-8. This is a standard procedure. When something like this ever happens, immediately appropriate measures are taken. Subsequently, the situation is analysed, which requires a certain time. The helicopters were therefore grounded roughly a month, till all tests had been finished. There was also the training of the crews how to fly in these conditions. At present, the helicopters are flying again.

The whole incident had also its ceremonial finale. In the mid-February, Defence Minister Martin Stropnický and Chief of the General Staff General Josef Bečvář awarded to the crew of the helicopter, consisting of Captains Marek Bohuňek and Mojmír Zachariáš, First Lieutenant Eduard Malina, Master Sergeant Renáta Sajfertová a Sergeant First Class Martina Kulová, for their courage, decisiveness in an emergency situation, for preventing from the injury to members of the Army of the Czech Republic, and averting the damage of considerable extent, the Czech Armed Forces Honorary Badges of Merit.

by Vladimír Marek,
photos by: author and Jan Kouba



The Army of the Czech Republic belongs with 13% share of women among the leading countries of the NATO alliance



Women in the Czech Army

Before forty, fifty years ago it was rare. Currently, women are quite common. The public got used already to female doctors, psychologists or personnel managers. In recent years, however, we see female pilots, paratroopers, tracked vehicle drivers, or pyrotechnics. They serve in combat units, with chemical or engineer troops, as tank troopers, gunners, but also in Special Forces. They lead combat units, pilot fighter aircraft or combat helicopters. This year, people might also see even a woman with the rank of general.

The Czech Army has about three thousand women and the principles of equal opportunities of men and women in the defence sector, among others, are guaranteed by an internal regulation in form of the Defence Ministerial Order entitled "Enforcing the Principle of Equality between Men and Women within the Competence of the MoD", then it is a service aid "Equal Treatment of Men and Women", and finally "Defence Ministry Action Plan to Implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security."

Equality between men and women

The latter document, approved by the Minister of Defence in June 2015, declares the effort of our department to realize the obligations of this resolution and to inform the general public and interest organizations about the measures adopted to meet the principle of this resolution and the principle of equality between women and men within the Ministry of Defence in general.

When women enter the army, no one distinguishes whether it is a man or a woman. Both sexes equally must pass through a sieve of physical and psychological tests. The army is a team, and here it is necessary to prove that you are useful and beneficial, regardless of gender. Nevertheless, mixed groups are very important for the team as a whole. Both sexes in fact complement each other and work together, and the representation of women at various levels of command is often motivating.

Female pilot, paratrooper and pyrotechnician

Progress in numbers of soldiers, since joining the Alliance, has testified that the Czech Army is open to women. Within NATO, the Army of the Czech Republic reached the 10th place.

The chart 1, however, shows that although the number of women has increased, so has the number of men, because the proportion of women decreased slightly, compared to previous years. If a woman decides to join the army, no one cares whether the candidate is male or female. What matters most is what the candidates can do and what the army gains.

"Therefore, it is not unusual that women are part of the combat units and in these positions could be deployed in operations abroad," says Major Miroslava Štenclová, permanent delegate to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives. "At present, we currently have female representation at higher levels of command; we have a woman even in the position of Chief Sergeant Major of Armed Forces."

Development of numbers of female soldiers

Graph 1



Psychological findings of the Czech Army clearly conclude that women tolerate very well long-term burdens, on the contrary, men tolerate well those of short-term. These differences are used to build contingents for deployments abroad. Women have a better sense of direction for short distances; they handle communication far better and are able to perform multiple tasks at once. Men are far better in coping short-term stress and their long distance orientation is better.

The ratio of women and men applying for a service in the Czech Army says that women are slightly more successful. The same is true even in cases of admission to the University of Defence Brno or Military Secondary School and College at Moravská Třebová. A high proportion of female students are a long-term trend. The ratio of girls to boys admitted to study in relation to the number of male and female candidates suggests that discriminatory attitudes are broken down and that the girls are in the application process successful.

Operations abroad—the proportion of female soldiers

Graph 2



"Female soldiers are sent to operations abroad mainly as part of a selected formation and over the years their participation must be seen in context with performed operational tasks of the contingent," Major Štenclová continues. "The character individual operational deployment changes every year and so does even actual employment of female soldiers. However, always is taken into account what specific professions—occupational specialties are needed for a contingent in question."

As a soldier, the woman must perform the same tasks as a man. Physical conditions are not negligible and biological facts cannot be ignored. Women are structurally weaker than men. But this still does not justify the exclusion of women who are capable to fulfil demanding physical requirements of respective position.

The highest rank is colonel, so far

Women are represented in the Czech Army in all ranks, from female sergeant to colonel. Last year alone, numbers of our armed forces were expanded by 127 women. Overall, our army has almost three thousand women, ten percent of them in "commanding" positions.

"In the Czech Army, women hold most often the rank of master sergeant, there are 463 of them," Major Miroslava Štenclová says. "Another common rank is first lieutenant, 389 women, followed by captains in capacity of 293 women, the Czech Army has 179 female majors and in the rank of lieutenant colonels there are 70 women. The highest rank Czech women ever reached, is that of colonel, in which we have so far four women."

The first woman in the Czech Army was raised to the rank of colonel in 2007. Her name was Lenka Šmerdová, who worked then as a head of department that was in charge of enlistment, selection and recruitment of new soldiers. At that time, receiving her promotion, she said: "Women compared with men have it a little harder; they must always be a little better." Currently Colonel Lenka Šmerdová is responsible for the recruitment of new soldiers at the Recruiting Department which is subordinated to the Personnel Agency of the Army of the Czech Republic.

Another is Colonel Jana Růžičková, which currently holds the position of Director of the Office of the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic. Another two female colonels work at the University of Defence in Brno.

Ranks structure

The most frequent ranks of women in the ACR
- master sergeant 463 women
- first lieutenant 389 women
- captain 293 women

The highest ranks of women in the ACR
- colonel 4 women
- lieutenant colonel 70 women
- major 179 women

Regarding the rank of general, on 8 May 2015, President Miloš Zeman promoted the first women to the rank of general. She is Brigadier General Lenka Šmerdová, Advisor to the Chief of the General Staff, who is in charge of the recruitment of new soldiers. Women are in command structures even in other armies in NATO. For example, the US Armed Forces had their first female general already in 1970. In 2008, a woman stepped up between the absolute military elite. To the rank of four-star general was promoted Ann Dunwoody, who as a logistics officer participated in the Gulf War.

Text and photos: Jana Deckerová, graphs: Recruiting Department, MoD



The Czech tactical air unit again provided air policing coverage to the airspace of the island of geysers and volcanos



The Gripens over Iceland

Fighter pilots from Čáslav Tactical Air Force Base served their third tour from September till November last year at the Keflavik airbase on Iceland. The Air Policing 2016 task force provided a continuous coverage to the airspace of the Republic of Iceland as part of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defense System (NATINAMDS).

The primary mission for the Czech Air Force was to defend the partner nation's territorial sovereignty. In 2009 and 2012, the Czech airmen served several operational tours in the Baltics and in the Republic of Iceland over the past three years. During the ASICIPPN mission (Airborne Surveillance and Interception to meet Capabilities Iceland's Peacetime Preparedness), the Czech service personnel were on 24/7 alert duty from 5 October till 1 November 2016. The superior command Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) stationed in Jeden, Germany, set the time limit for scrambling. "It was highly demanding not only for the Czech personnel on Iceland but also on those who stayed at the home base at Čáslav. The Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) duties must be performed one hundred percent in both locations at the same time," explained the commanding officer of the unit on Iceland Lieutenant Colonel Jaroslav Tomaňa.

Medium range missiles for the first time

For this tour, the spectrum of operational capabilities expanded with the historically first "hot" deployment of JAS-39 Gripen aircraft with the AIM-120 AMRAAM for air policing of the airspace over Iceland. Deputy Commander for operations Major Tomáš Merta explained that AMRAAM missiles were a regular part of the inventory of NATO nations, and that was why they formed a part of equipment of the Czech fighters.

Specificities of this tour

The tour was planned for a long time, which allowed the selection of personnel who had not been in Iceland before. For many service personnel, it was the very first experience with foreign deployment. "The tour is shorter than usual, which is based on the requirements of Iceland," Lieutenant-Colonel Tomaňa elaborated and went on to say: "the lessons we have learnt will help us further increase combat and operational capabilities of the 21st Tactical Air Force in Čáslav." Although the tour on Iceland is "air", the contingent also comprises soldiers assigned for guard duties. Their commanding officer First Lieutenant Gustav Stehlík expanded: "Our soldiers guarded the assigned area and the ammunition depot where they kept 24-hour duty shifts. Their service was difficult with inclement winter weather on Iceland involving torrential rains and wind velocity over 50 km per hour."

Attack on frigate

"We were asked to participate in a sea exercise taking place roughly 80 km southwest from Iceland," the Czech contingent's commanding officer LTC Tomaňa describes the engagement of Czech Gripen fighters. The mission for the Czech airmen was to perform a simulated attack on the Languedoc frigate that is one of the newest vessels of the French Navy. That class is adequately equipped against airborne attacks and the readiness of their crews could prove readiness of the Czech JAS-39 Gripen aircraft. In turn, our pilots could practise low level manoeuvres above the sea.

"The Gripen has the lowest flight level above sea at 100 feet, but because we do not fly above sea so often, we opted for a safer minimum level at 330ft," Major Tomáš Merta, one of the participating pilots, explains. He adds that the French Navy had prepared a detailed scenario with individual flight profiles to best train their capability to defend against air attacks. The exercise had a relatively broad coverage – from assistance and evacuation from individual vessels by helicopters and boats, through practicing a fire alarm, to sea / air cooperation. For example, young Danish seamen practised an air attack alarm and familiarised themselves with the potential of air defence weapons. The commander of the French frigate Languedoc summarised the benefits of a short but very dense exercise. "Joint training brought us many positive aspects and we were impressed by artful manoeuvres of your aircraft, your skills and professionalism."

