

Areview

2/2015

A Well-balanced Military Force

2

There are Three New Jaguars in Brno,
Baring their Teeth

33

All won

50





The Libavá Military Training Area in the Czech Republic was the venue to multinational exercise Ebonite Javelin 15

Ebonite Javelin hitting the target

A patrol of the 5th Force Protection Company sets out for their area of responsibility with the mission to provide security coverage for a meeting of the company commander and commander of an Afghan National Police unit. Following necessary planning process that goes down into finest level of detail, a group of six Tatra 810 trucks replicating heavy armoured hardware used in Afghanistan negotiates local dense traffic without problems.

The drivers have been through the Riders training course: they know that they must win respect through aggressive driving and minimise the possibility of attack on the convoy, including by a victim borne IED. That was one of the fragments of the multinational exercise Ebonite Javelin 15 that took place in the Libavá Military Training Area in June earlier this year.

Predeployment prepping

Almost 400 soldiers of the 71st Mechanised Battalion and their colleagues from the Slovak 11th Mechanised Battalion prepared for

deployment in Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina there for two weeks. "This style of driving requires that drivers maintain perfect coordination and absolute concentration," says one of the drivers, Corporal Roman Polívka. "We must accelerate and decelerate sharply, change the direction and maintain separation of just several feet. New tactical procedure require that other vehicles were also able to see forward; we therefore may not drive behind each other, but with a side separation in order for the vehicle commanders to see the vehicle riding in front of him," CPL Polívka expands on some of the driving principles.

All round defence

Upon reaching the meeting point, all vehicles take their positions to form the round defence. Commanders read the maps well in preparation; every CO knows where to go and instruct drivers, top gunners cover their fire sectors at once. After taking their positions, searchers are ordered to dismount. Two soldiers jump off each vehicle to do the recce. Then the crews leave their vehicles to complement all round defence formed by the vehicles. "Only when we find out the environs of the check point is safe, the officer going for the meeting dismounts. He is accompanied by interpreter and also bodyguards," Captain Radek Šoman, a force protection company commander, elaborates on what will follow. "The meeting must be quick; the unit may not be in place for long. Any delay gives the opponent a chance to respond to our presence," the commander adds.



Air support

The effort by units in training came to head with a live fire. The play for the final operation involved a joint patrol in the area of responsibility, which came under attack by a strong opponent. The unit even called a close air support with a pair of L-159 light combat aircraft dropping bombs on the insurgents' positions. MEDEVAC came in for casualties, and had to be covered by another attack helicopter due to strong enemy activity. Firing from handguns as well as mounted weapons, the Czech-Slovak patrol managed to repel the attack and carried on their mission. "The chosen exercise play derives exactly from situations the soldiers from Hranice will be up to on everyday basis downrange in Afghanistan," Colonel Kopecký comments on goings-on in the site. "In provision of security to the Bagram airfield, they will be responsible for covering and protecting their assigned area to

prevent the insurgency from shelling or threatening the strategic Allied base otherwise." "The whole training was designed to hone skills and abilities essential for foreign deployed operations. Czech and Slovak soldiers practised patrolling, observation, searching, maintaining security, protection of critical infrastructure, establishing checkpoints, search and apprehension of persons of interest. They also trained their shooting and driving abilities," Major Přemysl Štěpánek evaluated the benefits of the exercise. The commander of the Slovak Brigade Colonel Kubáň was also satisfied with the performance of his soldiers. "Cooperation and joint training with other nations' armed forces are always useful; commanders, staffs and soldiers have opportunities to compare the procedures they follow and enrich their experience." The Slovak commander also thanked Czech service personnel for the facilities and universal support his soldiers received.

by First Lieutenant Radek Hampl and Vladimír Marek, photos by 1LT Hampl

contents

A Well-balanced Military Force	2
Military ranks and rank corps	6
MoD Defence Decorations	7
Czech Armed Forces' Foreign Deployments and Missions	8
Noble Jump 2015	21
Czech Fighters over Iceland	24
Success contingent on logistic	26
EOD training	30
There are Three New Jaguars in Brno, Baring their Teeth	33
Terrorists over Temelín	36
Danube Ride	38
Successors to the Black Bear	40
People Around Us	42
For the First Time "On His Own"	44
Africa Attracts Him	46
One Team	48
All won	50
Italian Blade 2015	54
Warrior 2015	56
Time to move on	58
Falconers	61
He Once Experienced All this	62
A Handful of the Brave	64

Published by MoD Czech Republic
Communication and Promotion Department
Tychonova 1, 160 01 Praha 6, Czech Republic
www.army.cz



Identification number: 60162694

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

Editor-in-chief: Vladimír Marek
Layout: Andrea Bělohávková

Translation: Jan Jindra, Jaroslav Furmánek, Jiří Mareš
Cover photo: CMM 3°REI

Distributed by MHI Prague, Production Section
Rooseveltova 23, 161 05 Praha 6, Czech Republic
Olga Endlová, tel. +420 973 215 563

Printed by: EUROPRINT, a. s.

ISSN 1804-9672
Registration number: MK ČR E 18227

Published in November 2015

Lieutenant General Josef Bečvář: Our goal is to increase manning levels, emphasise human resources, attain increased defence appropriations and launch major system replacement programs

A Well-balanced Military Force



When you were offered the post of the Chief of General Staff, was it a clear-cut decision making for you, or did you take some time for consideration?

It was a clear-cut decision. On the other hand, one always has to ponder such serious things. So I did take some time off to think and then accepted the offer with appropriate respect adequate to its importance. The fact of the matter is that to serve as a Chief of Defence represents a huge professional but also personal challenge. It is universally unique a not really easy position.

You have a high familiarity with the General Staff – you served as the First Deputy Chief of General in

the past. Did you know you were up to four years of working twelve hours daily with almost no free weekends, did it not discourage you, and did your wife or your family not tell you should choose a calmer job?

I have always consulted any major decision in relation to my service career with my family in the past. On the other hand I always kept the last say for me, including thanks to a huge understanding of my family. To work as the Chief of Defence is truly challenging, and it also affects the family. There is much less time to spare on your family and indeed your hobbies. Four years in such a demanding position are truly a maximum. Then

At the beginning of May earlier this year, Lieutenant General Josef Bečvář became the Chief of General Staff Czech Armed Forces. Five months plus on, he discusses the current condition of the armed forces and challenges the Czech military will be up to in the years to come.



the replacement should come; longer period would be outside anyone's compass.

General, you spent years in your service career in France; you studied in Melun and later at École Militaire in Paris. You even worked as the Czech Republic's defence attaché in France. Do you have a weakness for that country?

Sure. I was keen to learn about that country already in my youth. I thought about how life was there. Later on, and particularly in my military career, I was lucky to eventually spend eight years in France. I do have a weakness for France, weakness for her wonderful sights, no

matter whether in the mountains or at sea. I also had a chance to get to know many interesting people there.

How does France differ from the Czech Republic, is life calmer there, are people more cool there?

Certainly not. That is only a look from the outside, the way we like to think about France, but probably not completely true. When you live there for an extended period of time, you are able to see things that escape tourists' attention at the first sight. As every country, France has two faces. One is hectic France of big cities, including Paris. Then there is the other France, the one feeling good, nicely scenting, with vineyards, orchards, lavender and fields. But it cannot compare to the Czech Republic. Each country is specific and each has its charms.

Do you not regret a bit that contacts between our armed forces are no longer that intensive as was the case in between the World Wars?

That depends on how you judge those relations. If we speak about how often our soldiers travel to France for exercises or education, and contrarily how often French soldiers come to us, we would conclude cooperative activities are not that intensive as with the United States, Germany or United Kingdom. That is however not to say that cooperation between our countries



going Afghanistan in French mountains, there is training in tropical environment and many additional activities.

Over those years, you have gained a good familiarity with the French military; where do you think we could get some inspiration, and what we could learn from them?

I do not like to draw a comparison between those things. We would compare something that cannot be objectively compared, be it the personnel strength, responsibilities, or the fact that we do not have any Navy. We would surely identify many additional differences. When I lived in France and followed the developments in the French military, it was critically important to grasp the esprit as to the Armed Forces' position in the society, how highly respected it is, what rights it has and what it represents for the citizens. The French Armed Forces enjoys and maintains a huge credit in this respect. It is highly valued, it has its authorisation, its pivotal position including in peacetime. As to soldiers themselves, there is one thing that stands a good example for us: French soldiers treasure a high loyalty for the French Republic and the French Armed Forces.

You are the oldest Chief of General Staff in the modern history of the Czech Armed Forces. Do you not think that the Czech general officers retire from the military too soon, that they could still use their experience in top-ranking positions?

I may really be the oldest acting Chief of General Staff in the modern history of the Czech Armed Forces. But I do think that age is optimal for this position. The post of the Chief of General Staff should be the peak of both military service career and working career for the individual. The outgoing Chief of General Staff should not already be somewhat indecently exposed to what are not always positive effects of the competitive environment in the job market. Indeed, the position of CHOD is difficult to grasp in the civilian life in many respects. In my view, it is therefore not correct for CHODs to retire from the military already in their fifties, which has already happened in the past. On the other hand

I do understand general officers retire from the military in a natural way sooner, but the Chief of General Staff should be a different case. That is also my experience from France, where the Chief of Defence simply leaves the military on his old-age retirement.

Did you have a chance to follow developments in the Czech Armed Forces and what was your vision when you assumed the new post?

Everything started when I spoke with General Pavel back in February 2014 about the possibility for me to continue service in the post of the 1st Deputy Chief of General Staff. I welcomed that offer. So, I had a chance for more than a year to consult, discuss and work many issues with General Pavel and Deputy CHODs, and be involved in preparation of the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept. Although I had served outside the Czech Republic for three years before that, the last year was very useful for me to gain appropriate degree of familiarity and have input into some of the matters covered under the Concept. My vision is essentially formulated in the Concept. It is naturally not my vision only; it is a shared vision by other general officers and senior leaders in the General Staff and the Ministry of Defence. Our shared goal is to again increase manning levels, emphasise personnel, make sure defence appropriations increase and progressive replacement of major systems commences, particularly in the Land Forces.

When you were offered to serve as the 1st Deputy Chief of General Staff, did it occur to you that it would be a sort of an standby reserve for the top military position?

I certainly did not realise that. The selection of a new Chief of General Staff is relatively comprehensive machinery. It involves consulting among the Defence Minister, the Cabinet and the President. But the opinion of the outgoing Chief of General Staff is also voiced, and it is consulted in parliamentary committees. It is a pretty complex matter. So, on my return to the Czech Republic I did not have a slightest clue it could end up this way and I could become the Chief of General Staff.

As you assumed office, you inherited the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept that was just about to be finalised. To what extent is the document groundbreaking, did you have to step into it, or are you satisfied with its final shape?

It should be made clear that the concept is not a ground-breaking policy. It is a document that provides a primary analysis of what has happened in the Czech military in the past couple of years as a result of defence cuts that largely impacted personnel in particular. The situation was quite critical; we were about to hit the rock bottom. It was necessary to say what we will do about that. In this context, I should mention my predecessor General Pavel, who articulated those problems openly. The Government passed the defence budget just recently. The Ministry of Defence should have four billion CZK growth year-to-year, which is truly a significant change after many years. Moreover, the prediction for the years 2017 and 2018 was also endorsed. And that is the game-changer for the Czech Armed Forces Development Concept to be launched at all. Naturally, one may never be absolutely sure there will be enough money down the road for us to be able to implement it one hundred percent. The key thing is that the programs the concept envisions may now be launched. Maybe

we will need to distribute some of the projects over an extended period of time. The important thing though is there will be enough funding to start development as well as modernisation programs. We also have sufficient funds for personnel expenditures. That means we will be able to carry on recruiting new soldiers in the next year. In total, we are short of roughly five thousand service personnel; after some six years, we intend to have more incoming military professionals than those going out. The plan is we will get thousand new soldiers, and that is decisive for me. Over those four years, the Czech Armed Forces will be in position to perform missions in a standard manner in adequate personnel strength. We will get rid of so-called Emmantal organisation structures and rather fill individual vacant positions with military professionals. All modernisation projects are also high on priority list, with modernisation of the Land Forces being the foremost. That primarily applies to the 7th Mechanised Brigade and the Artillery Regiment. We still have the legacy Praga V3S trucks in the inventory of the Land Forces. We seek to replace them with a more advanced system too. We are building another logistics support battalion. We also plan to procure multirole helicopters and radar systems.



As you mentioned the 7th Mechanised Brigade, new infantry fighting vehicles and even a new tank system has been talked about in that connection. Is that realistic?

At present, there is a tank battalion in the order of battle of the 7th Mechanised Brigade. We plan to keep the tanks in the inventory, rearming of the tank battalion is definitely not on the table now. That would claim huge costs that we do not have enough funding for. The existing tanks will be retained. I trust that my successors will come back to it and the heavy hardware will be replaced at some point in the years ahead. The key thing though is that we want to build a military force that will be well-balanced. We do not want to forget about the existence of tanks or artillery. While the artillery regiment only has two battalions at the moment, it is still a nucleus of something we may build upon in case of crisis. Then we would build up another regiment on its basis. That is the prism we look at the armed forces' structure when we speak about a well-balanced military force.

Was it not a mistake that we perhaps paid a smaller attention to heavy weapons under the impression of Afghanistan?

Afghanistan has been a big topic for us from 2002. When our engagement peaked we had something in the order of one thousand service personnel deployed in Afghanistan. Such an extensive and challenging mission must have also naturally affected the peacetime structure of the armed forces. Many of the Armed Forces' operations were tied to the process of deploying and sustaining forces in that specific environment. Some people coin the term "afghanisation" of the military. I do not like to put it that way, but our long-term engagement in that area no doubt affected the overall shape of our armed forces. I do not say nevertheless that the effect is necessarily negative. First of all, we have learned a lot in Afghanistan and proved we can do a good job in such a challenging environment, accomplish the mission, and that is extremely valuable for the armed forces' morale.

Right after you assumed the office, you turned much of your attention to the active reserve component, is it an important subject for you?