In summary

In the course of the operation, the pilots performed 120 training flights, most of which were Tango Scramble, which means practising activation of quick reaction alert aircraft in time limit. They completed 133 flight hours. Including with the transfer flight from the Czech Republic and back, the 2016 tour logged 170 flight hours for the Czech fighter pilots. At the end of October, the Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces General Josef Bečvář visited the airmen on Iceland to commend them for their commitment. "I highly value the excellent job you have done in support of protecting the airspace of the Republic of Iceland. You have already shown your skills to defend the territorial sovereignty of a partner nation in the past. Your familiarity with the local environment and your rich experience was definitely instrumental to the successful mission accomplishment. You are true professionals in the right place." The Czech Ambassador for Norway and Iceland Milan Dufek also addressed the service personnel with a recognition of the important contribution by the Czech Republic to the protection of Iceland and reinforcement of mutual relations.

by Captain Marek Maxim Švancara, Michal Voska, photos by Air Policing Island 2016, Jan Kouba

factsheet

Iceland is not an EU Member State, but is a NATO founding nation since 1949. NATO uses the Keflavik airfield to provide security to the Arctic corridor and for refuelling strategic bombers. Iceland does not have own military forces. Keflavik has 10,200 inhabitants and lies approximately 50 km southwest from Reykjavik. Built by U.S. forces during World War II (put into operation on 24 March 1943, roughly 45,000 U.S. personnel), the airfield is a part of the Reykjavik district. After the war, Americans built one of the largest NATO bases there with a multitude of Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) line radar and surveillance stations and the COMBARFORLANT command for radar ships and aircraft, as well as logistic support for strategic operations – the 551st Wing AEW&C had a sizeable number of Warning Star aircraft there. That primarily involved F-15 Eagle, C-130 Hercules, KC-135 Stratotanker, Lockheed EC-121 Warning Star and AWACS Boeing E-3. On 15 March 2006, the U.S. Ambassador in Iceland announced that the United States had decided to substantially reduce its presence on the island. On 8 December 2006, Captain Mark S. Laugthon was the last U.S. officer to leave Iceland. NATO then offered to Iceland that it would protect its airspace in a similar way it does for the Baltic States.





NATO air and land forces exercised in Hohenfels, Germany



Allied Spirit VI

One of the most important training exercises in 2017 saw the participation of some 70 airmen of the 22nd Helicopter Airbase with Mi-24/35 and Mi-171Sh rotary wing aircraft. In common manoeuvres, units from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Germany, Hungary and the U.S. practiced defence operations, close air support and special forces support.

The three-week field training exercise that came to a head at the end of March required both a demanding logistic support in the form of equipment and personnel and it also placed substantial demands on all service personnel in terms of language skills. On day 1, Saturday 11 March 2017, the Red Line briefing determined the rules to be observed during the exercise. Flight personnel then familiarised themselves with the airspace over the Hohenfels Training Area (HTA) and an observation flight was performed. On Sunday, 12 March 2017, everybody took part in medical training. Apart from routine stuff, cards were handed out to everybody including the pilots. The cards showed various injuries from light and heavy penetration wounds through traumatic head injuries. In case of contact with the opponent, those "injuries" were applied in practise to achieve maximum reality. Naturally, everything was complemented with the MILES system the Czech forces are very familiar with. It safely evaluates hits using a set of laser sensors positioned on individual soldiers, and it is continuously checked for serviceability by the instructors and evaluators. U.S. soldiers performed the check using the laser transponder, which sounded two short beeps after pointing at the soldier.

Pilots shooting too

Alert, alert, alert, resounded over the improvised camp. That was the first level of threat. For everybody present, including the pilots, that was a signal to immediately take defensive positions. It is completely commonplace to see the BREN assault rifle in the hands of soldiers, but pilots taking cover behind a Humvee is not what one can observe on daily basis. Pilots are normally the kings of the skies, but the terms were set here clearly. Everybody exercises and projectiles by opposing forces kill all; we have to be on constant alert and instantly able to effectively defend ourselves. The unit commander and Mi-24/35 captain Major Jan Vanický praised the setting and the environment because it was highly realistic. "Land forces planning system is a challenge for us. For some it is new, some of us have completed courses in the U.S. and we have an in-depth familiarity with the system. But it is the first time for us to face it. There is always a current plan

available showing the status of land and air equipment, personnel, and currently valid documents. Those change several times a day and it is critical to proceed according to the effective version, which places high demands on our attention."

Latvian Brigade

The Czech unit was assigned into a Latvian Brigade. It was a major experience for both parties. Latvia does not have own air force except for four Mi-17 machines primarily used for search and rescue operations. Likewise, Latvian air defence is zero and it is provided by NATO nations in the frame of Baltic Air Policing. The Latvian armed forces concept is based on a small mobile volunteer force with 6,000 personnel at high readiness alert, which is complemented and supported by 12,000 well trained National Guards. So, there were two antipoles during the exercise. One was the command over air forces, specifically allied choppers (in the Czech case Mi-171Sh and Mi-24/35) by the nation that does not practically have own air force, and second subordination of experienced pilots and flight personnel to a command with very limited experience. For all involved, that was a difficult assignment and there was no room to make mistakes. On top of that, the division was split into three brigades.

Three battalions, two real ones

As mentioned, the brigade was divided into three battalions. Two real ones and one staff battalion – Latvian mechanised battalion, U.S. infantry (partially mechanised) battalion and a Hungarian battalion outside the Hohenfels Training Area. Activities of the battalion were simulated, and the activities against the battalion were also simulated. Our unit was twenty kilometres from the battlefield in a simulated manner, nearby a closed area. It was an area contaminated in a simulated manner. None of the exercise trainees could enter that zone, which was also valid for air operations. The situation in Hohenfels also enables the use of highways which is specific to that training area and so many of the movements were performed using the extensive highway network. Since the most mobile force the brigade had available were the Czech air assets, it also became the most powerful antitank component if weather allowed. As to its true size, the unit was a reinforced company; but its significance for the brigade was on the level of battalion, meaning a higher echelon. Thanks to our participation, a high mobility and the unit itself were used practically nonstop. The only restriction was the absence of secure communications, which is determined by the design and equipment







of our machines. Other exercises always simulated the opposite. That is the availability of secure communication; but it is not possible here – the conditions are completely realistic.

Aged, but reliable

Given the tender underway for some time to select the supplier of new multirole helicopters, it was useful to see the air assets used by the NATO partners. There was for example the advanced Eurocopter UH-72 Lakota with relatively low transport capacity but advanced avionics, not to speak about the transport capacity of the famous but aged Chinook CH-47, which was assigned to the Latvian Brigade along with the Eurocopter machines. It was pleasing to watch the famed Hinds (Mi-24) to dominate the air. No doubt it is too early for them to be scrapped. Thanks to their universality, a high use value and transport capacity, the gunship was able to perform virtually any mission. In the context of the use of the legendary machine, Major Jan Vanický said: "Both the Czech aircrews and indeed other armed forces flight personnel highly value the benefits of this machine when they see the aircraft's performance, agility and what we can accomplish with it." To an extent, it is an aged Soviet machine but its firepower and capacity are still unparalleled. It is also low-maintenance and chronically reliable. Where the Hind however lags behind is avionics, electronic warfare suite and communications.

by Michal Voska



The patrol of the 42nd Mechanized Battalion took part in Wales in the prestigious Exercise Cambrian Patrol 2016

Tábor's patrol won the bronze



The Exercise Cambrian Patrol is a prestigious military patrolling exercise that has been attended by more than one hundred teams from around the world since 1959 and is taking place in the British military area of the Cambrian Mountains in Wales. It is the area, where among others the selection procedures for SAS elite units are held. At the same time, it is a competition aimed at verifying basic military skills, abilities for teamwork, physical and psychological fitness and, in the case of foreign patrols, last but not least, the English language.

The whole contest is conceived as a 48-hour intensive training without the possibility of sleep, with a tactical mission to perform tasks focused on individual types of all-military preparation. The difficulty of this competition is illustrated by the number of resigning teams, which counts almost half of the starting list. The Tábor team won the Bronze Medal this time, a very decent result.

"Focus on navigating in difficult terrain and train with large backpacks and adequate load," these tips were heard from 1LT Daniel P. during the preparation for the race relatively often. Another participant of the previous platoon race, SGT Josef H., adds: "It will not be easy, kilometres of walking, little sleep, lots of physically demanding tasks. Above all, always keep to your *hard routine*, under all circumstances," says SFC Marián Š. We hear these sentences on all sides, from those who already tested this exercise on their own. We're getting a little nervous, but we're more curious about how our team will make it this year.

It is seven in the morning, local time. Commands in English occasionally interrupt the morning's quiet sky. The Czech Patrol of the 42nd Mechanized Battalion of St. Wenceslas of Tábor launches one of the most difficult military competitions in the world. "Halt", "materiel inspection", "move in this direction" this is the list of the most common commands we heard translated from our commander. That's how our participation in Cambrian Patrol 2016 begins. After checking the mandatory materiel, which together with a weapon weight nearly fifty kilograms, we go to the next point, where the commander receives the regiment commander's combat command and then gives us instructions for processing the plastic table, so that he could schedule his own operation. For creating

a plastic table we were prepared well ahead, even before the competition. We wrapped all tackles we could use to create it and put them into a big rucksack. But there is a hitch, after checking the material, our big backpack was confiscated, so we have to rely on our own improvisation. Nevertheless this is a thing the Czech soldier will make masterfully. And this is even reflected in the final evaluation. In addition to the very good spoken performance of the patrol commander while giving an order, our plastic table is a success and we are receiving extra ten points for it.

But there is another task. It is the reconnaissance of enemy positions with the aim to confirm their presence in the area of deployment. I'm looking at my watch, it shows eight hours. It's been dark for two hours, and we've had about ten kilometres of walking. The only thing to see is the image through a night vision device. The view by itself is not very encouraging, hills with steep slopes, water streams that are regularly spilled out of their bed, stony tracks often filled with water, so that you can no longer tell if it is still a road or the stream. The grassy meadows, which at first glance look like an ideal place to move, but the reality is different. The land is so humid that after a few hundred metres in this terrain, when every second step, a leg stinks down into the muddy water to the knee, you are so exhausted that you are angry at yourself, whether it was a good idea to voluntarily sign up for this international military exercise. However, it is clear from a simple look at other members of the eight-member patrol, who are tirelessly moving forward, that if the 42nd mechanized battalion could reach again the destination with some awards, then it would be possible only with those fellows all around. After reconnoitring the enemy positions, it is necessary to pass the information to the superior, but the route to him leads over a seventy-five-metre water barrier. The dawn begins. There is no time if our patrol has to use the remnants of darkness, it is necessary to issue the most necessary orders, to prepare the materiel and yourself to enter the water to overcome this ice bath, under the mutual cover. Sunshine welcomes us already on the opposite side, where we of course need to change into dry clothes and head for the destination. After a few kilometres it will happen. But it's not all yet. We have approximately one hour of time to restore combat capability, to process reconnaissance reports, for receiving a fragmentary order, planning another progress, and after an hour to start walking, again around the beauties of the British kingdom.

After another five kilometres, with thirty-five kilograms on our backs, we meet a British soldier in a CBRN protective suit and with a gas mask. He instructs us how to overcome the contaminated area. Then the movement as such follows, reaction to infestation and leaving hazardous area. Fortunately, this is only an exercise and after decontamination we can continue to fulfil our mission, to say no longer with adequate protection against poisonous substances, because of tactical gear, most of the team broke their plastic suits and shoe covers.

We get into the British armoured vehicles Foxhound, which take us to unknown places. The vehicle is awesomely overheated and we are not able to sleep for at least a few minutes, as the driver is probably a former car racer, so our thoughts of sleep are changed by ideas about where the nearest vomit bag is available in the vehicle. After completing the journey, we are given additional tasks, the programme changes quickly, and we are again on our way. It is getting dark, so we use night vision devices to enjoy hilly countryside even at night. The next stop is on a farm from the century before last, where a commander and patrol deputy with the use of computer guides artillery firing to target. The target is destroyed and so the rest of the team can go to another post. The pace is rising and also the number of stops with other vocational tasks. We're getting to a helicopter crash site, with three injured persons. The main patrol medic takes up his role; he sorts out the injured and organizes their treatment. In the meantime, the patrol commander organizes the security operation and subsequently requests for MEDEVAC, i.e. air transport of the injured for further treatment. It is necessary to mention that military veterans of the last war conflicts are used as figurants and so almost every caregiver can try to put the butterfly bandage on the real stump of a bloodied hand or leg. After answering the situation, we receive new instructions, we move to another point, about three kilometres away.

At this point, the commander will receive further orders regarding the attack on the building and a subsequent capture of the wanted terrorist. This race is one of the most difficult competitions in the world. Its completing for most British soldiers means career advancement, so at first glance a seemingly simple task after a while changes into a physically very demanding exam. The agent, who was supposed to guide us in sight of the building, deliberately guides us through the worst terrain that leads to the building and moreover, he still goes fast, so we have to set a really high pace to keep up with him. Moreover, everything is done with simulated weapons in protective clothings, which include, among other things, a facial mask that makes breathing difficult. Finally, we're at the building. There's another agent waiting for us to pass on the info about covering fire in our favour.

The streams of machine-gun tracer projectiles, spanning several metres above our heads, flashes of flares on the night sky, explosions of grenades exploding a few metres from us, interrupted only by the commander's loud commands, throughout the whole action. We managed, the prisoner is in our hands, and without our own losses we go back to the starting point where we hand over the prisoner to an intelligence officer for his interrogation. At the base the last task awaits for us, lessons learned from the race. Based on the experience of recent years, we do not use ready-made comfortable chairs in an overheated room; we prefer to hear the whole evaluation when we stand. It is the last test whether even after such a challenging exercise we are able to stay awake and not to fall asleep. The contest is over. What a relief. We did it.

The patrol was set up from the members of reconnaissance team and a sniper group. Formed from the best what the St. Wenceslas Battalion has. The team had even a witness of the previous participation, when they won the silver. All we have to do is to finish with his words: "Next time we will come for the gold!"

By 1LT Lukáš Cimbůrek, photos by Zdeněk Koza



Czech medics save Iraqi soldiers wounded in the fight against Daesh

Field Surgical Team in Iraq



Czech medical unit that departed to Iraq last year comprises mostly the members of the Military Medical Agency, who were complemented with the soldiers of the Central Military Hospital and additional military units and installations.

The specialist core of the team comprises two surgeons, an anaesthesiologist, middle-level medical personnel and additional specialists. In Iraq, the Czech unit is integrated in a U.S. role 2 field medical facility. Harsh conditions and frequent shocks caused by artillery fire are a test of professionalism and courage for the medical personnel.

For the medics and doctors, it is a deployment in the most difficult conditions. First, soldiers had to complete a demanding predeployment preparation. That always comprises an introduction to the history of the conflict, the country, its habits and culture, rules for the use of force and international law. The training also includes shooting practice from short and long weapons, hand grenade throwing – the basic military skills, that medical personnel also have to possess for their protection. Special focus was also on defence against weapons of mass destruction. The unit was then briefed on the situation and deployed with the mission to reinforce the Role 2 US Basic Aid Station (BAS) and the Forward Surgical Team (FST).

Marks of fighting apparent

The way from airfield to the camp, where 17 Czech specialists operate, is still marked by recent hostilities. The whole camp was in the hands of Daesh just a couple of months ago. There are craters filled with concrete on the roads and runways and a wreck of Mi-17 helicopter with Iraqi army camouflage pattern lies in the sand. In the area of deployment, the Czech Field Surgical Team (FST) first had to familiarise themselves with the field hospital. They were assigned a smaller building formerly used by the airfield personnel. There are still bags with sand instead of windows and an opening rammed by a rocket with bent rebars gapes in the ceiling and is partially covered by a wooden board. The FST is accommodated in portacabins equipped with European standard electrical sockets. Familiarisation with the field hospital personnel was quite fast. The composition is very variegated both in terms of nationalities and specialisations; there are American, Danish and British medical personnel. Despite the difficult conditions, everybody performs their missions in the camp to the highest professional standards. There is no room to make mistakes; reception of casualties has to be perfectly coordinated, fast and effective.

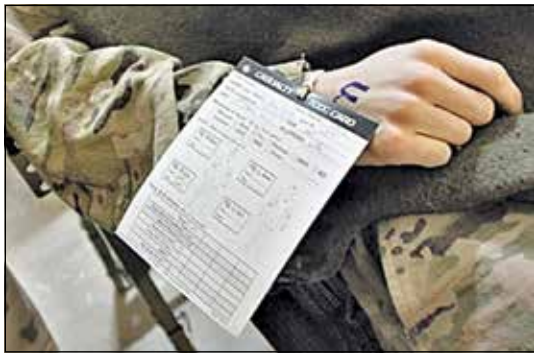
Reception rehearsal

The door into the ROLE 2 building fling open. A wounded coalition soldier is carried on stretchers. "Patient with a thigh penetration wound," the American medic reports. The Czech team starts to work. The chief physician stands at the head of the patient and gives instructions in a rapid sequence. Pressure, pulse and vital functions check. "Cut the clothes, leave tourniquet tied," he issues additional orders and automatically checks the patient's status. "Hands!" an order is heard for anyone close that their help is needed for a while. A medic comes running and grabs the patient by the legs. "Head," commands the medic. "We will turn him around … three, two, one… go," the second physician examines the back part of his body, whether he does not have any injuries that went undetected on the initial examination. "Clear," is heard and the patient is returned on his back. The projectile is suspected to have damaged the thighbone. All is done very fast and everyone on the team has a specifically assigned function. To those who have never seen a trauma team in action this may appear as a Formula 1 service team. The team functions as a well-oiled machine that is precisely tuned up to run without slightest hesitation. A nurse writes down everything that happens around the patient into the prepared form. She must not omit anything, nothing will be repeated.

Excellent evaluation

A U.S. physician watching and evaluating the situation gives another piece of information: "The patient was in field for an hour before he received treatment." Additional

questions run through the heads of physicians and nurses. What it may mean for the status of the patient and the necessary actions to be taken? Another command follows: "X ray," and a radiographer with mobile X-ray device is here in no time. "Hands!" is heard again, the patient is lifted and the radiographer inserts the plate underneath his body. On command of the assistant radiographer, everybody leaves their positions around the patient before the x-ray image is generated. The projectile smashed the thighbone. The head physician announces the patient will need to undergo an operation acutely. "Stop," the onlooking U.S. physician voices, claps his hands in recognition and lifts his thumb up. The rehearsal of an urgent patient reception is however far from complete. The used materiel is quickly taken away. The patient is now already dressing up and smiling at those who saved his life and the place where he laid a while ago changes into an improvised lecture hall in a second. A bench is brought in and the second part starts with equal importance – the feedback. The American colleague wants everybody to recap everything that took place. That enables every doctor and nurse once again to go through what they were doing. In the second part of the discussion, the other medical personnel who closely followed the rehearsal will be given room for discussion. Every observation, every useful detail will be invaluable in practice. At the end of the improvised seminar, the high professionalism of the Czech Field Surgical Team is recognised, not as a social necessity. The Czech team goes to fill the places where their American and Danish colleagues stood a while ago. They now take the positions of urgent reception. The entry door fling open and there is another wounded person on the stretchers, this time a Czech soldier. A clear-cut command again resounds in the room: "Hands!"



Hot run after the rehearsal

Just a couple of hours after the last rehearsal, we learn on the radio from the ops centre that we are to expect a patient with polytrauma following explosion of an improvised explosive device. Initial information is just fragmentary and we only learn that it should be a member of the Iraqi militia, who stepped on an improvised explosive device. The alfa team are getting ready for the reception. In 40 minutes, they bring the patient on a big pick-up. Same as during the rehearsal, every member of the team knows their place and what they should do. The lower extremity is devastated, but only the X-ray scan will show clearly the scope of damage to the bones and ankle. The sentence is passed: it will not be possible to save the extremity. Now it is possible to perform the amputation so that it would allow the patient to comfortably use the prosthesis in the future. The frighteningly looking large wound on the head eventually turns out to be insignificant and it only takes 25 stitches to treat it. The important thing is that the brain has not been injured. The operation is complete in several hours. The patient remains in care for several additional hours and then has to be transported into a civilian medical facility. There is no space for a long after-operation care. The capacity has to be freed for other patients. The building strongly shakes several times under the pressure of shock waves produced by the artillery that shells the positions of the Daesh from the camp. It is necessary to clear up fast and again prepare the operation room! The surgical team bravo will again take their positions. But everybody carefully listens whether the radio would not announce a reception of the patient.



Mass casualty

Over the next few days, the medical personnel will again be tested by so-called MASCAL. The acronym alluding to the mass reception of the injured may have another meaning: it is test of professionalism, rational decision-making, work under extreme pressure and stress, but also a merciless test of preparedness of the medical personnel, which does not forgive any mistakes. What the whole field surgical team (FST) has prepared for on a sustained basis has become a reality. The day was relatively calm. Briefing in the morning, then routine check of workplaces and testing of functionalities and correct operation of devices. There was no indication anything out of ordinary would happen. Only a morning information about fierce hostilities indicated an event to prove our professionalism would sooner or later happen. The ops centre gave a radio call late at night for the FST members to immediately report at their workplaces. It was clear something out of the ordinary was happening. The news of MASCAL caused an immediate reaction with the medical personnel on site. Nobody waited for anything; everyone knew where their place was based on the so-called MASCAL roster. Individual workplaces started to be prepared. Two medics assigned for the triage of patients were on a concrete area in front of the hospital, others were inside. A simplified approach to the injured starts to be applied, something like crisis management. First specific information arrive on the radio. Those are victims from among Iraqi soldiers who got under attack by suicide bombers.

Who has the priority?

A US Army truck brought in first two injured. Both cases had a chest trauma. After thorough examination, overall diagnostics was performed and the status evaluated. Literally everybody is at work. It is necessary to check whether the injured do not have dangerous ammunition on themselves, manage the information flow and radio traffic. In normal practice, both injuries would mean immediate surgery. MASCAL is however governed by the logic that there may be additional patients on their way. The physician has that in mind during his decision-making because some others would need the operation room more urgently. Ambulance car brings in additional patients in a while to reach the final number of five. The decision is made instantly on the priority for operation. There are two operation beds in the room, and demanding operations are performed on both. As is logical in decision-making during MASCAL, it was determined that the less time consuming operation of an eye injury would be done directly on stretchers in the reception area. This quick improvised surgery gave the patient a hope that he would not lose his eye. Specialist ophthalmologist care can only be provided by a higher role. The patient was therefore transported on MEDEVAC into Baghdad. Mass reception and treatment of patients shows the ability of the Czech medical personnel to adapt to the new situation and find the right way ahead in a tense atmosphere. The last one to be brought to the operation table was a patient with trauma leg injury following a suicide bomber attack. The dawn is already breaking, but the personnel of the hospital still performs one hundred percent. The last operation is finished at around nine o'clock, by which time everybody is exhausted. Besides those serving shifts at the intensive care unit, the medical personnel are leaving to take a well-deserved rest.

by Michal Voska and FST, photos by FST



factsheet

The proposal for deploying the Field Surgical Team into the Republic of Iraq was passed by the Government of the Czech Republic through its resolution No. 877 of 5 October 2016. The deployment was authorised by the Senate of the Parliament through its resolution no. 557 dated 19 October 2016 and the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament through its resolution no. 1393 of 20 October 2016.