It is an important part of our military. We presently have about 1,250 members of the active reserve component. We nevertheless want to have five thousand reservists within four or five years in the reserve. Twenty five hundred out of them will perform missions in the territory in support of Regional Military Headquarters and twenty five hundred will be assigned in organisational components with manoeuvre battalion and brigade. I was in Píslavice yesterday; there is a tank battalion and a reserve tank company acting next to it. That is the way it should be. Development of the active reserve is truly my high priority. I trust that amendments will be passed to defence legislation in this year to improve the conditions both for the reservists and indeed for their employers.



factsheet

Josef Bečvář was born in Pilsen on 11 August 1958. He studied at the Military School in Moravská Třebová and then he graduated from the Army College in Vyškov, the artillery program. He started as a rocket troops platoon commander and eventually became a fire battery commander. At the end of 1980s, he served as a senior officer in the artillery staff of tank division and lead senior officer of the Military Police Directorate. In 1993, he studied a French Gendarmerie information course in Melun. Upon his return into the Czech Republic, he became the deputy commander of the Military Police Command Prague. From 1997 through 2004, he served as the Chief of Military Police. At that time, he also studied at the École Militaire in Paris. He completed studies of the Faculty of Law of the Charles University in Prague in 1995-96. From 2004 through 2007 and then again in 2011-2014, he was the Czech Republic's Defence Attaché in France. From April 2008, he served three years as the Deputy Chief of General Staff – Chief of Staff. At the beginning of August 2014, he was appointed the First Deputy Chief of General Staff. General Bečvář's hobbies include horse riding, travelling and literature.

Some are not completely sure that five thousand reservists can be recruited; do you regard that number realistic?

I do think it is realistic.

In connection with the Act on Reserve Soldiers, people say we could go even further to accommodate them, that they have a better position in Poland, and that is why they do not have problems with recruitment for reserve forces...

Let us be realistic: all nations have some of kind of problems with the reserve component and there will always be much room for improvement. In case the Czech Republic finds out in five years' time that five thousand is a number too low, then let us have six or ten thousand of reservists, but we need to have appropriate conditions for them in place. We have had a force review done just recently and we have funding budgeted for five thousand reservists until 2020. It is not just that we pay them thousand Czech korunas monthly and additional allowances for exercises, but we also need to have the boots, battledresses and other equipment for them, there must conditions in place for their proper training and employment. So, there is a whole package of additional measures that goes with the number of five thousand.

Your vision is that every reserve soldier should have his personal weapon, equipment and go for training performed with active-duty units of our military. That is a big novelty; do you seek to launch the project already in the next year?

The Active Reserve Component needs to be interconnected with the professional part of our military to maximum extent possible. I would hate to see any dividing lines. That is why we already have preparations underway for a training linked together to maximum extent. If a tank company comprising military professionals goes for training into a military training area, then let us have the reserve tank company training alongside them. We would like to see professional and reserve soldiers to know about each other as much as possible and share experience, for example when they go for lunch into a dining facility. Simply the active reserve must become a full-fledged and equal part of the Armed Forces. That will have to apply to the reserve forces' equipment, although not

everything will naturally happen overnight given the low funding in recent years.

Was it not a mistake in the past that individual Active Reserve companies were assigned under the command of the Regional Military Headquarters in the past, which resulted in a barrier to have grown between professional and reserve soldiers?

I do not think that would be a mistake. One part of the active reserve component will be tied to manoeuvre units, and the other part should primarily be involved in territorial defence. There are regional governors, crisis management system and the Regional Military Headquarters. There may be floods and other emergencies and it is therefore necessary for the reserve infantry companies to be involved in those cases and able to support the Integrated Emergency System.

The amendment to the Act No. 221 on Career Soldier has been in force for three months. What are the lessons gained so far; will it not need some additional finetuning?

The Act newly gives a clear answer to every military professional as to how their military career will evolve. What they should give to the military and what they may expect to get in turn. Same as any other fundamental change, the amendment solicits many reactions that we are following very closely, particularly as concerns comments on remuneration policy. But it would be a mistake to draw hasty conclusions. We evaluate everything now and work with the State Secretary to be able to submit to the Minister an analysis at the end of this year and asses what needs to be done with the Act and implementing regulations. But I consider the amendment positive as a whole. If there are some problematic matters to only come out in practise, we will naturally seek to finetune those.

The Czech Armed Forces has a pretty high average age. Do you think the recruitment efforts underway may help decrease it?

What is a high and low age these days? I would not like to overestimate this subject. Yes the armed forces has somewhat grown old. The recruitment was mothballed and military professionals stayed in posts for longer as a result. On the other hand, they gained more experience and served more operational tours. It would

therefore not be completely right to launch some mass campaigns just to rejuvenate the armed forces. Soldiers manage to perform their duties and the population grows old too at the end of the day. In this situation, it makes no sense to insist on having young soldiers everywhere in the armed forces. The important thing is that they must be able to perform their missions.

The other uniformed services represent a considerable competition for in the labour market. Do you believe the service conditions the new act stipulates will give us an edge in this respect?

I believe so. We concurred with the director for personnel that the amendment to Act 221 is in many respects truly attractive for young people entering the military. The Czech national economy is on the rise though. Young people face a decision, whether they would pursue their career in the military or in a civilian vocation. I do think nevertheless that the settings are very good as to material and financial benefits associated with military service. Naturally, there is the Police, prison service and other security services or components of the Integrated Emergency System interested in pretty much the same personnel pool, which is quite small. I am nevertheless confident that the amended Act will canvass young people. There are many attractive opportunities in the military from manifold jobs to further education to the prospects of foreign operational deployments. There are also many programs the civilian companies or other security services do not offer in such an extent. Soldiers have a special medical support, physical training and many other benefits.

What is the message you would like to convey to soldiers in conclusion of this interview?

I would like all armed forces members, not only military professionals, but also defence civilians and members of the active reserve component, to know that I highly value their diligent work and sacrifices they are making. My experience has proven that I may fully rely on them, be they performing their missions in the home territory or on foreign deployments. We will rather have more tasks in the years ahead, and they will definitely be more challenging than today.

Military ranks and rank corps

Generals



General



Lieutenant-General



Major-General



Brigadier-General

Senior officers



Colonel



Lieutenant-Colonel



Major

Junior officers



Captain



First-Lieutenant

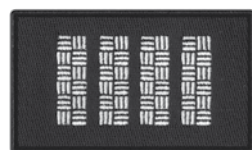


Lieutenant

Senior non-commissioned officers



Chief Warrant Officer



Senior Warrant Officer



Warrant Officer

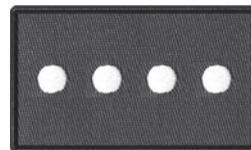


Master Sergeant

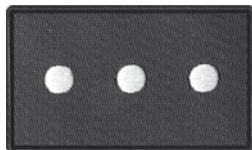


Sergeant First Class

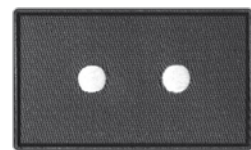
Junior non-commissioned officers



Staff Sergeant

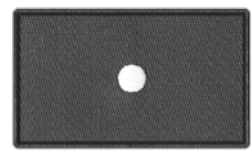


Sergeant



Corporal

Enlisted personnel



Private First Class



Private



Images show embroidered rank insignia worn on field uniforms

MoD Defence Decorations



National Defence Cross of the Minister of
Defence of the Czech Republic



Golden Linden Decoration of the Minister of
Defence of the Czech Republic



Cross of Merit of the Minister of Defence of
the Czech Republic
1st Class



Medal of the Minister of Defence of the
Czech Republic, For injury



Medal of the Minister of Defence of the
Czech Republic, For Service Abroad



Czech Armed Forces Service Medal
1st Class

Czech Armed Forces' Foreign Deployments and Missions

UNPROFOR / UNCRO – Yugoslavia

Mission: establish and run checkpoints; organising mobile observation teams; oversight of deposited weapons of warring parties; provide security the Croatian Podlapač community; patrolling and humanitarian aid; escorting convoys carrying displaced persons from the Republic of Serbian Krajina into Croatia

Bases: Knin, Borje, Jezerce, Udbina, Klapavica etc.

(March 1992 – April 1993)

Battalion commander: LTC Karel Blahna
Personnel: 500

(April 1993 – April 1994)

Battalion commander: COL Vladimír Braun
Personnel: 500

(April 1994 – March 1995)

Battalion commander: COL Vojtěch Seidl
Personnel: 1,000

(April 1995 – March 1996)

Battalion commander: LTC Ludovít Círok
Personnel: 1,000

(April 1994 – July 1995)

Commander Sector South: MG Rostislav Kotil

(October 1995 – January 1996)

Commander Sector South: COL Karel Blahna

IFOR – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mission: implement individual parts of the Dayton Accords; maintain militarily secure environment; permanently monitor activities of the formerly belligerent armies in barracks and staging locations; provide organisational and logistic assistance to OSCE during elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bases: Donja Ljubija, Bosanska Krupa, Stari Majdan, Arapuša, Brežićani

6th Mechanised Battalion (January–June 1996)

Commanding officer: MG Jiří Šedivý
Battalion commander: LTC Josef Sedlák
Personnel: 669



6th Mechanised Battalion (July–December 1996)

Commanding Officer: COL Jaroslav Jásek
Battalion commander: LTC Josef Prokš
Personnel: 669
The 6th MechBn continued as part of SFOR from 20 December 1996.

UNTAES – Croatia

FIELD HOSPITAL

Mission: provide medical care to UN personnel
Base: Klisa

(March 1996 – March 1997)

Commanding Officer: MAJ Pavel Budínský
Personnel: 40

(April 1997 – March 1998)

Commanding Officer: LTC Miloslav Matoušek
Personnel: 40

SFOR – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Mission: supervise implementation of military aspects of the Dayton Accords; stabilising zones of separation; continue to stabilise the secure environment; assist in creating favourable environment for a safe return of refugees and displaced persons, humanitarian aid and reconstruction

Bases: Donja Ljubija, Bosanska Krupa, Divulje, Velka Kladuša etc.

6th Mechanised Battalion (December 1996 – February 1997)

Commanding officer: COL Jaroslav Jásek
Battalion commander: LTC Josef Prokš
Personnel: 669

6th Mechanised Battalion (March–November 1997)

Commanding Officer: COL Zdeněk Mach
Battalion commander: LTC Pavel Jiráček
Personnel: 669



(April–December 2004)

Commanding officer: LTC Ladislav Buček
Personnel: 7

AFOR – Albania, Turkey

ALBANIA, KAVAJE – A HUMANITARIAN AID MISSION

Mission: Provide medical aid to Kosovar refugees and AFOR service personnel; provide specialist medical aid in the branch of traumatology, ENT, X-Ray, dentistry, cardiology and psychiatry; provide humanitarian aid to Kosovar refugees



TURKEY, GÖLCÜK – A HUMANITARIAN AID MISSION (aid after disastrous earthquake)

Mission: provide specialist medical aid; provide medical and logistic support to provisional shelter camps

6th Mechanised Battalion (November 1997 – August 1998)

Commanding Officer: COL Jiří Kašpárek
Battalion commander: LTC Jozef Šemelák
Personnel: 669
The 6th MechBn continued as part of SFOR II from June 1998.

7th Mechanised Battalion (August 1998 – March 1999)

Commanding Officer: COL Ján Gurník
Battalion commander: COL Jaroslav Pražan
Personnel: 588

3rd Mechanised Battalion (March–October 1999)

Commanding Officer: COL Michal Vass
Battalion commander: LTC Vladimír Stríž
Personnel: 588

1st Mechanised Battalion (October 1999 – April 2000)

Commanding officer: COL Zdeněk Košvanec
Battalion commander: LTC Martin Květon
Personnel: 580

43rd Mechanised Battalion (April–October 2000)

Commanding Officer: BG Vladimír Lavička
Battalion commander: LTC Aleš Opata
Personnel: 580

4th Mechanised Battalion (October 2000 – April 2001)

Commanding Officer: COL Jaroslav Lazorišák
Battalion commander: LTC Radek Henner
Personnel: 580

5th Mechanised Battalion (April–December 2001)

Commanding Officer: COL Jan Neplech
Battalion commander: LTC Antonín Vícha
Personnel: 580



CZECH ARMED FORCES NATIONAL REPRESENTATION IN SFOR II
Bases: Zagreb, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Prijedor

(December 2001 – April 2002)

Commanding Officer: COL Miroslav Žižka
Personnel: 15

(April–October 2002)

Commanding officer: COL Jaroslav Kolkus
Personnel: 15

(October 2002 – April 2003)

Commanding officer: COL Jiří Kuchař
Personnel: 8

(April–October 2003)

Commanding officer: LTC Petr Smola
Personnel: 5

(October 2003 – April 2004)

Commanding officer: LTC Jaroslav Kulíšek
Personnel: 7

6th Field Hospital (May–November 1999)

Commanding Officer: LTC Jindřich Sitta
Personnel: 89

KFOR – Kosovo

Mission: safeguarding the Administrative Border Line separating Kosovo and Serbia; monitoring all activities at the ABL and in the border areas; registering and ensuring a safe return of displaced persons; creating conditions for the restoration of peaceful coexistence of Kosovar Serbs and Albanians; protection of cultural monuments; monitoring activities of the Kosovo Protection Corps and participation in its transformation and training.

Bases: Camp Sajkovac, Gazala Lines, Lipljan etc.