Active Reserve of the Military Medicine Agency

New units of the Active Reserve

The Army of the Czech Republic must be ready for every situation of biological threats. The Army pays continuously a special attention to training, drills of traditional procedures, and cooperation with institutions that provide biological protection in our country. On July 1, 2016, there arose the Active Reserve of the Military Medicine Agency (AZ AVZdr) under the Centre of Biological Protection (CBO) at Těchonín which is going to cooperate with military professionals in the field of biosafety.



The volunteer Medical Reserve Unit AZ AVZdr is composed of 135 standard posts that create together a comprehensive structure of the Specialized Infectious Hospital SIN. This structure includes a reception ward for low threshold infections, ward for temporary hospitalization and an intensive care ward. There are positions for laboratory technicians occupied with biochemical, haematological and microbiological diagnoses, or pharmacists, but also for logisticians, drivers and cooks. For a flawless cooperation between Medical Reserve Unit AZ AVZdr and military professionals, it is important to plan both unit's training, as well as the training by itself. Primarily, the training of AZ AVZdr unit will focus on safety drills, linking a unit with the Specialized Infectious Hospital SIN, with respect to corresponding specializations, introducing techniques used by the Biological Protection Centre CBO and the Specialized Infectious Hospital SIN, working in shifts, preparation for mobile elements of Army biological protection, and the practical use of AZ AVZdr unit during field exercises.

Combined training

Secondary, the preparation of Reserve Medical Unit AZ AVZdr will focus on firearms training and combined arms training. The drivers will attend respective courses at the Training Command-Military Academy Vyškov and further supplementary courses will be arranged with respect to the capacities of educational institutions in the ACR. Later on, during exercises, the "reservists" will compare their own experiences and knowledge of taking care of patients, practicing transporting by means of isolation devices, in the so-called Bio-bags or Bio-boxes. Not only that, an important part of their preparation will be a practice of dressing and safe undressing protective covers and also the perfection in handling and subsequent Bio-bag disinfection of personnel in the decontamination zone. Paramedical staff will execute doctor's orders and instructions by the ward nurse; they will focus principally on providing nursing care and medication. Then the "reservists" will familiarize with hospital's environment, individual tasks and basic systems of the Specialized Infectious Hospital, Centre of Biological Protection CBO, with the specifics of care for patients suffering from highly contagious diseases in conditions of high safety level BSL-4 (Bio Safety Level 4). In fact, they will be trained at individual posts to develop professional knowledge and skills, they reach mutual substitutability in individual positions and medical posts, which will improve teamwork concept (buddy system), they gain experience and knowledge in providing intensive care in terms of BSL 4 in field conditions and similar military medical areas, and finally they will get a chance to be assigned to EU and NATO medical units, or to be deployed in foreign operations.

Their first training

The possible first training of medical reserve unit AZ AVZdr in the Centre of Biological Protection CBO should take place in the late October or November 2017, with regard to other training activities. The exercise of AZ AVZdr unit will be conducted parallel with practicing the activation of the Specialized Infectious Hospital SIN, i.e. twice a year, covering one week. The AZ AVZdr medical reserve could be called up for the deployment in SIN hospital in a form of follow-up units, for tasks of operational support. This call up could be ordered only by the Czech government. "Despite very specific occupational requirements, the interest in service in AZ AVZdr units is surprisingly high," says Capt. Tomáš Gröger, liaison officer and coordinator of prospective candidates for service in the Active Reserve of the Military Medicine Agency (AZ AVZdr)." To date, there are officially registered more than six dozen of candidates for the Active Reserve AVZdr. Positively, it is a long-term good reputation of military medics that contributes to it," the captain says.

by Michal Voska, Capt. Tomáš Gröger, photos by Jana Deckerová

Military Cynology Centre at Chotyně practices the deployment of military dogs in the form of roping from helicopters

Heavenly dogs



The use of dogs in the military is as old as mankind itself. Already almost two thousand years before our era, the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi commanded the warriors, accompanied by the dogs, stirring up terror and panic among the enemies. The Sumerians and the Assyrians were known for huge Great Danes that went with them into battle. In the First and the Second World War, in various armies, virtually on all fronts, service dogs could be counted in tens of thousands.

In our army, in the last two decades, the scope of training has been significantly expanded. In addition to standard guard duties, dogs have been trained to search for weapons, ammunition, explosives and drugs. After 2000, some soldiers came up with an idea of training dogs focused on deployment against terrorists. We managed to gather several soldiers, some of them with a paratrooper training, plus they could work with dogs. In 2007, when the army decided to deploy Military Police Special Operations Groups (SOG) in Afghanistan's Helmand, the unit flew with dogs from the Military Cynology Centre Chotyně. In each of the three SOG contingents deployed from April 2007 to October 2008, there were two dog handlers with four dogs. In the following years, specially trained dogs and dog handlers were also sent to support our Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar.

The six-member group

The Military Cynology Centre Chotyně currently trains six dog handlers for the deployment of dogs in action from a helicopter. Either as a jump from a hanging position, or in the form of rappelling with a trained dog. It's something not completely standard. They are hundreds of hours of rigorous training.

"First of all we try a harness. In order we could see that the dog is not restricted. Then we focus on the basic hangings. We fasten the dog in harness and over a pulley raise it up above the ground. Thus the dog gets used to such unnatural position. Training continues on, through the use

of simulator, to a helicopter. It is an advantage that all dogs with us are accustomed to helicopter. Because we plan among others their air transportation," explains dog handler Sergeant First Class Marek Zugar. "We focus primarily on rappel from helicopters. We also try to rappel down the rock. But this is a bit more complicated, as rappelling into a free space is easier. When rappelling from helicopter, you are not restricted by anything; you don't have to pay attention. On the rock there are all sorts of obstacles, through which it is necessary to get the dog in harness. We considered even a training simulator Jakub, but there is a problem, how to get up on the top with a dog, as there are only ladders. We practice on an airborne simulator; in this case we can get to the top up the stairs."

Training on helicopters is normally prescribed by the airborne manual. At least once every three months there should be ground preparation in simulator, and once every six months, rappelling from a helicopter. In fact, it is performed more frequently. The only limitations in this respect those are only free air capacities we can use.

The soldiers are getting used to dogs

Training dogs for the action is based on common standards of operating procedures. Of course, the assignment of dog handler to the team has its own specifics. It is important that all should be tuned in and all should know that there is a dog. Sometimes a dog may hinder. Especially if someone in the team is not accustomed to the fact that in the group works also a dog handler. It makes a little bit of trouble. Dog handlers of Chotyně therefore as much as possible coordinate their activities with other components of the army. It is necessary for their members to know how the handler and his dog work and how they are beneficial.

All dogs from the Cynology Centre should be used to heavy fire. It is one of the basic conditions even in the selection. In this case, however, there is a condition is that the dog has to manage direct fire opened by its handler. It must lie quietly beside him; it must not hinder, nor reveal its position.

But the team oriented to rappelling is doing more than it is specified in a test manual for training the dogs. It's above a standard that their dogs are able to work under any conditions. Gunfire, explosions, smoke, loud noise, flames. Guard dogs are prepared among others to search persons in built-up areas. It does not matter whether it is a cave, house or a larger area. Dogs go there before the soldiers. The point is to protect as much as it could the lives of members of a team.

factsheet

Sergeant First Class Marek Zugar has been concerned with the profession of dog handler since he was fifteen. In 2000, he joined the Municipal Police Prague on the position of dog handler. After seven years, one of his acquaintances said, that there were vacancies in the Military Cynology Centre at Chotyně, whether he didn't want to move into a new job. Suddenly, new opportunities were opening up. Until then, he had only experienced defender dogs. At Chotyně he got a chance to deal not only with dogs focused on scent activities. At the end he became a member of the team deploying dogs to action by roping them down from a helicopter.
His fellow in this team is Sergeant Tomáš Procházka. Working with the dogs he has enjoyed since childhood. He dealt with sports cynology already in civilian life. In 2002, he joined the Reconnaissance Battalion Bechyně. But a year later it was cancelled. As he had devoted himself to the dogs already in civilian sector, he transferred to Chotyně, where at the time there was a vacancy. Tomáš' heart beats only for dogs. Working with them represents not only the job but also a hobby. To his two canine wards, he devotes most of his free time even after working hours. During that time, a very strong bond has been formed among them. For him, it's something like a family.

Thirty kilograms extra

The handler with such specialization, of course, cannot be afraid of the deployment at heights. Therefore, to rappel, or to carry out rescue work on the rope, there is only one limit, and that is the examination of physical training, worst grade is 2. In fact, you need even something more. And to this requirement each of the handlers of the team adapts his own physical preparation. "In addition to a rucksack and weapons as other soldiers, we have extra at least thirty kilograms, which is the weight of a dog." Actually, it's live weight, which somehow moves. But after a time, well-trained dogs will accustom to parachute jumps. They perceive them as a perfectly natural matter. "They literally hang in a harness like a sack," says Sergeant First Class Marek Zugar. "Not always it is without problems. Some time ago I had to rappel in the Doupov training area, at night, with a night vision device. Moreover, I had a rucksack hanging down below my feet. The night vision distorts reality; you can poorly estimate how far there is the ground. It was literally on the edge."

According to Sergeant Tomáš Procházka, it is not possible to expect the same commitment from a dog handler as with other soldiers, even though their training is the same. You should take into account the fact that the handler is in action not for himself, but all the time he must control the dog. "In any case, we try to be most useful. We have a chance to go through fairly intensive preparation, including fire and tactical training. If something happens to one soldier from the team, we must to be able to replace him. When the group gets into trouble, we can't just passively watch."

During deployment, we ensure both the health of soldiers and even dogs. The Military Veterinary Institute Hlučín regularly organizes a course of basic first aid for dogs. On the request, it may be extended. Some units mastered Combat Life Savery according to US manuals. This manual also contains extended assistance in case of injury to the dogs. There are practical experiences from Afghanistan, where US troops provided maximum care for wounded dogs, including MEDEVAC. As to Americans, the dog is part of a team and they are able to take care of it, on the highest top level. The dog has the same priority treatment as in the case of man. Also Czech military cynologists and veterinary doctors are trying a similar approach.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by author and archives of the Military Medical Agency



Military Police officer First Lieutenant Lukáš Kvapil did not finish the Dakar Rally because of injury; nevertheless even so this challenging competition gave him a lot

He tasted the atmosphere at the start, the next year he would like to smell the finish line



Lukáš Kvapil believed that the second stage of the Dakar will not be among those unfortunate. He just helped to the injured Italian competitor. "Suddenly I saw a motorbike lying on the ground, and next to it there was a muddy lifeless body. At that moment I stopped racing, military drill awakened inside me. I reported to the Central Office the details of an accident, secured the crash site and provided first aid to the wounded competitor," he described later.

At that time, Lukáš had spent three hours in the sun at temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius, in which he had nothing to drink. He waited for the arrival of paramedics and then directed passing cars so that the paramedics could treat and load this injured person. All this cost him a good deal of his body strength. In addition, the track was after passing a large number of vehicles much devastated. He passed the second checkpoint and from all his strength tried to concentrate on the completion this stage a race. Supposing he had managed it, the organizers in the following stage would have deducted the lost time.

Bad luck hidden beneath the sand

But once a wheel of his machine stuck in a hole buried in soft sand, it was clear that the bad luck was waiting for him right here, and that he would have to drink this bitter cup to the dregs. The fall unpleasantly injured his face and dislocated the shoulder. He suffered a concussion. In this situation, he could do nothing but throw in the towel. The helicopter transported him to the bivouac, where he waited in agony for several hours for transport to a local hospital. Nevertheless only after four days at home he decided to undergo a surgery, in the Central Military Hospital in Prague Střešovice. "When First Lieutenant Kvapil phoned and told me what had happened, I did not hesitate to contact the director of the Central Military Hospital. I watched the whole extensive preparation of his and after finding the details of the accident I was aware that he will need intensive and high-quality medical care," explained Brigadier General Pavel Kříž, Chief of the Military Police.

"It's the most extreme and toughest race in the world and we all competitors were well aware that we're there at risk. The race track was changing every moment. It was influenced by many factors, ranging from climate and ending by passing through a large amount of racing vehicles. All this produced a really hard time for participants. Such situations can't be influenced. What for some might represent the end of the race, for another does not mean anything," explains the fatality of this critical moment Lukáš Kvapil.

The moment in question was also watched with concern by the Lukáš family. The modern technology in this race allowed to fans and all his loved ones to watch the race online. "Unfortunately, the situation on social networks, when I stood for nearly three hours and nobody knew what was happening, was for all those who kept their fingers crossed for me, really difficult. It was a relief for them when they saw that I set in motion again. However, my point stopped in front of the finish and then came the news about my injury."

Recognition from the Minister

Lukáš Kvapil showed after returning to the Czech Republic, a good dose of modesty. Even at the moment when Defence Minister Martin Stropnický visited the Central Military Hospital to thank him for helping to rescue an Italian racer and presented him the material gift. According to Lukáš, anyone would do something like that. "During the race, individual

competitors are going for the jugular, but if it is really needed, they help each other. It's so tough race that many times we rely only on ourselves. I am convinced that such behaviour is typical for every competitor.

Most people who made such a big thing speak about it very modestly. I am glad that Lukáš is also of this kind," Martin Stropnický underlined. "People often wonder what is or is not the state of our military. From a human point, in any case, it goes very well. Lukáš' feat, as well as the activities of members of the Army of the Czech Republic, are proof of that."

Like a rock star

Lukáš knew the Dakar from TV programmes and stories told by its participants. But the actual experience surpassed any of his thoughts. "It was an unforgettable experience to stand on the starting ramp and perceive the crowds of fans who were very friendly and disciplined. To stop and let someone of the spectators, take a selfie with me, was a dream for them which was fulfilled. It was an extraordinary experience. I felt like a rock star. Fans were able to create an incredible atmosphere."

If Lukáš were to compete in the Dakar, one of the conditions would be the participation in a qualifying race the Dakar Series, which are held around the world almost all year. He chose Morocco. It was the closest of all and it took place at the most appropriate time. In fact, it was a little Dakar. "The organizers prepared the same conditions in the technical specifications and navigation. For us, racers, the smaller doses of kilometres were positive. But the difficulty was comparable to the Dakar in South America. I managed to place in the top fifty, from among one hundred and twenty participants. I appreciate that."

Perhaps it is no secret that at the Dakar race a good luck plays a big role. Technical equipment must not fail; you must not have an accident. You are not allowed to get lost. Almost every contestant has a talisman of his own. Lukáš' wife gave him an emblem of horse on a motorcycle. In addition, this personal gift was hanging on his neck.

Nevertheless, though fortune did not favour him, he managed to fulfil his old dream. He stood at the start of the Dakar rally. I thank the department and Pavel Kubíček for this dream come true. And what it gave to me? The assurance that I have abilities and that my training was moving in the right direction. Physically and mentally I was well prepared. Unfortunately, I could not show all that was in me. But I am convinced that I would do the same again without hesitation," Lukáš accents. "The Dakar is my world and life. I'll do everything to win through to the rally



next year. I would like experience the feeling the participants have at the finish. I have nothing to change in my preparation. I've had the best conditions for training in the military, as well as for methodical training in the Army Sports Centre Dukla Praha. The only thing I change, I'll respond to developments in technology. These matters I would like to present at the Motosalon trade fair in March at Letňany."

factsheet

Lukáš Kvapil performed his compulsory military service with the Castle Guard. Later, already as a professional soldier, he organized motorcycle escorts for foreign delegations and the President. His career progressed farther, he moved up to the Guard Service of the Military Police. There he not only ensured a motorcycle escort, but also the transport in special vehicles and even a personal protection. He went through a number of interesting courses. In Hechlingen, Germany, he completed training with BMW motorcycles, at circuits in Brno and Most he trained solving emergency situations at high speeds. In Miramas, France, he underwent a course of driving with armoured BMW vehicles.
From the position of an ordinary rider he worked up in ranks of the Military Police to the post of chief of the Training Department for Escorts, Guard Service Command, Military Police. He also participated in foreign missions. Specially, in 2004, he worked in Iraq as a drill instructor for firearms and tactical training. A year later he returned to this country as part of a team of personal protection. In 2011, he served in Afghanistan where he provided a personal protection for a contingent commander and the staff of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.



by Vladimír Marek, photos: archives of Lukáš Kvapil

A new assault rifle from the Czech Republic will be soon in the ACR's arsenal

CZ Bren 2



The development of technologies and weapon systems goes forward and it also applies to personal weapons. The introduction of the first generation of unified modular system CZ Bren has increased the combat ability of individuals and units of the Army of the Czech Republic. Already in 2011, CZ Bren assault rifles were used by soldiers in a foreign operation on the territory of Afghanistan. The deployment of a weapon in different climatic conditions and the immediate responses of soldiers to its abilities led the Czech Arms Factory to improve its specifications. Backed by experiences from operations abroad and soldiers' training, the Czech Arms Factory developed the second generation of a modern automatic assault rifle, CZ Bren 2, also known as CZ 806.

The CZ BREN 2 is the next generation assault rifle from the CZ brand family of service weapons. This weapon was designed for the most demanding users from special units and armed forces operating anywhere in the world. Today, the Brens are used by armed forces and security units in 42 countries of the world. Weapon's design is based on proven tapping the combustion gases from the barrel with option of three--stage regulation of the piston mechanism. The CZ Bren 2 is characterized by extreme reliability and durability under all conditions exhibiting high accuracy and long service life. Light weight and compact dimensions make handling fast and comfortable. Controls are ambidextrous and easy to reach. Elaborated ergonomics guarantees outstanding shooting. Materials used are non-combustible or have increased fire resistance, as well as being resistant to impacts and mechanical damage. Basic disassembly and assembly for routine maintenance can be carried out without the need for any tools.



In the Czech forces since 2010

The Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic ordered for the Czech Army in 2010 in the first round 7,937 CZ 805 BREN rifles; worth 1.2 milliard Czech crowns (CZK). Almost all weapons were delivered with the respective magazine slot and original transparent magazines. The original magazine assembly of CZ 805 Bren can use only original magazines from the Czech Arms Factory or the German Heckler & Koch Company (G36 rifles). The last 200 pcs of the first series were produced with a new MC assembly for STANAG magazines (by the end of 2013). With a MC magazine assembly, the second series of 9,500 CZ 805 Bren rifles are to be delivered to the Army of the Czech Republic by 2020. The price of the second order is CZK 1.1 milliard.

Improvements based on experiences

The firing mechanism of the CZ Bren 2 assault rifle exploits the well-proven tapping the combustion gases from the barrel. The piston mechanism has three-stage regulation. The main known difference from the previous version is a significant drop in weight. The shortened assault rifle CZ 805 Bren A2 (barrel 280 mm), without sights and magazine, weighs 3.39 kg. The weight of the CZ 805 Bren A2 with full magazine and belt is 4.1 kg. The newer CZ Bren 2 (barrel 280 mm), without a magazine and metal sights, weighs 2.86 kg, with an empty magazine and metal sights 3.06 kg. For a shortened version (barrel 206 mm), this is 2.76 kg, or 2.99 kg respectively. The difference in weight of the CZ 805 and



the CZ Bren 2 thus makes more than 0.5 kg. As far as dimensions are concerned, both weapons are similar in size and almost unchanged. The body of the weapon CZ Bren 2 is 10 mm shorter. The significant step forward is even a sophisticated buttstock with an ergonomic cheekpiece and a replaceable rubber butt plate. The innovated rifle also received a new telescopic buttstock. Because of it, the soldiers can set the length of the weapon, depending e.g. on whether they are wearing bulletproof vests, or not.

Double-action releasing bolt

The Bren 2 also abandoned the controversial option series 2-blasting. Now the switch allows fire a single shot or continuous fire. The switch is double-sided. Another important element is a double breech mechanism. Releasing the breech can be controlled by a mechanism in the interior of the trigger guard (alongside the magazine) and over the trigger guard. The cradle releasing of a magazine is located within the reach of the index finger in the magazine slot. The releasing lever is independent, so that when shooting, unlike the CZ 805 Bren, it does not move. The lever makes possible to reach the rear position. Weapons are supplied to the Czech Army, including accessories, which cover optical devices, tactical knives, transport packages, armament sets for armourers, and spare parts sets. We will also receive 800 pieces of the CZ 805 G1 grenade launcher, including accessories.