6th Reconnaissance Company
(June 1999 – January 2000)
Commanding Officer: MAJ Karel Klinovský
Personnel: 196

4th Reconnaissance Company
(January–July 2000)
Commanding Officer: LTC Vladimír Podlipný
Personnel: 196

2nd Reconnaissance Company
(July 2000 – January 2001)
Commanding Officer: MAJ Zdeněk Pitner
Personnel: 196

7th Reconnaissance Company
(January–July 2001)
Commanding Officer: MAJ Vlastimil Rozumek
Personnel: 196

11th Reconnaissance Company
(July 2001 – January 2002)
Commanding Officer: MAJ Petr Smola
Personnel: 180

1st Czech-Slovak Battalion KFOR
(January–July 2002)
Commanding Officer: LTC Ľubomír Frk
Battalion commander: LTC Jiří Dragan
Personnel: 400

2nd Czech-Slovak Battalion KFOR
(July 2002 – February 2003)
Commanding Officer: LTC Aleš Opata
Battalion commander: MAJ Petr Procházka
Personnel: 400

3rd Czech-Slovak Battalion KFOR
(February–October 2003)
Commanding Officer: COL Rostislav Jaroš
Battalion commander: LTC Josef Kopecký
Personnel: 400

4th Czech-Slovak Battalion KFOR
(October 2003 – April 2004)
Commanding Officer: LTC Ivo Střecha

Battalion commander:
LTC Zdeněk Havala
from January 2004:
LTC Josef Kopecký
Personnel: 400



5th Czech-Slovak Battalion KFOR
(May–December 2004)
Commanding Officer: LTC Aleš Vodehnal
Battalion commander: LTC Antonín Genser
Personnel: 400

6th ACR Contingent KFOR
(December 2004 – July 2005)
Commanding Officer: LTC Jaroslav Trojan
Battalion commander: MAJ Roman Náhončík
Personnel: 400

7th ACR Contingent KFOR
(July 2005 – January 2006)
Commanding Officer: COL Aleš Vodehnal
Personnel: 500
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 100 (in home station)

8th ACR Contingent KFOR
(January–July 2006)
Commanding Officer: COL Miroslav Hlaváč
Personnel: 500
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 100 (in home station)

9th ACR Contingent KFOR
(July 2006 – January 2007)
Commanding Officer: LTC Pavel Lipka
Personnel: 448
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 116 (in home station)

10th ACR Contingent KFOR
(January–July 2007)
Commanding Officer: LTC Ladislav Švejda
Personnel: 391
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 116 (in home station)



11th ACR Contingent KFOR
(July 2007 – January 2008)
Commanding Officer: LTC Milan Schulc
Personnel: 433
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 116 (in home station)

12th ACR Contingent KFOR
(January–July 2008)
Commanding Officer: LTC Jiří David
Personnel: 406
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 116 (in home station)

13th ACR Contingent KFOR
(July 2008 – January 2009)
Commanding Officer: LTC Jiří Roček
Personnel: 402
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 116 (in home station)

14th ACR Contingent KFOR
(January–July 2009)
Commanding Officer: LTC Róbert Bielený
Personnel: 413
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 106 (in home station)

15th ACR Contingent KFOR
(July 2009 – February 2010)
Commanding Officer: LTC Jiří Kývala
from 10 December 2009: LTC Jan Cífkva
Personnel: 386
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 102 (in home station)

16th ACR Contingent KFOR
(February–October 2010)
Commanding Officer: LTC Martin Kavalír
Personnel: 322
Ops Reserve Force Coy: 102 (in home station)

1st CZE ORF KFOR (October 2010 – July 2011)
Commanding Officer (home): LTC Jan Cífkva
Personnel (home): 503
CO core force: MAJ Ladislav Horák
Personnel: 92

1st CZE Task Force KFOR
(June–November 2011)
Commanding officer: MAJ Josef Nejedlý
Personnel: 99

1st CZE Team HQ KFOR
(August 2011 – February 2012)
Commanding Officer: MAJ Pavel Udvorka
Personnel: 7



2nd CZE Team HQ KFOR
(February–August 2012)
Commanding Officer: LTC Vladimír Petera
Personnel: 6

3rd CZE Team HQ KFOR
(August 2012 – February 2013)
Commanding officer: LTC Aleš Stybor
Personnel: 7



4th CZE Team HQ KFOR
(February–August 2013)
Commanding officer: MAJ Karel Vykoukal
Personnel: 10

5th CZE Team HQ KFOR
(August 2013 – February 2014)
Commanding officer: MAJ Jan Matula
Personnel: 7

6th CZE Team HQ KFOR
(February–August 2014)
Commanding officer: MAJ Otakar Růžička
Personnel: 13

7th CZE Team HQ KFOR
(August 2014 – February 2015)
Commanding officer: MAJ Libor Mašlaň
Personnel: 8

Essential Harvest – FYROM / Macedonia

Mission: security of the Headquarters Multinational Brigade and relay stations; escorting supply convoys; patrolling in the HQ MNB area; developing the MNB Commander's airborne reserve force
Base: Skopje



43rd Airborne Company
(August–October 2001)
Company commander: CAPT Oldřich Nápravník
Personnel: 120

Enduring Freedom – Kuwait

CBRN DEFENCE UNITS

Mission: protection of coalition forces and civilian population against intentional use of chemical, biologic, radiological or nuclear weapons or systems; radiological, chemical and biologic surveillance coverage along with a sustained and continuous detection and early warning; performance of assignments in support civil defence of the State of Kuwait; consequence management following the use of weapons of mass destruction or accidents in an assigned area of responsibility
Bases: Camp Doha, Kuwait City



9th Reinforced Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Company
(March–September 2002)
Commanding Officer: COL Josef Prokš
from 5 August 02: LTC Dušan Lupuljev
Personnel: 251

4th Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Detachment
(September 2002 – February 2003)
Commanding officer: COL Jan Weiser
Personnel: 251

1st Czech-Slovak Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion
(February–June 2003)
Commanding officer: COL Dušan Lupuljev
Personnel: 395

ISAF / Resolute Support (RS) – Afghanistan

ISAF was replaced by non-combat Operation Resolute Support at 1 Jan 2015.

FIELD HOSPITAL – KABUL

Mission: provide Role 3 medical care to the injured, the burnt and ill both during combat activities and at other times; short-term in-patient treatment for ISAF service personnel; provide medical and humanitarian aid to the local population
Base: KAIA



6th Field Hospital (May–October 2002)
Commanding Officer: COL Jindřich Sitta
Personnel: 140

11th Field Hospital (October 2002 – February 2003)
Commanding Officer: LTC Marek Obrtel
Personnel: 140

Field Surgical Team (February–April 2003)
Commanding Officer: COL Peter Gál
Personnel: 12

EOD & METEO – KABUL

Mission: EOD reconnaissance, disposal of unexploded ordnance, improvised explosive devices and engineer reconnaissance of the Kabul International Airport area; meteorological support to air traffic management; measuring and sharing hydrological and meteorological data
Base: KAIA

1st EOD Detachment ISAF KAIA (March–September 2004)

Commanding officer: MAJ Radek Augustýn
 Personnel: 16

2nd EOD Detachment ISAF KAIA (September 2004 – March 2005)

Commanding officer: CAPT Zbyněk Koza
 Personnel: 16

3rd EOD Detachment ISAF KAIA (March–September 2005)

Commanding officer: 1LT Milan Pavlík
 Personnel: 15

4th EOD Detachment ISAF KAIA (September 2005 – March 2006)

Commanding officer: MAJ Bořek Valíček
 Personnel: 17

5th EOD Detachment ISAF KAIA (March–September 2006)

Commanding officer: MAJ Zdeněk Hejpetr
 Personnel: 18

6th EOD Detachment ISAF KAIA (September 2006 – March 2007)

Commanding officer: MAJ Martin Kolář
 Personnel: 19

PRT FAYZABAD, BADA KHSHAN PROVINCE

Mission: Provide security to the German PRT; security of the Fayzabad airfield; escorting vehicles and PRT resupplying convoys; liaison with the locals; patrolling in assigned area of responsibility and situational awareness

Base: Fayzabad

1st PRT Fayzabad ISAF (March–October 2005)

Commanding officer: MAJ Miroslav Vybíhal
 Personnel: 40

2nd PRT Fayzabad ISAF (October 2005 – March 2006)

Commanding officer: LTC Radek Černý
 Personnel: 44

3rd PRT Fayzabad ISAF (March–October 2006)

Commanding officer: LTC Tibor Budík
 Personnel: 83

4th PRT Fayzabad ISAF (October 2006 – March 2007)

Commanding officer: MAJ Peter Salák
 Personnel: 82

5th PRT Fayzabad ISAF (March–August 2007)

Commanding officer: COL Aleš Opatá
 Personnel: 86

6th PRT Fayzabad ISAF (August–December 2007)

Commanding officer: LTC Petr Procházka
 Personnel: 86

LEAD NATION KAIA – KABUL

Mission: performing the lead nation role at the Kabul International Airport; provide aerodrome daily operations management; provide security for civilian persons at the airport and its preparation for handover to civilian representatives and the Afghan Government
Base: KAIA

**1st Contingent LN KAIA ISAF**

(November 2006 – April 2007)
 Commanding officer: COL Bohuslav Dvořák
 Personnel: 47

FIELD HOSPITAL AND CBRN DEFENCE UNIT & METEO & AIR OMLT – KABUL

Mission: Provide Role 2E medical care to injured, burnt and ill patients both during ISAF combat operations and at other times; short-term in-patient treatment for ISAF service personnel; provide medical and humanitarian aid to the local population; performance of CBRN reconnaissance, sampling and identification of agents in a mobile lab; CBRN assessment and early warning for forces and local authorities; personnel decontamination up to platoon level; meteo support to air traffic management; performance of measurements and sharing hydrometeorological data; observation and assessment of basic meteo elements and phenomena; since April



2008, training Afghan Air Force personnel on Mi-17 and Mi-24/35 helicopters.

Base: KAIA

1st FH and CBRN contingent (April–August 2007)

Commanding officer: COL Zoltán Bubeník
 Personnel: 98

2nd FH and CBRN contingent (August–December 2007)

Commanding officer: COL Igor Krivosudský
 Personnel: 99

3rd FH and CBRN contingent (December 2007 – April 2008)

Commanding officer: COL Marek Kocvrlich
 Personnel: 104

4th FH and CBRN contingent (April–August 2008)

Commanding officer: COL Mojmír Mrva
 Personnel: 104

5th FH and CBRN contingent (August–December 2008)

Commanding officer: MAJ Martin Benda
 Personnel: 105

MP SOG – HELMAND

Mission: training ANA forces; assistance on force development, internal security operations with ANA forces; ANP training support
Base: Camp Shank

1st SOG contingent ISAF (April–October 2007)

Commanding officer: MAJ Petr Krčmář
 Personnel: 35

2nd SOG contingent SOG ISAF (October 2007 – April 2008)

Commanding officer: MAJ Pavel Růžička
 Personnel: 35

3rd SOG contingent ISAF (April–October 2008)

Commanding officer: LTC Miroslav Murček
 From August 2008: MAJ Pavel Horňák
 Personnel: 35/23

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM LOGAR

Mission: support humanitarian aid and reconstruction activities in the province; security of the PRT civilian component; ANSF training; monitoring and assessment of military and civilian situation; providing base security; maintaining dialogue with the province governor and district governors; performance of confidence-building activities with local authorities so as to minimise the risk of conflict
Base: Camp Shank

**1st PRT Logar ISAF (March–August 2008)**

Commanding officer: COL Ivo Střecha
 Personnel: 198

**2nd PRT Logar ISAF**

(August 2008 – February 2009)
 Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Lipka
 Personnel: 200

3rd PRT Logar ISAF (February–August 2009)

Commanding officer: LTC Petr Procházka
 Personnel: 275

4th PRT Logar ISAF

(August 2009 – February 2010)
 Commanding officer: LTC Milan Schulc
 Personnel: 275

5th PRT Logar ISAF (February–August 2010)

Commanding officer: COL Rudolf Honzák
 Personnel: 275

6th PRT Logar ISAF

(August 2010 – February 2011)
 Commanding officer: LTC Ctibor Gazda
 Personnel: 283

7th PRT Logar ISAF (February–August 2011)

Commanding officer: COL Miroslav Hlaváč
 Personnel: 293

8th PRT Logar ISAF

(August 2011 – February 2012)
 Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Andráško
 Personnel: 292

9th PRT Logar ISAF

(February–August 2012)
 Commanding officer: COL Antonín Genser
 Personnel: 293

10th PRT Logar ISAF

(August 2012 – February 2013)
 Commanding officer: COL Josef Kopecký
 Personnel: 293

11th PRT Logar ISAF (January–June 2013)

Commanding officer: MAJ Vladimír Jelínek
 Personnel: 100

URUZGAN**Mission:** base security**Base:** Dutch Camp Hadrian / Deh Rawod**1st Contingent Uruzgan ISAF
(July 2008 – January 2009)**Commanding officer: MAJ Miroslav Brázda
Personnel: 63**2nd Contingent Uruzgan ISAF
(January–April 2009)**Commanding officer: CAPT Jiří Líbal
Personnel: 63**KAIA AND CBRN UNIT + METEO + AIR
OMLT – KABUL****Mission:** provide CBRN reconnaissance, sampling and identification in a mobile lab; CBRN assessment and early warning for forces andlocal authorities; personnel decontamination up to platoon level; meteo support to air traffic management; performance of measurements and sharing hydrometeorological data; observation and assessment of basic meteo elements and phenomena; since April 2008, training Afghan Air Force personnel on Mi-17 and Mi-24/35 helicopters
Base: KAIA**1st Contingent KAIA and CBRN unit
(December 2008 – June 2009)**Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Jelínek
Personnel: 70**2nd Contingent KAIA and CBRN unit
(June–December 2009)**Commanding officer: LTC Jiří Pluhař
Personnel: 64**3rd Contingent KAIA and CBRN unit
(December 2009 – June 2010)**Commanding officer: LTC Josef Šimůnek
Personnel: 61**HELICOPTER UNIT – PAKTIKA****Mission:** airlifting personnel and materiel; support to quick reaction forces; medical evacuation of injured and ill NATO and Afghan National Security Forces service personnel
Base: FOB Sharana**1st Heli Unit ISAF****(December 2009 – March 2010)**Commanding officer: COL Petr Schwarz
Personnel: 100**2nd Heli Unit ISAF (March–June 2010)**Commanding officer: LTC Milan Koutný
Personnel: 99**3rd Heli Unit ISAF (June–October 2010)**Commanding officer: MAJ Robert Papš
Personnel: 99**4th Heli Unit ISAF****(October 2010 – January 2011)**Commanding officer: COL Jaromír Šebesta
Personnel: 99**5th Heli Unit ISAF (January–May 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Karel Krejčířik
Personnel: 98**6th Heli Unit ISAF (May–August 2011)**Commanding officer: COL Václav Valeš
Personnel: 99**7th Heli Unit ISAF (August–December 2011)**Commanding officer: COL Jaromír Šebesta
Personnel: 99**AMT / AAT KABUL****Mission:** training Afghan National Army Air Corps personnel on Mi-24/35 and Mi-17 helicopters**Base:** KAIA**1st AMT ISAF (April–November 2010)**Commanding officer: CAPT Vladimír Vladík
Personnel: 11**2nd AMT ISAF****(November 2010 – March 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Petr Kratochvíl
Personnel: 19**3rd AMT ISAF (April–August 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Rudolf Straka
Personnel: 19**4th AMT ISAF (August–November 2011)**Commanding officer: MAJ Miroslav Borůfka
Personnel: 19**5th AAT ISAF (November 2011 – March 2012)**Commanding officer: LTC Petr Kratochvíl
Personnel: 19**6th AAT ISAF (March–July 2012)**Commanding officer: MAJ Jaroslav Falta
Personnel: 19**7th AAT ISAF (July–November 2012)**Commanding officer: MAJ Josef Kořínek
Personnel: 49**8th AAT ISAF (November 2012 – March 2013)**Commanding officer: MAJ Pavel Procházka
Personnel: 27**9th AAT ISAF (March–July 2013)**Commanding officer: CAPT Miroslav Šajban
Personnel: 30**10th AAT ISAF (July–November 2013)**Commanding officer: LTC Josef Falta
Personnel: 30**11th AAT ISAF (November–March 2013)**Commanding officer: MAJ Dalibor Křenek
Personnel: 30**12th AAT ISAF (March–July 2013)**Commanding officer: CAPT Petr Šafařík
Personnel: 30**13th AAT ISAF (July–November 2014)**Commanding officer: MAJ Jan Vanický
Personnel: 30**14th AAT ISAF (November–March 2015)**Commanding officer: MAJ Petr Slíva
Personnel: 30**CZECH ARMED FORCED TASK FORCE ISAF
& NSE – KABUL****Mission:** The Czech Armed Forces Task Force ISAF providesan organisational umbrella to all Czech MoD units and components deployed in the territory of Afghanistan, including the provision of comprehensive support to the deployments
Base: KAIA**CZE TF & NSE ISAF****(June 2010 – January 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Šiška
Personnel: 55**CZE TF & 4th NSE ISAF (January–June 2011)**Commanding officer: COL Jaroslav Jířů
Personnel: 55**CZE TF & 5th NSE ISAF****(June–December 2011)**Commanding officer: COL Jaroslav Štrupl
Personnel: 61**CZE TF & 7th NSE ISAF****(December 2011 – June 2012)**Commanding officer: COL Ján Kožiak
Personnel: 61**CZE TF & 8th NSE ISAF****(June–December 2012)**Commanding officer: COL Martin Štochl
Personnel: 61**CZE TF & 9th NSE ISAF****(December 2012 – June 2013)**Commanding officer: COL Jaroslav Trakal
Personnel: 61**CZE TF & 10th NSE ISAF****(June–December 2013)**Commanding officer: COL Pavel Veselý
Personnel: 61**CZE TF & 11th NSE ISAF****(December 2013 – June 2014)**Commanding officer: COL Stanislav Hudeček
Personnel: 61**CZE TF & 12th NSE ISAF
(June–December 2014)**Commanding officer: COL Radek Hasala
Personnel: 46**CZE TF & 13th NSE ISAF / RS****(November 2014 – June 2015)**Commanding officer: COL Vratislav Beran
Personnel: 46**CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENCE UNIT
– KABUL****Mission:** provide reconnaissance, sampling and identification in a mobile lab; radiological and chemical situation assessment and early warning for ISAF forces and local authorities
Base: KAIA**9th CBRN Team ISAF****(June 2010 – January 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Karel Dvonč
Personnel: 11**10th CBRN Team ISAF****(January–June 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Miroslav Brázda
Personnel: 14**11th CBRN Team ISAF****(June–December 2011)**Commanding officer: LTC Jaroslav Bartoš
Personnel: 14**12th CBRN Team ISAF****(December 2011 – June 2012)**Commanding officer: MAJ Petr Zdráhala
Personnel: 14**13th CBRN Team ISAF****(June–December 2012)**Commanding officer: CAPT Věra Bielská
Personnel: 14

14th CBRN Team ISAF
(December 2012 – June 2013)
Commanding officer: MAJ Jaroslav Dohnánek
Personnel: 14

15th CBRN Team ISAF (June–December 2013)
Commanding officer: CAPT Hanuš Ort
Personnel: 14

OMLT – WARDAK
Mission: Train, mentor and assist on planning, command and control of a battalion equivalent ANA infantry unit (kandak)
Bases: COP Carwile, COP Soltan Kheyl



1st OMLT ISAF
(September 2010 – March 2011)
Commanding officer : LTC Ladislav Švejda
Personnel: 54

2nd OMLT ISAF (April–September 2011)
Commanding officer : LTC Michal Kucharski
Personnel: 54

3rd OMLT ISAF (October 2011 – March 2012)
Commanding officer : LTC Zdeněk Mikula
Personnel: 54

4th OMLT ISAF (April–October 2012)
Commanding officer : LTC Martin Botík
Personnel: 54

5th OMLT ISAF (November 2012 – April 2013)
Commanding officer : MAJ Igor Jašek
Personnel: 54

MILITARY ADVISORY TEAM – WARDAK
Mission: mentor assigned Afghan National Army kandak
Base: Soltan Kheyl

1st MAT ISAF Wardak (March–October 2013)
Commanding officer : LTC Jan Zezula
Personnel: 59

MILITARY ADVISORY TEAM – LOGAR
Mission: mentor assigned Afghan National Army kandak
Base: Camp Shank

1st MAT ISAF Logar (March–October 2013)
Commanding officer : MAJ Přemysl Tuček
Personnel: 64

FIELD SURGICAL TEAM – KABUL
Mission: provide specialist medical care as a part of French medical facility
Base: KAIA

1st FST ISAF (February–May 2011)
Commanding officer : LTC Martin Oberreiter
Personnel: 10

2nd FST ISAF (May–September 2011)
Commanding officer : LTC Josef Roubal
Personnel: 10



3rd FST ISAF
(September 2011 – January 2012)
Commanding officer : LTC Michal Plodr
Personnel: 11

4th FST ISAF (January–June 2012)
Commanding officer : MAJ Tomáš Dušek
Personnel: 11

5th FST ISAF (June–September 2012)
Commanding officer : MAJ Radek Pohnán
Personnel: 11

6th FST ISAF
(September 2012 – January 2013)
Commanding officer : LTC Ivo Žvák
Personnel: 11

7th FST ISAF (January–May 2013)
Commanding officer : MAJ Ivan Stříbrský
Personnel: 11

8th FST ISAF (June–September 2013)
Commanding officer : MAJ Ivo Kašpárek
Personnel: 12

9th FST ISAF
(September 2013 – January 2014)
Commanding officer : COL Pavel Kupka
Personnel: 12

10th FST ISAF
(January–May 2014)
Commanding officer : LTC Josef Roubal
Personnel: 13

11th FST ISAF
(June–September 2014)
Commanding officer : LTC Martin Oberreiter
Personnel: 13

12th FST ISAF / RS
(September 2014 – January 2015)
Commanding officer : MAJ Radek Pohnán
Personnel: 13

FORCE PROTECTION COMPANY – BAGRAM
Mission: provide security to Bagram Airfield
Base: Bagram Airfield

1st FP Coy ISAF (October 2013 – April 2014)
Commanding officer : CPT Libor Tesař
Personnel: 150

2nd FP Coy ISAF (April–November 2014)
Commanding officer : CPT Jiří Pazděra
Personnel: 150

3rd FP Coy ISAF
(November 2014 – April 2015)
Commanding officer : CPT Pert Liška
Personnel: 150

MP TRAINING TEAM – WARDAK
Mission: training the ANP
Base: outpost at Durani community

1st MP Trng Team ISAF
(March–September 2011)
Commanding officer : CAPT Martin Čajan
Personnel: 12

2nd MP Trng Team ISAF
(September 2011 – March 2012)
Commanding officer : CAPT Zdeněk Koreczki
Personnel: 12

3rd MP Trng Team ISAF
(March–September 2012)
Commanding officer : MAJ Radek Ocelka
Personnel: 12

4th MP Trng Team ISAF
(September 2012 – March 2013)
Commanding officer : MAJ Libor Daněk
Personnel: 12

SPECIAL FORCES TASK FORCE – NANGARHAR
Mission: perform operational assignments tasked by Commander ISAF SOF
Base: Camp Hombre (Jelalabad)



1st SOF TF ISAF
(June 2011 – January 2012)
Commanding officer : COL Karel Řehka
Personnel: 100

2nd SOF TF ISAF (January–June 2012)
Commanding officer : COL Pavel Kolář
Personnel: 100

SPECIAL FORCES UNIT – KABUL
Mission: advise and mentor ANSF
Base: KAIA

1st SOF ISAF (January–June 2014)
Personnel: 19

2nd SOF ISAF (July–December 2014)
Personnel: 23

Iraqi Freedom – Iraq

7TH FIELD HOSPITAL, HUMANITARIAN DETACHMENT, MP TEAM
Mission: provide humanitarian aid, particularly be the means of transportation and distribution of water and collecting and disposal of unexploded ordnance; medical care for the local population to mitigate the consequence of the post-war condition; provide specialist medical care to Czech Armed Forces personnel and other states' armed forces' servicemembers operating in the territory of Iraq; MP – escort, security and guarding duties; provide police security to all Czech deployments
Base: Basra

(April–October 2003)
Commanding officer: COL Mojmir Mrva
Personnel: do 320

(October–December 2003)
Commanding officer: COL Přemysl Škácha
Chief of hospital: COL Vojtěch Humlíček
Personnel: 280

EU OPERATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA (FYROM)

Mission: staff tours at the operation HQ
Base: Concordia Skopje



(April–December 2003)
Team lead: MAJ Petr Sýkora
Personnel: 2

IZ SFOR / MNF-I – Iraq

MP CONTINGENT – BASRAH
Mission: provide escort, security and guard duties; police security to the Multinational Division South-East (MND-SE); training Iraqi police at the Az Zubayr Police Academy;



training instructors at Iraqi police stations and training Iraqi traffic police
Base: Shaibah, Az Zubayr

MNSTC-I – BAGHDAD
Mission: training selected groups of commanders (strategic and operational command echelon officers); assistance on development of the Military Academy and the Training, Education and Doctrine Centre; assistance on developing and building security structures in Iraq



(December 2003 – March 2004)
CO 1st MP Contingent: LTC Jiří Neubauer
Personnel: 92

(March–June 2004)
CO 2nd MP Contingent: LTC Milan Diviak
Personnel: 92

Sovereignty of the Republic of Iraq was restored at 28 June 2004, and the Iraqi Zone Stabilisation Force (IZ SFOR) was renamed Multinational Forces Iraq (MNF-I) at 19 July 2004.



(June–September 2004)
CO 3rd MP Contingent : LTC Luboš Bahník
Personnel: 92



(September–December 2004)
CO 4th MP Contingent: LTC Miroslav Murček
Personnel: 92

(December 2004 – March 2005)
CO 5th MP Contingent: LTC Jiří Neubauer
Personnel: 100

(March–June 2005)
CO 6th MP Contingent: LTC Milan Diviak
Personnel: 100

(June–September 2005)
CO 7th MP Contingent: LTC Pavel Chovančík
Personnel: 100

(September–December 2005)
CO 8th MP Contingent: LTC Roman Gottfried
Personnel: 100

(December 2005 – March 2006)
CO 9th MP Contingent: LTC Miroslav Murček
Personnel: 100

(March–June 2006)
CO 10th MP Contingent: LTC Jiří Neubauer
Personnel: 100

(June–September 2006)
CO 11th MP Contingent: LTC Milan Diviak
Personnel: 95

(September 2006 – January 2007)
CO 12th MP Contingent: LTC Ladislav Tvrdý
Personnel: 97

MNF-I CONTINGENT – BASRAH
Mission: security of the Delta and Ritz main entry gates and security of the COB internal premises; monitoring and mentoring Iraqi Police stations
Base: Basra – COB (Contingency Operating Base)

1st CZE Contingent MNF-I
(January–April 2007)
Commanding officer: MAJ Jan Marša
Personnel: 99

2nd CZE Contingent MNF-I
(April–August 2007)
Commanding officer: MAJ Marcel Křenek
Personnel: 100

3rd CZE Contingent MNF-I
(August–December 2007)
Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Rous
Personnel: 99

4th CZE Contingent MNF-I
(December 2007 – June 2008)
Commanding officer: MAJ Jiří Hrazdil
Personnel: 99

5th CZE Contingent MNF-I
(June 2008 – December 2008)
Commanding officer: MAJ František Grmela
Personnel: 17

6th CZE Contingent MNF-I
(December 2008 – February 2009)
Commanding officer: COL Zbyněk Janečka
Personnel: 4

Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan

SPECIAL FORCES GROUP
Mission: special reconnaissance

6th Special Group (March–September 2004)
Base: Camp Mauer (Bagram airport)
Commanding officer: COL Ondřej Páleník
Personnel: 111

6th Special Group (May–October 2006)
Base: Camp Prostějov (Kandahar airfield)
Commanding officer: COL Ondřej Páleník
Personnel: 120



601st Special Forces Group
(August 2008 – January 2009)
– **1st deployment**
Base: Camp Anaconda (Kandahar)
Commanding officer: COL Milan Kovanda
Personnel: 99

601st Special Forces Group
(January–August 2009) – 2nd deployment
Commanding officer: COL Roman Kopřiva
Personnel: 96

601st Special Forces Group
(August–December 2009) – 3rd deployment
Commanding officer: COL Josef Kopecký
Personnel: 99

Operation Althea (EUFOR) – Bosnia And Herzegovina

GUARD PLATOON & HELI UNIT – TUZLA

Mission: security and guarding the MNTF (N) command and camp; aerial reconnaissance and air transport of personnel and materiel
Base: Eagle Base (Tuzla)



1st CZE Contingent EUFOR
(December 2004 – July 2005)
Commanding officer: LTC Radim Řehulka
Platoon leader: CAPT Miroslav Folvarský
Personnel: 85

2nd CZE contingent EUFOR
(July–December 2005)
Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Hurt
Platoon leader: CAPT Karel Vlček
Personnel: 90

3rd CZE contingent EUFOR
(December 2005 – June 2006)
Commanding officer: LTC Pavel Jelínek