Rapid Deployment Brigade

About this new version of the assault rifle are interested also NATO special units and successful testing has already taken place in several countries. "The use of the CZ 805 Bren A1/A2 weapon for the needs of the Czech Armed Forces is estimated in perspective of twenty years or even more. In connection with the needs of the Active Reserve and manning individual units, the army will continue to arm the forces also during the next year," said Army General Josef Bečvář, Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic. According to General Bečvář, the new weapons are designed primarily for combat units, especially they will primarily supply with them 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade. Gradually, Bren rifles of all modifications should be received by all soldiers, including members of the Active Reserve.

factsheet

CZ 805 BREN A2 vs. CZ BREN 2 (CZ BREN 806)

	CZ 805 BREN A2	CZ BREN 2
Calibre	5,56 × 45 mm	5,56 × 45 mm
Length of barrel	280 mm	280 mm
Number of grooves	–	6
Lead of grooves	–	178 mm
Weight without magazine and sights	3,39 kg	2,86 kg
Weight with sights and empty magazine	–	3,09 kg
Length with buttstock extended / buttstock folded	780 mm/580 mm	750–798 mm/ 570 mm
Width with buttstock extended / buttstock folded	112/77 mm	140/80 mm
Magazine capacity	30	30
Effective firing range	300 m	300 m
Rate of fire	760 RPM	850 ± 100 RPM
Barrel durability	20 000 rounds	20 000 rounds
Body material	dural	dural

Characteristic features

- The weapon system is based on established tapping the combustion gases from the barrel, with option of three-stage regulation of the piston mechanism.
- Extreme reliability and weapon's resistance under all conditions.
- High accuracy and long service life.
- Low weight and compact dimensions for quick and convenient gun handling.
- Weapon controls are ambidextrous.
- Elaborated ergonomics with excellent shooting behaviour.
- The materials used for the weapon are non-flammable, or have increased fire resistance; they are impact-resistant and have high resistance to mechanical damage.
- Basic disassembly and assembly for routine maintenance can be carried out without the need for any tools.

By Michal Voska,
photos by Czech Arms Factory Uherský Brod (CZUB) archives



The truck company in Kopřivnice is a traditional supplier for the Czech Armed Forces



TATRA trucks

for the Armed Forces

At the beginning of January, Tatra company delivered twenty-six Tatra Tactic platform trucks (formerly designated T 810). The deliveries will continue throughout the year with several dozen vehicles in multiple variants to be supplied. Those will join roughly three thousand trucks in service with the Czech Armed Forces, which are used both at home and on foreign operations.

The first vehicles of the Tatra Tactic family were delivered to the Czech Armed Forces in April 2008 (based on a 2006 order for 556 units) and since then they have replaced the oldest trucks in the Czech Armed Forces inventory, the legendary Praga V3S. Besides the Czech military, Tatra Tactic vehicles are also used by the armed forces of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Tatra Trucks company introduced in 2004a completely new type of truck, the T 810 6×6 ATS, and since the last year it is newly marketed under the Tactic trademark. It is a medium truck with ladder frame chassis and original Tatra Rigid portal axles, which is produced in 6×6 and 4×4 axle configuration. The total vehicle weight is 15.5 tons (in 6×6 configuration), or 13 tons (in 4×4 configuration). The Tatra Tactic vehicles are primarily designed for military use which is reflected in the designation derived from military terminology. But they are found extremely useful in the civilian sector as well.

Support to the domestic defence industry

In the ceremony marking the acceptance of the vehicles in Štěpánov depot, Defence Minister Martin Stropnický said: "Given the current security situation, support to the domestic industry is critical. Production capabilities in the home territory have a strategic importance for the state, either in the form of own enterprises or proven commercial suppliers." Tatra is undoubtedly one of them. Given the proven platform, the military uses approximately three thousand Tatra T 815 and T 810 vehicle in various modifications, including armoured versions designed particularly for deployed operations. As to the T 815 family, we have 650 platform trucks with 4×4, 6×6 and 8×8 axle configuration and 1,350 vehicles designed for various specific purposes (container transport, cranes, tractors). In the Czech Armed Forces inventory, the T 810 platform is dominated by 600 platform trucks for the transport of personnel and materiel and additional 70 pieces of special equipment (tail lifts, container loaders). By the end of the year Tatra Trucks will have delivered additional forty T 815 medium and heavy trucks and container loaders and forty-one T 815 vehicles of the PRAM system (120mm mortar carrier). Most of the current T 815 models are on the edge of life and their replacement is planned from 2020 on.

factsheet

Review of military models manufactured in TATRA factories from the beginnings till the present

Type	Design	Manufac-tured in
Tatra 111	Truck	1942–1962
Tatra 805	Light truck	1953–1960
Tatra 809	Halftrack	1953
Tatra OT 810	Halftrack – redesign of German Sd. Kfz 251	1958–1962
OT-64 SKOT	Engine for 8×8 armoured personnel carrier in cooperation with Poland on the basis of Tatra 138	1961–
Tatra 813	Heavy truck	1967–1982
ShKH vz. 77 DANA	Howitzer, manufactured at Dubnica, Slovakia on Tatra 815 chassis	1981–1994
Tatra 815	Heavy truck	1983–
Tatra 810	Medium offroad truck	2008–
Tatra 817 (815-7)	Heavy truck	2008–
Tatra Titus	Armoured military vehicle	2015–

6×6 TRUCK / MIL PLATFORM TRUCK

A customer project of an all-wheel drive medium off-road truck with 6×6 configuration, ladder frame and unique Tatra Rigid portal axles. The vehicle is equipped with liquid cooled six-cylinder engine, manual transmission, transfer case and modern three-seat cab with reinforced Level 1 ballistic protection armour floor, modified roof with machine gun mount, hatchet and additional modifications for special or military use. The vehicle has a winch and a central tire inflation system. The front axle is mechanically suspended on by coil springs. The rear axles are suspended by rocker leaf springs. Since 2010, the T 810 has also been offered in civilian version as a universal chassis-cab.



Engine	Renault Dxi7, EURO 3, 177 kW, 920 Nm/1 200–1,700 rpm
Transmission	ZF 6S 1000 T0, six speed
Cab	1 + 2 seats, armour floor
Wheelbase	3,150 + 1,200 mm
Total weight (max)	13,000 kg
Payload (max)	4,500 kg
Max speed	106 km/h
Superstructure	Payload platform with tarp, folding benches for 16 soldiers, rear stowing access. Internal dimensions 4,660 × 2,470 mm.

6×6 platform

Engine	Tatra T3C-928-90, EURO 3, 300 kW, 2,100 Nm/1,000 rpm
Transmission	Tatra 14 TS 210L, semiautomatic, fourteen-speed
Cab	Without standard Tatra cab
Wheelbase	4,090 + 1,450 mm
Total weight (max)	29,000 kg
Payload (max)	18,760 kg
Max speed	110 km/h
Superstructure	The platform is designed for various types of special vehicles that need: – Outstanding driving properties in difficult terrain – Heavy armour protection from the upper side of the chassis – Reliable platform with low life cycle costs



8×8 HIGHLY MOBILE HEAVY VEHICLE / MIL PLATFORM TRUCK

T 815-6 Force – military family with TerrNo 1 components, liquid cooled engines and optionally automatic Twin Disc transmission; the design of this family also modified the cab, which enabled the integration of cooler for liquid cooled engines, the interior was facelifted. Since 2006, it includes the (T 817) T 815-7 model – special military version with TerrNo 1 chassis components, low forward cab with provisions for add-on armour enabling C-130 Hercules transportability plus engines and transmissions in the existing variety expanded with Allison automatic transmission. Finally, the platform has also been used in the civilian sector for cranes, firefighting and mining superstructures. The current 815 family with the highest environmental standards is equipped with T3D Euro 5 SCR engine line and exterior facelifted cab since 2010.



Engine	Tatra T3C-928-90, EURO 3, 300 kW, 2,100 Nm/1,000 rpm
Transmission	Tatra 14 TS 210L, semiautomatic, fourteen speed
Cab	1+3 seats, C-130 transportability, add-on armour
Wheelbase	1,950 + 2,860 + 1,450 mm
Total weight (max)	38,000 kg
Payload (max)	21,100 kg
Max speed	110 km/h
Superstructure	Payload platform with tarp, folding benches for 24 soldiers, rear stowing access. Floor locks for one 20' or two 10' containers.

8×8 platform

Engine	Tatra T3C-928-90, EURO 3, 300 kW, 2,100 Nm/1,000 rpm
Transmission	Tatra 14 TS 210L, semiautomatic, fourteen-speed
Cab	The platform is supplied without standard Tatra cab; the frame with dashboard, pedals, steering and seat is installed on the chassis instead of cab; additional equipment is supplied as free components; electronic cab tilting with hydraulic cylinder.
Wheelbase	2,150 + 2,860 + 1,450 mm
Total weight (max)	38,000 kg
Payload (max)	25,000 kg (chassis)
Max speed	115 km/h



by Michal Voska, photos by Michal Voska and Tatra

Major General Jaroslav Klemeš lived to be 95

The last of the heroes on parachutes

In Great Britain in World War II, several hundred Czechoslovak paratroopers were trained. About a hundred of them were parachuted over enemy territory. More than half of them paid their determination to fight against the Nazis in the territories they occupied, with their lives. At present, only one of them survived. On January 31, this year, General Jaroslav Klemeš celebrated his ninety-fifth birthday.



Jaroslav Klemeš was born in 1922 in a district town Čadca in northern Slovakia. His father worked there as a revenue clerk. Between 1926 and 1936, the young Jaroslav graduated from a general school and four classes of city school at Skalice. After his mother died, it was only his father who raised him and his brother Vladimír. At Skalice, Jaroslav get trained as a commercial assistant and then he completed one year of business school. After the breakup of the republic, his father was dismissed from work; he had to move to Moravia, to the town of Strážnice.

He fought even in France

In January 1940, eighteen-year-old Jaroslav left with his friend Ludevít Čambala across Slovakia, the Balkans and Syria, to Marseille, France. At Agde, he was assigned to the Signal Platoon, HQ Company, 2nd Regiment.

In June 1940, he participated in the fighting against the Germans, on the Marne River, east of Paris. But at the moment the Czechoslovaks came into contact with the enemy, the front already collapsed. Unimaginable confusion was all around. "All were tired, we were marching all the way south. They were in retreat even at night. We had only two hours to rest. Who slept a little farther away, he might lose his unit. That was the case with my friend Čambala. He settled somewhere in a barn and lost us. Fortunately, in three or four days he caught us on a bicycle," Jaroslav Klemeš recalled.

After retreat to Great Britain, he served first as a despatch rider in the county of Devonshire. They were tasked to defend the coast against a possible disembarkation. Later, he was assigned to the signal platoon, where he graduated from a radiotelegraphic course.

Preparing for special assignments

From 1941, he began to prepare for a possible parachuting over the Protectorate. He completed a sabotage course and an airborne training course. They were followed by shooting, signal and conspiracy courses. Already in the rank of Corporal, he completed the preparation for conspiratorial civilian employment, conspiracy practice and a final sabotage course. His training ended with the so-called repeat course. Then he was already assigned to Platinium group, which later joined Pewter group. At the beginning of May 1944, they all moved to Laureto base



in Italy. They were to be dropped over the Protectorate at the beginning of October. However during their first sortie on October 3, 1944, their plane got lost due to bad weather over Moravia. Seven weeks later, the aircraft was hit over Vienna, and the crew decided to go back to the base. The drop finally occurred at night from 16th to 17th February 1945. "The day before the jump there was probably sunshine, snow thawed on the trees. It was beautiful to see black forests and white snowy fields. We jumped ideally to a ploughed field, to the very zone where we were directed, next to the river Chrudimka, near Nasavrky town," he remembered these moments after years.