Platoon leader: 1LT Michal Vorschneider
Personnel: 65

4th CZE contingent EUFOR
(June–December 2006)
Commanding officer: LTC Vojtěch Prýgl
Platoon leader: 1LT Jiří Novotný
Personnel: 65

5th CZE contingent EUFOR
(December 2006 – July 2007)
Commanding officer: MAJ Oto Klos
Platoon leader: 1LT Lukáš Novák
Personnel: 52

6th CZE contingent EUFOR
(July–December 2007)
Commanding officer: MAJ Josef Přerovský
Personnel: 4

7th CZE contingent EUFOR
(December 2007 – June 2008)
Commanding officer: LTC Petr Voborný
Personnel: 4

REPRESENTATION AT HEADQUARTERS EUFOR – SARAJEVO
Mission: staff tours at Headquarters EUFOR
Base: Butmir (Sarajevo)

1st CZE Team EUFOR (June–December 2010)
Commanding officer: MAJ Jiří Hanke
Personnel: 2

2nd CZE Team EUFOR
(December 2010 – June 2011)
Commanding officer: LTC Jiří Kubík
Personnel: 2

3rd CZE Team EUFOR (June–December 2011)
Commanding officer: MAJ Milan Holusek
Personnel: 2

4th CZE Team EUFOR
(December 2011 – June 2012)
Commanding officer: MAJ Eduard Gregor
Personnel: 2

5th CZE Team EUFOR
(June–December 2012)
Commanding officer: LTC Luděk Krč
Personnel: 2

6th CZE Team EUFOR
(December 2012 – June 2013)
Commanding officer: LTC Bohuslav Pernica
Personnel: 2

7th CZE Team EUFOR
(June–December 2013)
Commanding officer: LTC Roman Vildomec
Personnel: 2

8th CZE Team EUFOR
(December 2013 – June 2014)
Commanding officer: LTC Petr Filouš
Personnel: 2

9th CZE Team EUFOR (June–December 2014)
Commanding officer: LTC Lenka Fornůsková
Personnel: 2

EUFOR Chad/RCA

REPRESENTATION AT THE OPERATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (EU OHQ) – FRANCE
Mission: activities in the OHQ operations team
Base: Mont Valérien



(November 2007 – August 2008)
Operations team officer: LTC Jaroslav Průcha

(August 2008 – March 2009)
Operations team officer: MAJ Josef Melichar

REPRESENTATION AT THE FORCE HEADQUARTERS (EU FHQ) – TCHAD
Mission: logistic support
Base: Ndjamena

(March 2008 – March 2009)
Logistic group officer: MAJ Leon Šoc

Operational Headquarters EU BG (OHQ EU BG) – Germany

LIAISON TEAM AT OHQ EU BG
Mission: development of planning documentation; coordination of possible deployment of the Czech-Slovak EU Battle Group (CZE/SVK EU BG)
Base: Ulm

(April–August 2009)
Commanding officer: COL Miroslav Hlaváč
Personnel: 5

(September–December 2009)
Commanding officer: LTC Libor Grmela
Personnel: 3

BALTIC AIR POLICING – LITHUANIA

Mission: policing the airspace of the Baltic States: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the framework of NATINADS
Base: Šiauliai, Lithuania

(May–August 2009)
Commanding officer: MAJ Jaroslav Míka
Personnel: 117

(September–December 2012)
Commanding officer: COL Petr Lančí
Personnel: 64



Multinational Force and Observers (MFO)

REPRESENTATION AT MFO COMMAND HEADQUARTERS IN EGYPT
Mission: ACR members served staff tours at HQ MFO
Base: El Gorah

1st Team MFO
(November 2009 – May 2010)
Commanding officer: MAJ Oto Klos
Personnel: 3

2nd Team MFO (May 2010 – July 2011)
Commanding officer: LTC Ladislav Sekan
Personnel: 3

3rd Team MFO (July 2011 – July 2012)
Commanding officer: LTC Josef Lejsek
Personnel: 3

4th Team MFO (July 2012 – July 2013)
Commanding officer: LTC Libor Grmela
Personnel: 3



5th Team MFO (July 2013 – August 2014)

Commanding officer: LTC Zoltán Zöld
Personnel: 3

6th Team MFO

(August 2014 – September 2015)

Commanding officer: LTC Marek Pažúr
Personnel: 3

1st CASA MFO Air unit

(November 2013 – May 2014)

Commanding officer: LTC Milan Laniak
Personnel: 11

2nd CASA MFO Air unit

(May–November 2014)

Commanding officer: LTC Radim Ulrich
Personnel: 11

3rd CASA MFO Air unit

(November 2014 – May 2015)

Commanding officer: MAJ Miloš Domin
Personnel: 12

EU NAVFOR Atalanta**REPRESENTATION****AT OPERATIONAL****HEADQUARTERS – THE****UNITED KINGDOM**

Mission: ACR servicemembers served staff tours at the operational headquarters commanding the counter-piracy operation at the Horn of Africa

Base: Northwood

1st CZE Team Atalanta (January–July 2010)

Commanding officer : LTC Jozef Podoba
Personnel: 3

2nd CZE Team Atalanta

(July 2010 – January 2011)

Commanding officer : MAJ Vladimír Rébl
Personnel: 3

3rd CZE Team Atalanta

(January–July 2011)

Commanding officer: MAJ Zdeněk Fuka
Personnel: 3

4th CZE Team Atalanta

(July 2011 – January 2012)

Commanding officer : CAPT Jaroslav Černý
Personnel: 3

5th CZE Team Atalanta (January–July 2012)

Commanding officer : MAJ Václav Řidkošil
Personnel: 3

6th CZE Team Atalanta

(July 2012 – January 2013)

Commanding officer : MAJ Petr Manda
Personnel: 3

7th CZE Team Atalanta (January–July 2013)

Commanding officer : MAJ Václav Malát
Personnel: 3

8th CZE Team Atalanta

(July 2013 – January 2014)

Commanding officer : MAJ Ivo Fiedler
Personnel: 3

9th CZE Team Atalanta (January–July 2014)

Commanding officer : MAJ Martin Tesař
Personnel: 3

10th CZE Team Atalanta

(July 2014 – January 2015)

Commanding officer : CPT Pavel Jáger
Personnel: 3

EU TM – Mali

Mission: force protection of EU TM Headquarters, convoy escort, training Malian armed forces

Base: Bamako, Koulikoro

**1st TF EU TM Mali (March–September 2013)**

Commanding officer : 1LT Marek Štěpánek
Personnel: 34

2nd TF EU TM Mali (September 2013 – March 2014)

Commanding officer : LT Martin Sekera
Personnel: 38

3rd TF EU TM Mali (March–September 2014)

Commanding officer : CPT Martin Náplava
Personnel: 38

4th TF EU TM Mali (September 2014 – March 2015)

Commanding officer : CPT Michal Mamkin
Personnel: 38

Active Fence – Turkey

Mission: provide connectivity in support of a Dutch Patriot SAM unit

Base: Incirlik

1st DCM Team (January–May 2013)

Commanding officer : LT Antonín Fik
Personnel: 4

2nd DCM Team (September 2014 – January 2015)

Commanding officer : 1LT Michaela Čuříková
Personnel: 7

ASICIPPN – Iceland

Mission: provide air policing coverage to the Republic of Iceland

Base: Keflavik

**1st TF ASICIPPN**

(October–December 2014)

Commanding officer : COL Martin Nezbeda
Personnel: 66

Exercise involving very high readiness forces in Poland showed preparedness and a high professionalism

Noble Jump 2015

One hundred and fifty service personnel of the 43rd Airborne Battalion with 50 vehicles were a central part of the exercise in the Żagań training area. Difficult terrain, sand and dust tested skills of all trainees not only through live demonstrations, but also in challenging logistic assignments.



The NATO nations agreed to set up the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in September 2014 in the wake of a new security environment that came into being in Europe especially owing to the conflict in the Ukraine. To cater for that requirement, the Czech Armed Forces assigned Česká paratroopers of the 43rd Airborne Battalion. Multinational forces need to be coordinated seamlessly; when the force is activated, they have to be in the area of operations within forty-eight hours. There is no room for either mistakes or delays. The exercise involved not only combat demonstrations, but particularly a demanding transport that was made on rail and by air this time.

Moving personnel and equipment

NATO Headquarters provided the NATO C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft for airlifting some of the equipment and soldiers. Another component set out of Pardubice city in advance on trains carrying 40 vehicles and 89 personnel in total. Movement to a railhead 380 kilometres away took eighteen hours. That notionally started the exercise for them. Time ran relentlessly, but everything was done according to plan, the hardware survived transportation without a scratch and soldiers too. In case of live deployment, it would depend on specific situation, or indeed location where the forces were needed. The options include rail, more likely air, but also on the road.

Cooperation is the key

The primary goals of the exercise were not manoeuvres, handling situations in combat, perimeter security or medical evacuation, captivity or elimination of OPFOR, but particularly deepening cooperation. In the Czech case, it was specifically with Dutch soldiers, with whom our soldiers underwent training in the Czech Republic and in Eindhoven in April earlier this



year, Netherlands. It was possible to take lessons from mistakes and shortcomings for the Noble Jump exercise. The so-called spearhead forces will continue to develop and improve as current threats and security situation need to be tackled and prepared for. Thanks to that, practising with NATO equipment was also important.

Exchange of mortars

It is not really common to see Dutch paratroopers fire the Czech model 52 and Antos-LR mortars and Czech guys to shoot the L16A1 mortars. It was therefore necessary for the soldiers to get to know each better as best as they could and expand their hands-on familiarity

with ammunition and weapons their comrades use. The pre-planned joint fire practise perfectly served that purpose as they trained performance of individual fire mission with half-direct aim. In simple terms, mortar crews aimed at designated targets in the fire zone and eliminated them with fire on order by the commanding officer. First to arrive the fire line were Dutch mortar guys with calibre 81mm L16A1 mortars to show their operation to the Czech colleagues. Then Czechs took their positions at the weapons and practically tried taking aim and subsequent fire under supervision of Dutch instructors. Then they switched roles, and Dutch soldiers knelt down this time after a short introduction to Czech model 52 calibre 82 mortars and calibre 60mm Antos-LR mortars.

In the final phase of training, the whole combined unit fired at the designated target at the same time. At that moment, Lieutenant General Volker Halbauer, the commander of the 1st German Netherlands Corps that was in charge of the whole exercise Noble Jump in Poland, popped up at mortars: "What I see here is an absolutely perfect demonstration of Czech and Dutch soldiers," he said with commendation. General Halbauer however stayed with the mortar guys a little longer to watch their performance with interest and used the opportunity for informal chat with the soldiers.

Force support

Everybody has a role to play. Our Polish partners and us may use fast offroad vehicles and quadbikes to quickly take fire positions without unnecessary delay. The Kajman truck struggled through difficult sandy terrain with crew and with the support of Polish Special Forces quad

hardware. The vehicles also carry mobile bridging systems, because roads are likely to be cut off and destructed in real-world fight. Fire from tanks and IFVs in one plane finds its goal with high precision. OPFOR equipment (artificial targets in this case) explode, the opposing forces are pushed back and their resistance is forcefully and uncompromisingly eliminated. The official part of demonstration ends in applause by all attendees before soldiers break out to get their equipment ready for a journey into home stations. As if the on looking Ministers and General Officers would say: ready.

Static demos

The exercise naturally includes a display of equipment. It was possible to review Czech and other NATO weapons, moreover with explanations by soldiers whom operating the equipment is an everyday job. The Czech made Bren gun enjoys good visibility in the competition of other assault rifles. The improved version removed the shortfalls found on the first one. Most of the Special Operations Forces use Glock pistols, so the display was not that surprising for the attendees. The most important factor of the

static display was however not equipment but service personnel. Opportunities to discuss with many NATO partners have further deepened cooperation. Thanks to their excellent language skills, the Czech airborne soldiers were also able to answer many questions concerning their training, but also cultural differences and habits.

Home support critical

Major General Jiří Baloun, First Deputy Chief of General Staff, who attended the closing distinguished visitors day and visited soldiers at the demos, pointed out that everything was the outcome of sustained effort, drilling and commitment. "Both in the preparatory and realisation phase, our soldiers have performed their assignments to very good standards. The whole magic behind readiness starts at home. It begins with the support of political leaders, the armed forces high command, its support and naturally also plans with enduring stability and enabling development of capabilities so as to have the capability to project force with required precision, speed and in required time anywhere needed."

*by Michal Voska,
photos by Michal Voska and Jan Kouba*

and enduro bikes. It was necessary to take positions, clear the area and especially defend the landing helicopters. Their task was to load the captured opponents under continuous assistance by Hind gunships. Air support is critical in such operations; a pair of the F-16 Falcon fighters also available in addition to the choppers; their low pass is enough to show force. With attendance of the top NATO leaders including Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Philip Breedlove and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Jean-Paul Paloméros, the Distinguished Visitors Day was rehearsed into the finest level of detail. After the previous days, everybody knew what was expected and what shortfalls needed to be redressed.

Showing skills

Mortar fire, engine roar, shooting: that was how the final day with demonstrations started. Distinguished guests were able to watch from a platform the arrival of the Czech Kajman vehicles whose massive machine-gun fire supported the allied assault on the building to eliminate opponents, while another was captured. The Czech forces were positioned to be able to cover the whole area of operations and use massive firepower to clear pockets of resistance and made it possible for the helicopters to land. This time, it was the Hips and Blackhawks. Once mission is accomplished, soldiers observe the area thoroughly, all of them ready to fire. It is critical not only to seize the area, but also to control it, because the tide can turn in no time in the battlefield. Last load into the choppers, departure and progressive withdrawal of quick reaction forces heralds the approach of heavy armoured



A fivesome of Gripens from the 21st Tactical Air Force Base in Čáslav protected the skies over Iceland

Czech Fighters over Iceland

The Nordic state on an island was the station to the Czech fighter pilots for almost a month. The tour that saw no alpha scramble proved our ability to provide full-fledged contributions to NATO. Despite demanding climate conditions, pilots were also able to gain valuable experience in a much different operational environment.

More than ninety training flights, roughly 150 flight hours. That is the total log of the fivesome of Czech Gripen fighters that provided air policing coverage to the airspace of Iceland from July 29 till August 25, 2015 as part of Task Force ASICIPPN (Airborne Surveillance and Interception to meet Capabilities Iceland's Peacetime Preparedness). Requested by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, seventy airmen from the 21st Tactical Air Force Base Čáslav performed the mission. Same as in autumn 2014, when they protected Iceland for the first time, pilots did not log any alpha scrambles. They were brought to higher readiness a couple of times because of Russian military aircraft at Norway, but perhaps due to several accidents involving the Tu-95 strategic bombers, the tour in Iceland was somewhat calmer.

Demanding preparation

Despite a very short time span available for preparations, everything went high speed low drag style. Instead of usual twelve-month preparation, everything needed to be readied in a several weeks' time. That made the current mission substantially more challenging. As press and information officer Captain Tomáš Maruščák expanded, "it is challenging to maintain

QRA duty logistically and operationally in two locations at the same time". "2+1 Gripen aircraft are assigned for NATINAMDS back in the Czech Republic, there were 4+1 Gripen fighters in Iceland, which makes eight JAS-39C aircraft out of the total quantity of 12 single-seaters in the inventory. Four machines are used for pilot training in the Czech Republic and for replacement during planned maintenance works," Captain Maruščák commented on the biggest challenges of the mission in Iceland. Every mission places high demands on the whole team comprising ground personnel and pilots. Excellent condition is attributable both to previous preparations and closer cooperation with the aircraft manufacturer before the start of the operational tour. Sweden also contributed a C-17 Globemaster that airlifted everything that was needed. A different environment, particularly the climate, must be reflected in the way maintenance is delivered to the aircraft. That is also why the support team has to arrive well in advance to set everything up. In spite of absence of own military, the airbase history goes back to 1942, when the U.S. military decided to build an airfield meant to serve as a primary station for bombers in the northern Atlantic. During World War II, the airfield was used for military purposes only and as a refuelling stop for transatlantic



flights. The U.S. armed forces handed the airfield over to the Government of Iceland in 1947 and obtained its current name: Keflavik Airport.

In-flight refuelling

In order for the machines to manage a four-hour flight without having to land, they had to refuel a couple of times in flight. An Italian KC-767 tanker accompanied the Czech Gripens already for the second time. The first in-flight refuelling on operational deployment took place in the course of the same mission last year. It is a valuable experience for pilots, because air-to-air refuelling is a complex manoeuvre that requires ultimate concentration and precision.

The process is performed at speeds around 500 kilometres per hour and the edge of the basket suspended from the tanker is only twenty centimetres from the cockpit of the Gripen. No wonder pilots do not always succeed at the first try. Even the very departure of tanker aircraft is a difficult process, not to speak about the price tag. All five fighter aircraft therefore had to return shortly after departure for Iceland because

of a minor malfunction on one of the machines. It would be very costly to send a tanker only to cater for a single machine.

No alpha

There was no alpha scramble as opposed to the last year. Only higher readiness emphasised preparedness to take off. "We were on higher readiness alert, but we did not have to start off in the end. It still takes some three or four hours of flight to get over here," said the deputy commanding officer of the Czech TF in Iceland and one of the pilots, Milan Nykodým. He also enjoyed the area our machines operated in. "Iceland is naturally very much different to flying in the Czech Republic." The Task Force Commanding Officer Colonel Martin Nezbeda added that besides the size of the area of operations, one also has to watch out for a relatively dense traffic and noise limits. Those are rather strict, because there are flocks of protected bird species. The roar of machines is confusing or even threatening for them and naturally citizens do not wish to hear overflights

by fighter aircraft every day. All of that were the factors reflected in the operating mode and flight levels, plus they naturally restricted flight activities at weekends.

Substituting for RCAF

Czech pilots protected the airspace during this tour instead of the Royal Canadian Air Force. The RCAF performs mission against the so-called Islamic State. Although not having own military, Iceland is still regarded a valuable founding member state of the NATO Alliance, particularly owing to its strategic position. Security is provided by the Coast Guard and Iceland is responsible for air traffic management over the northern Atlantic, despite having no military forces. There are more than ninety thousand flights annually registered over the area. In addition, Iceland is a popular destination for tourists, which makes the air traffic even busier. A million of tourists visit the country every year and the figure is expected to double in the upcoming years. Keflavik airport therefore has to handle both civil and military traffic.

Well done

Defence Minister Martin Stropnický with delegation visited the pilots and ground personnel on the last day of the Czech Air Force's tour in Iceland. Czech Air Force Airbus A-319 CJ airport was symbolically escorted for approach by a pair of Czech Gripen aircraft. Minister Stropnický spoke highly of the cooperative attitude and high professionalism of Czech airmen. He added that pilots, much like other air force personnel involved in the mission, enjoyed an outstanding reputation in Iceland and that our presence was important. "Including because Russian activities, not in this month, but in springtime, were quite disconcerting, both as to violating airspace and territorial waters, it is necessary to do this job and Iceland appreciates it." Planners have already started to work on another tour scheduled for autumn in the next year. Again, five machines are expected to take up the duty.

by Michal Voska, photos by Michal Voska, CPT Tomáš Maruščák

Czech service personnel took part in multinational exercise Capable Logistician 2015 in the Bakony training area in Hungary



A convoy of trucks and multilifts accompanied by APCs resembles a long snake twisting through turns. Literally scorching sun in the skies gives a hard time to the drivers in the cabs. But otherwise there is complete calm everywhere. Indeed until an improvised explosive system goes off on the road, immediately followed by a fierce attack by opposing forces.

Soldiers respond exactly according to drills repeated perhaps thousand times. Force protection IFVs depart into sides in an attempt to attract the opponent's attention. The convoy continues as fast as they can to egress the area of hostilities, except for two vehicles the blast took out of operation. First of all, it is vital to take care of the casualties and call MEDEVAC. Once the opponent is pushed into appropriate distance, a towing truck, cranes and recovery vehicles arrive the site. Their mission is to get

the damaged vehicles and equipment out of the point of contact. One of the damaged vehicles is towed behind a recovery system mounted on a tracked APC platform of the 142nd Maintenance Battalion home-based in Klatovy.

Orchestrated by the MLCC

That unit also played an important role in exercise Capable Logistician 2015, which was organised in June earlier this year in Bakony

Military Training Area in Hungary. Its principal organiser was the Multinational Logistic Coordination Centre (MLCC) based in Prague. That would naturally not do without a huge support by the host nation, Hungary, and indeed Hungarian Armed Forces. Additional Czech and international logistic components as well as the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion also joined the exercise.

"Successful exercise Capable Logistician 2013, which saw the participation of over two thousand personnel and nine hundred vehicles in Slovakia two years ago, was where everything started. This time, the exercise built on a scenario envisaging dispute between two neighbouring countries with humanitarian aid provided at the same time. Over seventeen hundred trainees from 26 nations and 11 international organisations and agencies joined individual episodes. Soldiers had approximately six hundred

vehicles available. We initially have not planned for such a large scope. We thought of roughly a thousand personnel and three hundred vehicles. A high attention including by non-NATO countries rather surprised us: we are pleased to see such a high interest in our exercise," explains Colonel Jan Husák, Director of the Multinational Logistics Coordination Centre and acting exercise director.

Rationalising logistics

The exercise was designed for preparing Headquarters Joint Logistics Support Group (JLSG) and selected logistic support forces for the Visegrad Four Battle Group in 2016, and to rehearse multinational logistic aspects for this year's largest NATO exercise - Trident Juncture 2015. The other objective was to review



interoperability of logistic equipment, services, systems and standardisation of procedures and propose improvements. As a result, logistic support in present and future coalition operations should be rationalised. Practical activities

focused on thirteen functional areas that represent actual logistic activities performed in coalition operations such as in Afghanistan and Kosovo. One of the most frequented areas included the Reception, Staging and Onward

Movement (RSOM) centre, water treatment and distribution unit, fuel storage and distribution. A new exercised functional area involved airdrops coordinated by U.S. Air Force in conjunction with Hungarian and Polish forces.

Joint Support Group

Roughly thirty kilometres away, Székesvehérvár is where the exercise directing staff as well as the Joint Logistics Support Group (JLSG) have been located. A spacious hall is full of computers and communication systems. The JLSG is a relatively new structure, whose task is to directly coordinate subordinate forces in relevant functional areas and coordinate logistic support to the affiliated Hungarian mechanised battalion. The JLSG commanding officer is Czech Armed Forces Colonel Daniel Zlatník and his deputy is Colonel László Tár of Hungary, an MLCC member. For the time being, the MLCC seeks ways to practically join ongoing and future coalition operations. Its endeavour in Operation KFOR in Kosovo may well be regarded its initial success. That however has not yet covered all delegated functions according to NATO standards. And so they need to exercise.

"Our group has ninety-three people from twenty nations. As it is a relatively new structure, all lessons we gain are highly valuable for us. We share them with NATO nations and EU member states, as well as with PFP Partners," Colonel Zlatník advises. "Armed Forces of Visegrad Four countries are in a similar condition in terms of logistics. We suffer from heritage technology and need innovations. Protection of crews and squads against improvised explosive devices is where we have the biggest gap at the moment. But innovation in the domain of messing and boarding is also important. We have to tackle it somehow. Polish Armed Forces is slightly better off as they have made sizeable investments in this domain and gained experience with the host nation support process. It is not easy to ensure interoperability among NATO nations either. We seek to deepen it progressively. But it naturally depends on types of armaments,

technology used etc. Interoperability standards nevertheless improve continuously. One of the goals of the exercise is to verify it and propose potential measures."

Repaired even wrecks

A multinational maintenance and recovery unit is stationed directly in the Bakony training area. The unit's commanding officer is Major Robert Slak of Slovenia. The deputy CO is First Lieutenant Marcel Vorlík of the Czech 142 Maintenance Battalion based in Klatovy. "We provide transport for various types of hardware. For example, we recovered a stuck Slovenia Pandur APC or a turned Kamaz truck. In addition, we are responsible for servicing and minor maintenance of equipment brought into the training area. We try to be responsive to anyone coming here in need and repair what we can," First Lieutenant Vorlík says. "The equipment's origin does not matter that much. If it does not go into literally software things, the mechanical parts are very similar and we are able to put them together. We have six old vehicles available here (such as Avia, IFA and RABA trucks) designated as targets for shooting ranges. We sent a recovery team, to pull them out and a heavy transporter got them over here. We formed multinational teams, each was assigned a vehicle and their task was to set them operational. Although the vehicles were in horrible condition, three of them already run. Now we are working BRDM armoured personnel carriers. They have been really plundered, but we already managed get one of the engines running."

Soldiers from Klatovy travelled to the Bakony training area on their own. They also brought along a recovery vehicle built on a BMP platform on a low trailer. We had the most experienced crew for the exercise, so there was no problem except for a wheel on the truck towing the trailer, which ruptured some fifty kilometres from Rokycany. They put on a spare on and the escort team had to go back for another one. They refuelled and slept in Vyškov and arrived the training area on the next day.



water. The NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion has had a long-standing tradition. In addition to Czechs, the unit comprises Poles, Slovaks and Croats. In exercise Capable Logistician, their mission is twofold: they have the role of trainees – they have to tackle assignments coming out of the exercise play and instructions from the HQ JLSG. Besides that, they also provide regular MP force protection. The Czech MPs use the SOM 3 (monitoring and protection system) to provide security to water generation plants. The system is built into a box on a truck. Military Policemen are able to operationally deploy the system within thirty minutes' time. Security is provided by one of the cameras at this point. The other three sensor units are set operational over half an hour. Each unit has optical sensors, day TV camera, low level camera and infrared camera. That enables round-the-clock security of the area regardless of light conditions. Depending on physical properties,

"Comparing our equipment with others, we are well off; definitely better than Hungarians or Serbians. But Slovenians have more advanced equipment. They manage to do more with the system than we can. They also have a handy transportation system with platform and a hydraulic arm. There is a space for ten people in the cab. They are able to do light recovery, transport and some other stuff," First Lieutenant Vorlík adds.

Protection and monitoring system

We move a couple of kilometres onwards where Czech MPs at this time provide security to the production of the most critical commodity:



all three optical sensors complement one another. Initial detection of intrusion is mostly done by the Blighter 202 ground surveillance radar that has a range of four kilometres. Identification of the type of intrusion goes down with the sensor units. In ideal conditions at night, their range is eight hundred metres, and they detect humans over the range of fifteen hundred metres at day.

Attempt to poison water

"We initially used the system for security of a base with ammunition depots. Then we were informed that there had been a threat to water production. Someone allegedly tried to mix a warfare agent into the water. So we moved the system over here. We mostly perform fictive missions, but it does happen from time to time that we do not know whether it is reality or just a part of exercise play. Such as was the case

when we were tasked to investigate an accident involving two military vehicles," First Lieutenant Marek Novotný says.

There is a small lake inside the monitored area. For example, there are French, U.S. and Slovenian flags on the banks. National units pump from the lake and treat the water to make it potable, and deliver it to soldiers. There is also a very practical water packing plant that produces half-litre plastic bags. The water is tested thoroughly. Military specialists guarantee it is drinkable and may not cause any risks. The other option is to obtain water from drills. A large volume of water is consumed on operations. It is very demanding and relatively expensive to transport water over longer ranges. The more important is the ability to produce water on spot. NATO forces largely focus on obtaining potable water from saltwater.

Exercise Capable Logistician 2015 is over. The next edition of this series is scheduled for 2018

in Poland. "As with all multinational exercises, this one was also about strengthening interoperability among NATO armed forces. The nature of this exercise was very important for the NATO Alliance, because the success in majority of operations derives from the quality of their logistic support. Logistic teams are usually multinational and verification and evaluation of interoperability with individual systems is extremely important," concluded Brigadier General Jaromír Zůna, Director of the Czech MoD Logistics Agency.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by Vladimír Marek and Lucie Blahovcová

Specialist training event involving the units of the 15th Engineer Regiment Bechyně and experts from Texas and Nebraska

EOD training

The C-IED training site in Bechyně garrison was the venue to an exercise involving the EOD 15th Engineer Regiment and U.S. specialists. Czech forces were represented by the total of five teams. A range of diverse scenarios and model situations proved their abilities and specialist skills.