Even though the paratroopers hit a predesignated target zone, it was not easy to put the whole group together. In addition, they had to look for materiel that broke off even with the kit bags attached to the legs.

"In complete darkness, we buried parachutes in the woods. Each group had three contact addresses. At our first address, in a nearby seclusion, they did not want to provide housing to us. We succeeded only at the second address at Hradiště, with the Korábek family," Jaroslav Klemeš said. But even there it was not so easy. Mr. Korábek was not at home, because just at that time the Gestapo was hunting him. His wife was

informed that he was working for the resistance, but she did not know the password. For the challenge "We want bread", the countersign she did not know was "Bread and butter?" In addition, she feared the Nazi provocation. But when they showed her their weapons and supplies of food from Britain, she believed they were really paratroopers and housed them in a barn. Within a few days, they were contacted by a domestic resistance as they were supposed to help them to maintain the connection with London. The domestic resistance also organized their transport to the area of Velká Bíteš, where they had to arrange the drop of arms with the use of an aircraft guidance device.



Jaroslav Klemeš and Ludevít Čambala, two inseparable friends. Together we left our country (January 1940). Later, we fought on different fronts, and finally we met again in Prague (May 1945).

To help Prague

But in this area Platinum group did not worked together for a long time. The signal communication between Prague and London was also needed. And exactly this task was assigned to the experienced radio-operator Radim Klemeš. The only problem was how to get him with a radio and weapons to Prague. It was not possible by train, because there were regular sustenance inspections. And so the resistance members had to organize his transport by car. "We had forged documents. During the journey we were checked several times, fortunately they did not find our weapons and the radio," Jaroslav Klemeš described those dramatic moments. Out of the bathroom of the apartment in Kobylisy district, he sent to London hundreds of messages. He maintained the radio contact even during the time of the Prague Uprising. At this point, he became a little unintentionally the war reporter. His information about the fighting Prague was immediately broadcast by the BBC. His radio messages asked for American help for fighting Prague. He also arranged a drop of weapons in the Smíchov area. However, in view of the following development, this did not happen.



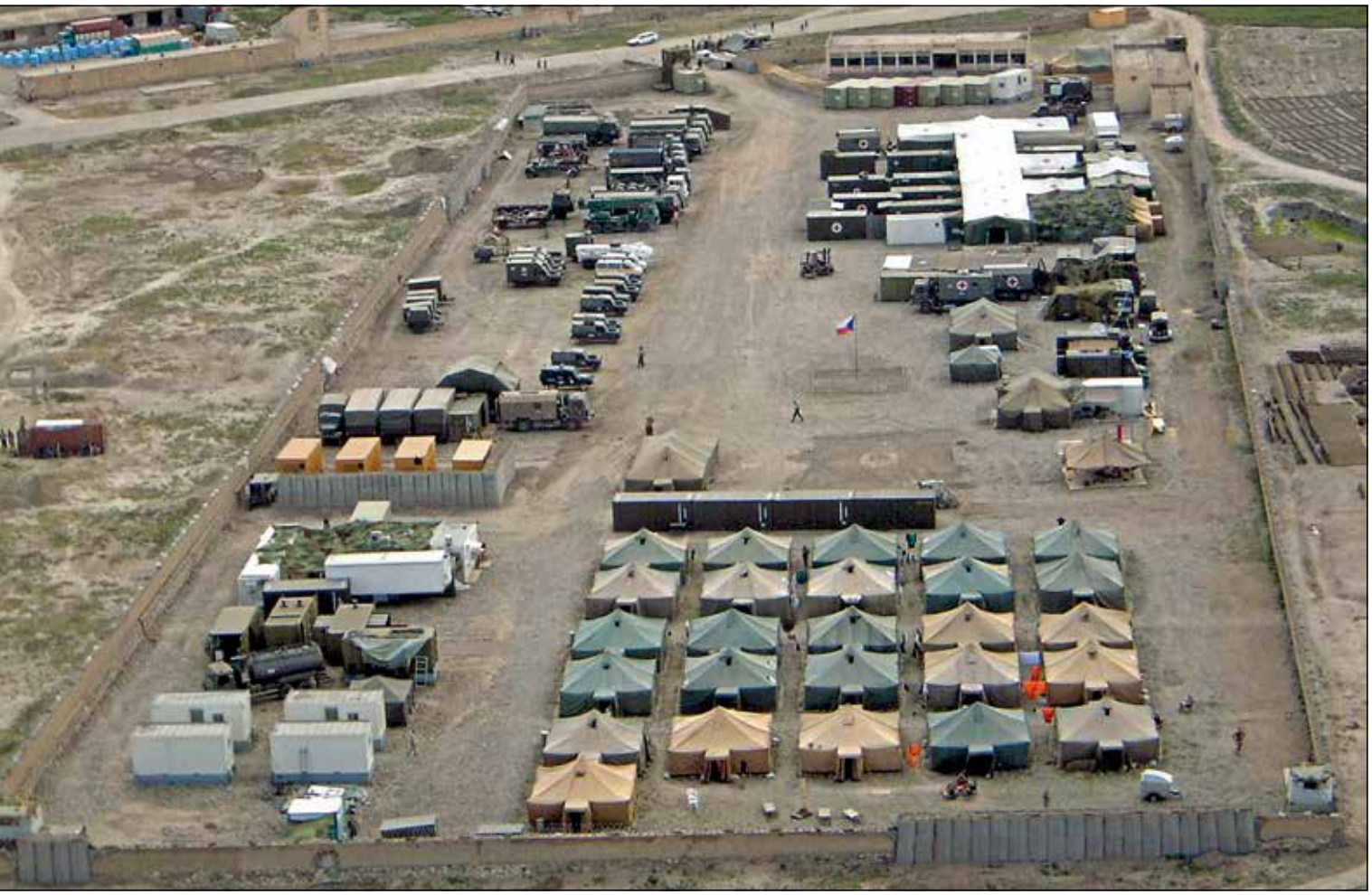


After the war, Jaroslav Klemeš reenlisted as a radio-operator in the army. First he was assigned to the Ministry of National Defence. From January 1946 he worked as an instructor in Milovice. Then he was transferred to the 2nd Infantry Regiment at Litoměřice. He reached the rank of First Lieutenant. But in December 1950, he was separated from the army, investigated for fifteen months and then sentenced to two years. He was accused of anti-state activities allegedly committed in General Paleček's group. They blamed him for not reporting the anti-state activity of his superior. He spent nine months in the so-called "Little House" in Prague-Hradčany. He was imprisoned in Pankrác, Bory, and in the Forced Labour Camp at Nebořice. He was demoted and at the same time all his decorations were taken away. After his undesirable discharge, he could work only as a labourer. The rehabilitation did not happen until 1968. However, he did not have full social recognition until 1989. Gradually he was promoted to the rank of Major General. Nowadays he lives in the Convalescent Home for Military Veterans in Prague's district Střešovice.

By Vladimír Marek,
photos by author, CMA-MHA, MHI archives.

The mission of a field surgical team into Iraq is a follow-up to a series of successful military operations of Czech military medics

A mission in white



Sending a field surgical team to Iraq was approved by the Czech government. In this country, the team worked from December 2016 for six months. It consisted of 17 medics, who were integrated into the Field Hospital of the US Navy, stationed 70 kilometres south of Mosul. Their task was to heal wounded Iraqi and coalition soldiers.

After the start of the activities of the Air Advisory Team in Balad in summer 2016, they were further specific doings of the Ministry of Defence directly in Iraq, aimed at supporting the fight against the so-called Daesh (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). The Czech Republic thus helps to the stabilization of situation in this region. The international coalition in this way, among others, reduces the motivation of the local population to migrate, which decreases the risk of penetration of Islamic fighters into Europe.

Start at Knin, Croatia

Our military has a long tradition of sending out military field hospitals and medical teams to unstable regions. When leaving aside the presence of our field hospital in the 50's of the last century in Korea, then the roots of this medical engagement date back to 1994 when it was decided to reinforce our contingent in the former Yugoslavia by another 480 people. In addition to some other units, there was also a field surgical hospital. It was initially conceived as an independent surgical detachment, consisting of two surgical teams with anaesthesiologists, as well as paramedics with practical surgical and anaesthetic knowledge. All was complemented by a surgical evacuation unit. Overall, there were 21 persons. Czech military surgeons and nurses with other personnel began to meet tasks related to medical support immediately after moving into the Croatian Knin, which was accomplished on 14 March 1994.

In autumn 1995, the entire facility moved to Zagreb, Croatia, where replaced a Mobile Field Hospital of the US Army (MASH). The field surgical team was reinforced by personnel up to 31 people and evacuation equipment was supplemented. In March 1996, the Field Surgical Hospital moved to Eastern Slavonia, where it began to work in favour of the UN peacekeeping mission UNTAES. By accepting this task, there was another increase in the number

of professional personnel by a total of 40 people and also an increase in equipment. In addition to these activities, the hospital had to perform tasks in the system MEDEVAC (medical evacuation – medical transportation and escort of evacuated persons).

Aid to refugees and distressed

In 1999, the AFOR mission was approved, aimed at helping Kosovo refugees in Albania. The Czech Republic was represented by the 6th Field Hospital. Generally, there were 89 people, extended by 10 Lithuanian military medics. This establishment did not only provide care to refugees, but also to members of the AFOR operation. The hospital provided twenty-four hour emergency and medical assistance in accordance with NATO standards, the so-called "Role 2", in the range of specialized medical care in the fields of traumatology, laryngology, radiology, dentistry, cardiology and psychiatry. On the whole, it had five surgical teams. On August 17, 1999, the north-western part of Turkey was affected by devastating earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale, with high numbers of casualties and injured. The number of persons deprived of shelter was approaching one million. In this situation, on August 23, 1999, mobile teams of the 6th Field Hospital set off from Kavaje to the affected city Gölcük. Subsequently, even the main part of the field hospital was moved to this area. It worked there until stabilization of the situation, when the tasks were assumed by local authorities, which occurred in the late October 1999. During the mission in Albania and Turkey, Czech medics treated a total of 13,000 patients.

Hospital started to work in Kabul

After two and a half year pause, Afghanistan waited for members of the 6th Field Hospital. From March 2002, our surgical team worked in Kabul for several weeks as part of the British 34th Field Hospital. In May 2002 it was replaced by the 6th Field Hospital. The hospital provided medical care at Role 3 level, for members of the ISAF Allied forces and local residents.

In mid-October 2002, members of the 6th Field Hospital were rotated by medics of the 11th Field Hospital. Our field medical establishment was able to provide daily care up to the 160 sick and wounded. It involved five surgical teams to perform up to 50 surgeries a day. In four months, its logistical support had to produce 2,903 cubic meters of drinking water, 215,280 kWh of electricity, to dispose 2,010 cubic meters of liquid waste and to wash 12,000 kg of laundry. In addition to providing medical care, in January 2003 there was another task, to dismantle the base, where they worked. After returning to the Czech Republic, 11-membered field surgical team, which was until April 2003 part of the German field hospital, still continued to perform the tasks of the mission.