Specialist training tested three teams of the 151st Engineer Regiment based in Bechyně, one from the 153rd Engineer Battalion home stationed at Olomouc and an EOD team comprising operators of the 601st Special Forces Group based at Prostějov. Members of the Texan and Nebraskan Army National Guard formed a three-member team for the training event. The preparation and realisation were orchestrated by specialists of the EOD Technical and Information Support Centre (CTIP EOD) led by LTC Zdeněk Hejpetr. Members of EOD company of the 151st Engineer Battalion were also involved in setting up the exercise. Mingling the teams in the final phase of the exercise made the event even more interesting. So, American experts searched and disposed IEDs shoulder-to-shoulder with Czechs.

Initiated by U.S. Embassy

The concentrated training was initiated by an offer the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), a component of the U.S. Embassy in Prague, addressed to the commander of the 15th Engineer Regiment. That was certainly complemented by the positive assessment similar joint training held in Bechyně back in 2012 received, then also with participation of members of Texas and Nebraska National Guard. This year's training and testing of skills and abilities of all trainees focused on practical solution of scenarios set up by the personnel of 15th Engineer Regiment CTIP EOD and EOD company of the 151st Engineer Battalion. The total of 32 diverse scenarios were prepared based on information, observations and lessons learned during operational deployment in Logar province, Afghanistan, and from the last iteration of the training course one of the CTIP EOD members completed at the Elin Air Force Base earlier in 2015.



Ops center

To support the concentrated training and for the needs of all involved, an operations centre with commanding officer First Lieutenant Robert Braun, a member of CTIP EOD. The ops centre controlled assignment and deployment of teams to tackle particular scenarios. Upon their return from the EOD incident site, the operations

centre was the venue of so-called Hot Wash Up, which included initial report on mission performance and accomplishment, description of the course of action and an after action review. Then the trainees were allowed to renew their "combat readiness" and particularly to prepare materiel for performance of missions in challenging scenarios. All materiel the EOD teams presently have available was used during the exercise.



That primarily included EOD-9 suits, stand-off manipulation devices, metal detectors, remote activation systems and X-Ray scanners to view suspect objects.

Talon robots

Helping to increase safety of military EOD teams during initial incident site search, one of the means of stand-off manipulation are the Talon EOD robots. The Talon enables reaching over longer ranges, while experienced operators may search the site using the camera system without the need to initially employ an EOD guy. The robotic helpers and additional materiel and equipment were provided to Czech forces free of charge as part of the U.S. Government's Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. Thanks to the program, the Czech military was able earlier to obtain drones and military equipment facilitating the performance of challenging missions, including those in Afghanistan.

Regular training

Concentrated training events for members of the EOD 15th Engineer Regiment, 601st Special Forces Group and Military Police members were held twice a year until 2013, always after their return from foreign deployment. The exercise saw the units cover scenarios of incidents they had been up to during their operational deployment, mainly in the Logar province, Afghanistan. The teams had ample opportunities to try out "hot" incidents and obtain critical information and observations that have been used in further specialist training. That was also facilitated by lessons obtained on courses abroad some of the EOD specialists in service with the Czech military successfully completed in the past. The training course held at the U.S. Eglin Air Force Base or the Global Anti Terrorism Operational Readiness (GATOR) included in predeployment preparation the Czech EOD teams underwent ahead of going downrange in Logar province as part of ISAF both stand a good example.

Afghan scenarios

Training held in Bechyně was a unique opportunity for EOD teams to practise EOD in realistic scenarios with a high degree of similarity to those specialists are up to downrange on day-to-day basis. All trainees praise the facilities at the EOD training site. Artificially created dusty roads resemble realworld environment in Afghanistan. Training can therefore be simulated highly realistically, particularly as searching IEDs. Planted under roads, they are hard to crack even for seasoned EOD specialists. Their experience and training make it possible for them to negotiate even such difficulties. The weather over the four days of the exercise was a true hell considering the equipment soldiers had to carry. The EOD-9 suit weighs almost forty kilos and does not provide much comfort to the user given the nature of its use. Even a short action in the magnitude of several minutes, such as setting up the detonation





system to eliminate the EOD, represents an exhausting job.

Modern conception

First Lieutenant Robert Braun and Lieutenant Colonel Zdeněk Hejpetr concur it is essential to get specialists ready for other threats too. "In addition to well-proven scenarios, our aim was

to tackle most current challenges, including elimination of improvised explosive devices along roads in Afghanistan," LTC Hejpetr added. Fictive scenario describes a motorbike gang, whose boss would find a suspicious package in his apartment. After careful examination, the EOD specialist assessed it was an explosive substance. Previous jamming prevented remote activation, but manipulation is still too risky. At that

moment, either water jet to deactivate the IED or similar option involving a prima cord and detonator would be used. Both can be planted either using the robotic hand on the Talon, or directly by an EOD specialist. The scenario made the job more attractive for specialists who would most frequently find themselves digging IEDs from the ground rather than handling a suspicious package on table top.

Proper command

Such format of training does not practise only detection and subsequent elimination of explosives, but it is also an opportunity for platoon leaders. They can exercise control and tasking the team as well as the performance of the very response operation and subsequent debriefing of specialists once they return to the base. The right equipment is naturally important, and due attention is paid to checking everything thoroughly before they get on the move. Everything is positioned in specialised vehicles; nothing can be omitted. It is not possible to go back or delay the disposal unnecessarily. Everything must be done quickly and efficiently. In the EOD job, the slightest mistake may be the final one.

Constant readiness

That kind of training significantly increases overall readiness of the EOD EOD 15th Engineer Regiment, but also EOD specialists of the 601st Special Forces Group or the Military Police. Honing drilled skills, devising new scenarios reflecting current needs and modern security threats are the only way forward in prepping for demanding operational deployments. The C-IED training site is a unique facility that our Allies highly value. Not to speak about the job our experts are doing, which is evaluated as truly top-notch effort and Czech EOD rank among the best.

by Michal Voska, photos by Jan Kouba



Students of the University of Defence Completed Foreign Legion Training in South American Jungle

There are Three New Jaguars in Brno, Baring their Teeth

It is a long-awaited finale of Guiana adventure. They passed the four-day survival test in tropical jungle, with minimum equipment, they are exhausted and hungry. Instead of rest, they float downstream on rafts, to a place where the bridge spans above the watercourse. Another hour of exhaustive training follows and the last hurdle in a form of handrails. At a depth of fifteen metres below, a massive body of water rolls. Adrenalin spreads throughout the entire body. With a cry "Selva", they throw themselves into the depths, one by one, and after a few second of falling they all disappear beneath the water surface. At that moment they do not mind that unlike some predecessors in previous years, they do not jump from the deck of an aircraft hovering over the river. "We flew even without a helicopter," they evaluated this moment after returning home, after several days.

Tree military students of the University of Defence—Staff Sergeant Michal Matějů, Sergeant Jan Šedivka, and WO3 Jiří Burda—finished training in the equatorial forest, from 31 March to 12 April, in French Guiana, at the base of the 3rd Regiment of the French Foreign Legion. Despite the fact they have large experiences as instructors in the supplementary student activity Commandos, after arriving at the base, they had to absorb large amounts of information necessary for stay in an unfamiliar environment.



Zoo on the Base

"The base has a small zoo, with animals that can be met in the rain forest," recalls Staff Sergeant Michal Matějů and tells the story on the creatures he actually encountered: "Spiders as big as hand, snakes, after that, monkeys jumping in the treetops." But the most annoying for Brno military students was another creature: "It was a small beetle, howling as a noise during hooter test, like at home, every Wednesday, we did not hear a word because of that beetle," describes this local background sound Staff Sergeant Michal Matějů.

After initial testing, all trainees, divided into four platoons of twenty people, left on boats the CEFE base, to a camp in the rainforest. "There began the everyday cycle of training, running, and other physically strenuous activities, in order to induce a feeling of exhaustion arising from the movement in the jungle," summarizes the contents of stay in the jungle Sergeant Jan Šedivka. Every day there was on the agenda also one of local obstacle courses. "Even a simple movement in the mud is very troublesome, let

alone with the burden. In addition, shins are suffering greatly, because everything is interwoven with roots which you do not see in the mud," Sergeant Šedivka remembers hardship on the obstacle course.

Exhausting Stay in a Tropical Jungle

The cadets from military school in Saint-Cyr must repeatedly climb dreaded set of four obstacle courses, built in the jungle, which are a sort of icing on the legionary cake. The "trail of pigs" stands for a set of barriers running through marshy oxbows. It is here where soldiers practice climbing over, balancing, prowling, climbing, jumping, diving, and swimming. The "liana trail" is called among trainees "monkey track". It consists above all of ropes, nets, trees and wooden structures. It is focused on climbing, hand over hand, jumps and balancing. The most of the time is required by "team trail", which usually takes more than two hours. It includes nine obstacles, requiring cooperation of the entire



group, at least of seven people. Again it consists of mud, trees, and giant smooth wall.

There also came the most difficult task of the whole course. Its essence was the task saying: in less than two hours to move the injured on a log, from one point to another, through impenetrable track, filled with mud, i.e. to overcome a fourth obstacle course. Michal Matěj remembers this move as one of the toughest and most tense experiences of the whole course: "An injured person on a log was totally helpless and completely reliant on the team, which carried the person. In my team, right from the start, several people got stuck in the mud, so that at the end only four of us could drag the log. And all



times we had to raise our shorts over our heads and then boots. Like that it was over and over again, till the Frenchmen began to sing their school song which mocks the absurd orders. I naturally did not know the words, but I started drumming by boots and then began drumming the entire platoon. It was uplifting, and the moral is—I'll say it vulgarly—even when you are in the shit, you must be in a good mood, it is psychologically very helpful," recalls WO3 Jiří Burda, as for him personally this moment had another meaning: "In this (for me) hardest day of the course I had a birthday, I must say the best birthday in life!"

Backpack Made of Palm Leaf

The survival test was unambiguous. With minimum equipment, members of the platoon had the task to build a sheltered camp, with beds above grounds, and safe fireplace, to establish an access path from the river and mark it, to build two rafts, to procure the instruments. "Such as to make a backpack out of palm leaf Patawa, tied together by the lianas of Mukuna tree," describes one of the tasks Staff Sergeant Matějů. They can apply acquired knowledge of theoretical training, for example how to use the wood of separate trees for various purposes. "Of course, we ourselves had to procure our food," says Jan Šedivka and his fellow Matějů adds: "For four days, I ate three fish bones, with pieces of flesh. And in the evening we cooked a soup of small crabs that crawled around on the ground."

The activities of individual platoons were evaluated, including the final examination during the last day of the course. Sergeant Jan Šedivka's platoon won the largest numbers of points for completed tasks, other platoons of Brno trainees gained only one less. All three members of

Czech group completed training successfully, and their uniforms are newly decorated by the prestigious insignia of the graduates of the course, with an image of jaguar baring its teeth.

"It was one of the most interesting, most difficult and most beneficial courses I have ever attended. It gave me much more than I expected, even though it was very difficult," Sergeant Jan Šedivka evaluates his biweekly stay in the camp of the Foreign Legion, and agrees with his fellow, Staff Sergeant Matějů: "We are very pleased that we were able to go to the course, it is a presentation of Czech mentality—we prove that the Czechs will not get lost, and that they can work even in a foreign environment."

Text: Viktor Sliva, photo: CEFE



around us the explosions of puff charges and shouting instructors."

Survival Test

Knowledge and skills acquired during this training were examined by the four-day test of survival. Trainees handed in bootlaces, belts, shirts and watches. They were allowed to take with them only a compass, whistle, machete, aids to kindle a fire, and water container. The inspection followed, whether someone had hidden food. It was performed in the river, where trainees entered only in shorts and infantry boots. "The checking was tough, about twenty



Servicemembers of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment and the Active Reserve Component 181st Infantry Company took part in exercise Safeguard Temelín 2015

Terrorists over Temelín

Midsize passenger airplane controlled by terrorists, low-flying drone carrying high explosives and apprehension of intruder in the security zone. Situations successfully handled by almost two hundred soldiers of the 25th Air Defence Missile in Strakonice and Infantry Company of the Active Reserve Component of the Regional Military Headquarters České Budějovice in exercise Safeguard Temelín 2015 at the nuclear power plant in Southern Bohemia.

A small passenger plane has deviated from its planned route and follows a bearing to the Temelín Nuclear Power Plant. The crew does not communicate with air traffic control. The threat has already been detected by radars of the air defence missile regiment home-based at Strakonice.

"Target... Roger, tracking... Altitude 2,000, distance 23, speed 200, inbound ... Ready to fire ... One fire, Two fire ... missile one shot ... target eliminated," is heard from the control and homing radar on target acquisition and subsequent elimination of the enemy aircraft.

Aerial target within 65 kilometres

The Temelín Nuclear Power Plant is a part of critical defence infrastructure, which means the government may in case of threat activate designated components of the Czech Armed Forces to provide defence and security immediately.

The defence of the Temelín NPP against aerial threats was therefore fully orchestrated by the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment home based

at Strakonice. The core was formed by the soldiers of the 251st Air Defence Missile Battalion augmented by members of other subunits.

"The heart of the complex is the SURN CZ surveillance and tracking radar with three-member crew – driver, operator and commander, which is able to detect aerial targets as far as 65 kilometres away," informs Lieutenant Radim Janák of the 251st. "In reality, airplanes or drones could never get into immediate proximity of the power plant and pose a threat."

Major-General Jiří Baloun, First Deputy Chief of General Staff Czech Armed Forces, concurs: "All flights are monitored; and if an airplane would suddenly deviate from its corridor and change direction, the Gripens would be at the NPP within five minutes, earlier than the plane that made an unplanned deviation from its declared route and became an aerial threat."

Standard mission

"What we do here are standard missions we would perform in case the Czech National Air Defence Reinforcement System would be activated," says Lieutenant Colonel Petr Prskavec,



commander of the 251st Air Defence Missile Battalion. "We have here for training a reinforced air defence battery operating the SA-6 Gainful air defence missile system, complemented with two teams with the RBS-70 man-portable air defence system and a team with the RVR radar surveillance sensor."