In Iraq's Basrah

Another place to deploy our field hospital, namely that of 7th, was Basrah, Iraq. It worked there in two tours, from April to the end of 2003. It was formed of a hospital section, support units, humanitarian detachment, two companies of Military Police and a group for civil military cooperation CIMIC. The hospitals included 129 wheeled vehicles and 132 containers. Materiel and equipment of the hospital weighed almost two thousand tons.

The main task of this contingent was providing health care to the local population, advancing humanitarian aid, water cleaning and its distribution. Our field hospital had 50 beds and 6 beds in intensive care. At the same time they were able to help up to 300 patients a day. Except for paramedical personnel, the hospital staff accounted seventeen doctors, two pharmacists, one veterinarian and one microbiologist.

Slightly smaller was the deployment of our medical officers in earthquake-affected Pakistan two years later. Traumatology team of six people worked there from 12 October 2005. In early November it was replaced by a group of 30 military medics. The team performed tasks according to respective medical specialties, concretely in the Dutch field hospital in Bagh, which is located about 100 kilometres east of Islamabad. In the team, there were surgeons, an epidemiologist, laryngology specialist, anaesthesiologist, paediatrician and a veterinarian.

In 2007, the Czech field hospital for almost two years again returned to Afghanistan. In five rotations at Kabul airport, dozens of doctors and hundreds of nurses took turns. Their task was to provide a medical support to NATO soldiers who operated in the area of Kabul airport. Moreover, the hospital was responsible for the transit of patients and keeping them in stable condition before strategical evacuation. It performed preventive and health care in the area of its responsibility. It also participated in the education and training of medical personnel of the Afghan army and the security force. In case of mass casualties, it was also responsible for rescue teams, up to a distance of 10 kilometres around Kabul airport. Regarding the provision of air ambulance service MEDEVAC, our medics observed Basic Emergency Assistance M1, with a time limit only three minutes. In addition, they performed M2 emergency duty, with readiness in eight minutes, and then also common duties in individual wards.

Even after returning our field hospital to its homeland, our army was involved in the provision of health care at Kabul airport. The 15-member field surgical team worked first in the French and later American field hospitals deployed in this area.

Text and photos by Vladimír Marek



Signallers of the Army of the Czech Republic celebrate the centenary of their existence





Command can't do without a connection

The well-known signallers' saying, "no connection, no command", was always true in this field from time immemorial and most likely it will be true even in the future, in times of advanced technologies. Since without any kind of connection it is impossible to pass orders, implement tactical or strategic intents on the battlefield and, of course, the coordination between units does not work.

All these facts our ancestors realized many centuries ago. And for that reason flame signals were created, so were flag and smoke signs. On the battlefield, an important role was played by despatch riders and runners.

An optical semaphore tachograph or telegraph from the end of the eighteenth century started the era of modern communication means. There continuously followed, even in the nineteenth century, the connection with telephones and wireless telegraphy. All these inventions were promptly used by armies of that time.

At the beginning there were spy stations

The history of Czechoslovak Signal Corps started a hundred years ago, in the year 1917. First, at that time still tentative measures, concerning means of communication, had been made by our legionnaires in Russia, a few months earlier. In the late 1916, several Czechoslovak soldiers at the request of the High Command of the Russian Army were sent to operate secret spy stations used to monitor enemy telephone conversations. Those legionnaires, who underwent telegraph training, later stood at the birth of our radiotelephone company. Its roots date back to the March 15, 1917, when it was ordered to establish a signal detachment with the Headquarters of the Czechoslovak Rifle Brigade. At that time, there were more than three months before the Battle of Zborov. Before taking up a position in front-line trenches near this Ukrainian village, on June 21, 1917, a Replacement Technical Half-Company was created, subordinated to the Replacement Battalion of the newly formed 3rd Czechoslovak Rifle Regiment. This half-company gathered the volunteers from field engineer, technical and signal units.

A few days later, on July 2, 1917, many of the signallers participated in the legendary battle of Zborov. In every of our regiments, there was established a Regimental Signal Detachment. It was a success of our troops in this battle, during which they managed to break the Austro-Hungarian trenches and move forward, which enabled further significant legionary recruitment among prisoners from Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia.

Establishing a Telegraph Company

The plans to build a Czechoslovak Army Corps appeared already at the end of July 1917. Part of its organizational structure was also a Telegraph Company. But at the end, this plan was not carried out. The unit, which became a cornerstone of a future Czechoslovak Signal Corps, was established on October 30, 1917, by order no. 931 of Lieutenant General Nikolay Dukhonin, Chief of Staff of Supreme Commander of the Russian Forces. But the proper formation of the Telegraph Company did not start until early 1918 in Kiev. Its commander was a Russian Colonel Andrei Lofickij. Then followed an order, upon which, in this unit, they were to gather all the soldiers who went through telegraphic training, no matter whether in the Austro-Hungarian or Russian armies.

At that time, on Ukraine's territory, there culminated chaos and chaotic situation that occurred after the Bolshevik revolution in November 1917. The first telegraph specialists began to arrive to Kiev in February 1918. At the end of this month, the Telegraph Company, which at that time had only 24 soldiers, was forced to retreat from Kiev towards Darnitsya. But even there the retreat did not stop. It continued towards Bakhmach and the Trans-Siberian railway. In the late March, a company command was assumed by Czech Junior Captain František Svozil. Throughout the journey to Vladivostok, where they arrived on June 11, 1918, the company was complemented by necessary experts. The Telegraph Company had therefore, at the end of its journey, 72 soldiers and 2 officers.

They managed to deliver all telegraph and other equipment to the destination without any damage. Despite the constant demands of Bolshevik leaders to surrender all this materiel. "The technical materiel, taken up at the last minute in Kiev, we brought all to Vladivostok. We carried this entire load in Kiev without carriages, without horses, and therefore we did not give a single device the Bolsheviks during our journey, even though in Penza some regiments surrendered their technical means and we did not even anticipate that we could use them in Russia. During this precarious situation we were the only source from which regiments could take materiel, and whom we also helped," described the then atmosphere former members of the company.

The first radio station

In Vladivostok, the signallers immediately engaged themselves in feverish activity. Soon a Telegraph School was established and began to prepare further experts. The company took over 16 telephone lines connecting the various parts of our troops stationed in Vladivostok. It also ensured a telephone connection with the hospital. Just in ten days, its number increased to 230 soldiers.

At this time, however, the mission of our troops fundamentally changed. It was not a goal to arrive on their own, as quickly as possible, to Vladivostok and from there to transfer to the Western Front in France. There were also signallers who participated in the control of Vladivostok and consequently together with our other units started for the west. The objective was to join all Czechoslovak groups scattered throughout the Trans-Siberian railway. In Vladivostok, only one telegraph department remained, the task of which was to ensure the connection with the staff. Other signallers were set down around a railway track. Their task was to operate telephones and telegraphs in the occupied stations. The Telegraph Company itself stayed in Nikolsk-Ussurijsk more than six weeks. In this garrison, there was established a Telegraph School, right inside the train, which quickly produced much needed specialists.

During the fights on the Trans-Siberian Railway, our troops captured two complete radio stations Telefunken and Siemens-Halske and their accessories. One of them was successfully put into operation, and thus on July 19, 1918, in Nikolsk-Ussurijsk the first Czech radio transmitter was established. Also the second radio station was successfully repaired with the help of technicians of the British cruiser Suffolk, moored in Vladivostok. And thus a radio connection between Nikolsk-Ussurijsk and Vladivostok could be established.

The Code Office

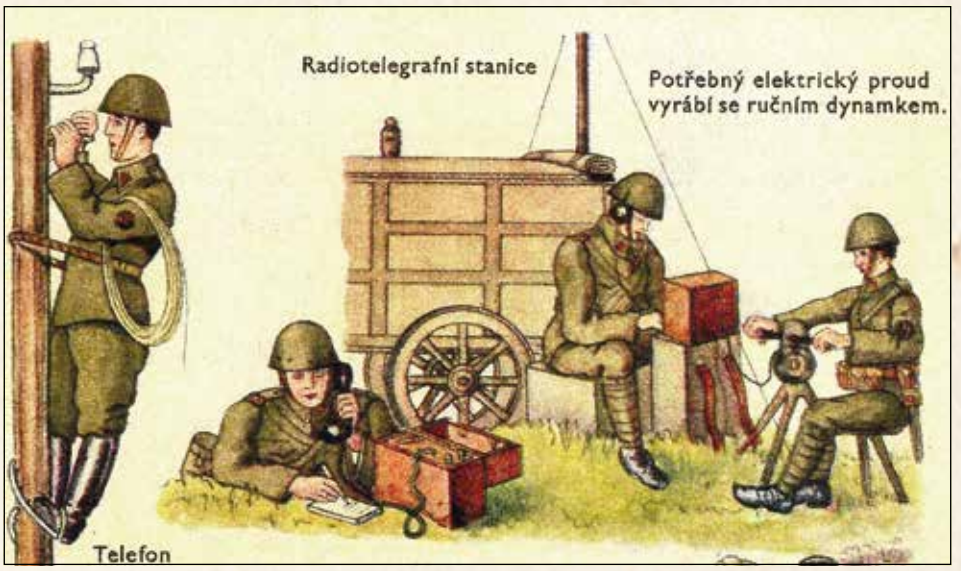
Until autumn 1918 for the main forces in the west around the railroad, the transfer of orders and regulations were controlled by a signal detachment. In a very short time, the detachment rapidly expanded to 90 members. In addition, at divisional headquarters there were gradually formed telephone, telegraph and automobile detachments that were subordinated to a divisional Chief of Signals. Besides telegraph and telephone networks, the troops employed also messengers using cars, mounted on horse or motorcycle or only despatch runners.

In October 1918, the Telegraph Company moved via Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and Omsk, to Yekaterinburg, so that the last day of October it reached the HQ of the Czechoslovak Army Corps at Chelyabinsk. Almost immediately it took over all tasks of a signal detachment. Its members were gradually integrated into the unit.



At the same time, the Chief of the Signal Service of the Western Front Command, Warrant Officer Zahálka created a Code Office, which prepared more and more sophisticated ciphers that enabled to hide the content of the messages from adversary. At that time, all along the entire Trans-Siberian railway there worked nearly two dozen of telegraph stations, which together with the Telegraph Company, till the end of the mission in Russia in 1920, handed on hundreds of thousands of messages. The basis for future Signal Troops of the newly formed Czechoslovakia was laid for good. In its development then proceeded First Republic army signallers in the 20's and 30's of the last century.

According to the publication History of Signal Corps
was prepared by Vladimír Marek, photos by CMA-MHA, MHI



Radiotelegraphic station.
The necessary electric current is produced with a manual dynamometer.


1918
21PLUK
1938
VOJSKA
21
21
ANT. POSPÍŠIL