Acquired targets shot down

Terrorists would usually seek to hijack not one but multiple airplanes and hit the chosen target

from different flight levels. The first flyover by an airliner therefore was at 2,000 ft and the other one at 500 ft. Another attack then came in the form of a drone loaded with explosives heading for the NPP secure zone. The UAV was also intercepted and operators of the RBS-70 man-portable air defence system eliminated the drone with imitated fire.

"Today, anybody can buy such a drone," LTC Prskavec elaborates. "It can carry a camera system to obtain aerial imagery but it can also deliver an improvised explosive device."

But the missileers are able to track and eliminate those aerial vehicles too, including multiple ones at one time. After firing a missile, the RBS-70 system is ready to fire again in couple of seconds.

Intruder apprehended

The perimeter of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment was delineated with five kilometres of concertina fencing. The Active Reserve Component soldiers provided security to the lines of communication around the nuclear power plant. "As part of the exercise, we set up three checkpoints and one guard post on access road to the Nuclear Power Plant," says Colonel Vladimír Pešek, Director of the České Budějovice Regional Military Headquarters. "Members of the Active reserve Component practised ways to



handle situations posing threat to checkpoints during the exercise."

And that was what happened. In front of the access to the security area the guards are about to halt an inbound car, but the driver does not react to the instructions by soldiers. The vehicle is stopped and driver apprehended until the Police of the Czech Republic arrives. The Police officers arrested the individual. Soldiers however discovered a suspicious bag in the car and alerted the police patrol to it. A Police EOD specialist is called in to the site, because there is a high risk that the bag could contain explosives.

Accompanied by the police response team, the EOD specialist searches the bag. His gestures imply that it is a harmless object. The bag is secured and the police ride with the apprehended individual outside the security area.

"It is critical for Active reserve soldiers to try and drill the operating procedures," says Colonel Pešek. "Training exercises are very useful for their potential operational deployment."

Military and police in tune with Temelín

"Any exercise proving the spectrum of our actions directly in the field, in this case the ability to defend the Temelín Nuclear Power Plant against aerial terrorist threat is always hugely beneficial for us," Major General Jiří Baloun evaluates the closing stage of the exercise. "This year's exercise Safeguard emphasised joint training and interoperability links among military professionals, members of the Active Reserve Component, Police officers and the CEZ company."

Servicemembers of the 251st Air Defence Missile Battalion are primarily assigned to perform missions in the frame of the Czech National Air Defence Reinforcement System and they train to be able to provide air defence coverage over strategic infrastructures, including nuclear power plants, for example in an impending terrorist

attack. Besides military professionals and police officers, roughly a hundred of the Temelín NPP employees joined the exercise, including the complete security service and the emergency management staff.

CEZ power engineers and specialists have a joint training with the police twice a year, soldiers come to the NPP once in two year. Airborne terrorist attack was however simulated for the first time ever. "The exercise took place outside the facilities and the Temelín NPP security service also joined the exercise," the CEZ Power Plants Security Director, Ms. Iva Kubáňová, explains the NPP's role. "Terrorist threat may result in activation of additional security measures and then our task would be to provide primarily logistic support to the armed forces."

by Jana Deckerová
photos by Jana Deckerová and Jan Kouba





Movement of armoured hardware of the US Army 2nd Cavalry Regiment on their way to NATO exercise Brave Warrior

Danube Ride

The Danube Ride as the convoy transiting the Czech territory was called divided into six columns on their way. In total, that involved almost 150 vehicles and 600 U.S. service personnel. On that occasion, the Czech Republic hosted the visit by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who discussed current security challenges with top government representatives.



The route of the movement led through Rozvadov, Prague, Brno, Vyškov and Lanžhot. Movement of main forces was divided into six columns travelling at intervals to provide maximum safety and fluency of other traffic. The Czech Military Police and the Police escorted the

U.S. forces. The Czech Armed Forces provided standard logistic support in the form of refueling, vehicle parking, boarding and lodging at the Training Command – Military Academy in Vyškov, where the U.S. convoy stayed over night. The costs associated with that part of host nation support were covered by the United States.

Support by NATO partners

In the context of the U.S. Army movement, Czech Defence Minister Martin Stropnický explained why NATO partners receive support. "It is just another transit through our territory as there have been many of those – there were one hundred and five road transits just from January till June. Those movements are naturally a part of our NATO membership commitments, as we enjoy the reputation of a reliable member and partner." A similar U.S. convoy transited the Czech Republic at the turn of March and April earlier this year; the so-called Dragoon Ride then attracted a high public attention. On the very transit, U.S. soldiers were greeted by thousands of sympathisers – in the cities where soldiers stayed overnight and along the roads they passed.

NATO Secretary General

During his visit, Jens Stoltenberg discussed security threats and current situation in Europe and beyond. In his call with Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka he particularly discussed the NATO Readiness Action Plan adopted in last year by the NATO Summit in Wales in the wake of the Russian annexation of Crimea and the situation in the Ukraine. The Prime Minister was keen to hear what the NATO Secretary General had to say on the aggravated security situation in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. "Especially the worsening of security situation in Syria and Libya are the root causes we are tackling



today in the form of migration wave," PM Sobotka said. NATO forces represent the proof of cooperation in the NATO framework, and that is also why the convoy transiting our territory on their way to Hungary was important.

Sleeping at Vyškov

Contrarily to the transit in March, when the headcount on the convoy was roughly one hundred and sixty Americans, more than three times more of them stayed in Vyškov overnight this time. That claimed a perfect coordination of logisticians and all components involved in supporting the transit. The whole demanding operation was performed without any difficulties, except for minor delay some of the columns experienced. Transits of foreign military vehicles are nothing unusual and they will happen as part of our NATO membership commitments in the years ahead.



The staff of the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion is up to Combat Readiness Evaluation later on this year

SUCCESSORS to the Black Bear

Several MPs jumped out of Land Rover. Rather than entry into the ammunition depot in the Hungarian Military Training Area Bakony, they were concerned with integrity of the perimeter fencing.

"We used the SOM 3 security and monitoring system to provide security to the ammunition depot at the start, but we had to move it over to a facility that treats water to make it potable and distribute to all forces deployed in the area. We only do random checks at the ammunition depot," explains First Lieutenant Marek Novotný of the Multinational Military Police Battalion. The battalion joined the exercise Capable Logistician 2015 in Hungary in June earlier this year.

It started with the Black Bear

The history of the project of multinational military police battalion and training goes back to 1999. NATO then came up with a strategy of defence capabilities that was designed to enable deployment of forces into crisis areas, equipping and sustaining them to successfully accomplish

their mission in the face of the opponent. In the Prague Summit three years later, Poland, Czech Republic and Croatia agreed to make a contribution in the form of developing a multinational military police battalion. Bulgaria initially joined the project and the Ukraine also considered participation, but eventually abandoned the intention.

In December 2005, efforts started to develop implementation agreement and March 2006 saw the coordination and funding group established. The leading representatives of national military police forces signed the implementation agreement in June 2007. In autumn 2008, the following initial MNMPBAT exercise – Black Bear 2008 – took place in Wedrzyn, Poland. Further editions of the exercise series were held in regular yearly intervals in the Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovakia. Everything came to a head in the certification exercise Sharp Lynx in Poland in 2012. But this year's exercise Capable Logistician

was no premiere for the MNMPBAT either: it took part in the first run of the CL exercise series already in 2013 in Slovakia.

Imaginary Atropia

The NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion trains continuously also in smaller training events. Members of the staff and unit meet several times a year to do joint preparation. The MNMPBAT assigned a company equivalent task force to exercise Capable Logistician 2015. That totalled seventy MNMPBAT members, of whom there were twenty-five Czechs. They were assigned to senior posts such as chief of operations centre and chief of operations group. The commanding officer of the company task force was Major Franjo Barunčić of Croatia. This year, he is the acting deputy commander MNMPBAT. The command positions are filled on rotation basis every year.

"The goal of this exercise was to prove NATO standards and interoperability among the nations. The organisers set the play into an imaginary country of Atropia, where the ARTFOR force deployed," Major Lukáš Stejskal explains. "We had opportunities to train here with the



members of other nations' armed forces. So we had highly realistic scenarios to practise communication in English, plan operations and subsequently control them from tactical operations centre on the radio."

The action by the company task force in exercise Capable Logistician was twofold. The unit performed missions arising from the prepared plans under the play and instructions from the superior command HQ. In addition, they provided real MP protection to the forces

in cooperation with their colleagues from the Hungarian Military Police.

The CoyTF was subordinated to the commander of the Joint Logistic Support Group (JLSG) provided escorts of heavy resupplying trucks and oversize cargo, valuable materiel and security of ammunition depot that stored costly sensitive and precision ammunition. They Coy TF used the SOM security systems to that effect, as the systems provide stand-off detection of any suspicious motion for the MP

to come and seize possible intruders or call in reinforcements.

Besides standard movement control and patrolling teams, the company task force comprised three specific teams. Team 1 comprised a response unit that performed regular policing, such as standard investigation. The team also had a pair of military service dogs specialised in detecting narcotics and explosives assigned to them.

"We used them for example when a suspicious package in the dining facility was reported. The whole surrounding area had to be evacuated and closed. Subsequently, we called a Croatian K-9 officer assisted by a Slovak EOD specialist. Their task was to find out whether the package could contain an explosive. Identification was positive in this case. The dog sat two times to indicate there had really been an explosive. That action, much like many others, required a detailed communication and cooperation among service personnel from individual nations forming the project of multinational battalion," First Lieutenant Marek Novotný elaborates.

The last team comprised explosive ordnance disposal specialists, who were assigned to individual teams as needed.

Provost Marshal

One of the goals of the exercise was also train the Provost Marshal Office (PMO) model. The Provost Marshal team reported directly to the commander of the Joint Logistic Support Group and their mission was to coordinate MP activities, assignments relating to the Military Police and advise the commander on all domains of MP responsibility.

"The exercise proved it is critical for the level of command, which has a subordinate military police unit, to have such type of coordination component," Major Stejskal expands. "In the course of the exercise, we had a chance to rehearse the whole spectrum of operations. Apart from what has been mentioned, we also provided security coverage to key elements and infrastructure of the forces in training. I am happy with the way we performed those missions. As is the case with any multinational unit, there are naturally certain challenges pertaining to single standard operating procedures. There are still minor differences among military police organisations of individual armed forces in some procedures, but we continuously work to finetune all of that. A multinational battalion working group convenes at least four times a year to harmonises those issues."

Multinational Military Police Battalion faces the CREVAL combat readiness evaluation later on this year. The MNMPBAT Staff is to undergo that process during exercise Compact Eagle 2015 that is organised by the Multinational Corps North East headquartered in Szczecin, Poland, in November this year. It is to the MNC-NE that the MNMPBAT is subordinate to.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by Vladimír Marek and the NATO MNMPBAT



He Enjoys Leading the Way for Others Captain Gabriel Bugajski, USAF, Participated in Scientific Research of the University of Defence

People Around Us

At first he was afraid that he would live in a cramped flat, far from his office, overwhelmed by impressions and experiences of life in Central Europe. But he found a comfortable apartment near his workplace and new colleagues and acquaintances helped him to get used quickly to his place of work. Nearly two years, the US Air Force officer Gabriel T. Bugajski served at the Defence University, where scientifically worked at the Faculty of Military Technology, under the international Engineer and Scientist Exchange Program (ESEP).

"During my service at the Department of Air Force and Aircraft Technology of the Defence University, I've learned more about turbojet testing than during six years of university. This is due to the researcher's inventiveness and collaboration with local industry," said Captain Bugajski, looking back at his working stay in the capital of Moravia. "I was impressed by the high level of engineers and scientists, who do excellent research work, with smaller budgets than many of their counterparts in other NATO countries."

Captain Gabriel Bugajski went to the Defence University in September 2013 as the very first USAF member in the Czech Republic, under the terms of above mentioned exchange programme. He came to the Brno university from the military test and evaluation centre AFOTEC DET 5 (Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center Detachment 5) in California, where he worked as a chief engineer for operative tests of transport aircraft Lockheed C-130 Hercules, and refuelling aircraft Boeing KC-46A. Here he was responsible

for planning the tests, data collection and their analysis.

"For this exchange programme I choose the Czech Republic first, because I enjoy leading the way for others. Besides, it was a chance for me to learn more about jet testing and to work with scientists who are among the best in their field, and share experiences and proposals for experiments. In addition, I was excited to learn a foreign language, to get to know the rich history of the Czech Republic, enjoy the world's best beer, and live in the great university city in the centre of Europe," Captain Bugajski describes the motives that brought him to Brno.

How to Test Engines Better

At the Defence University, Captain Bugajski was placed into an expert engine group, at the Department of Air Force and Aircraft Technology. So he participated in the project for development a research organization, with name "Tests

of Aircraft Propulsion Units in Selected Flight Modes", above all on tests of small jet engines TS-20 and JT100. During the project, he successfully applied his expertise in planning, testing, data collecting and data analysis.

Captain Bugajski also collaborated in the creation of software for collecting and analysing measured data from tests of small jet engines, and on the proposal for a utility model of measuring equipment for uneven flow in the inlet of jet engines. He is a co-author of five scientific articles and he also gave a lecture on design of experiments for undergraduate students.

"Such pressure distortions occur, when air or fluid moves rapidly through different shapes," the American officer described the essence of his study. "For example, water flows evenly from a garden hose, but if I put my thumb over the outlet, water pressure and its shape change dramatically. It is similar in case of an air inlet on an F-16 aircraft jet engine. Although the engine is cylindrical, its air inlet is of oval shape, which is not optimal for the engine, but it is

required by the optimal design of the aircraft. The shape of an air inlet introduce significant effect on engine performance and its other parameters, depending on airspeed, angle of start, and other ambient conditions. The wrong shape under operating conditions can potentially lead to a catastrophic engine failure. The more we understand such press distortions; caused by design choices for engine inlets, the better we can control engine performance as it operates under stress, both in military and civilian aircraft."

From Water to the Heights

Before he joined the U.S. Air Force, the American Captain was a competitive swimmer, for 15 years, and he played water polo at his high school. So, why did he join the Air Force instead of the Navy? "Apart from the abovementioned sports, I have always been interested in space research and related technologies," Captain Bugajski explains his inclination towards aviation.



"And the USAF is a leader in this field," he adds. While stationed at Edwards Air Force Base, he underwent a private pilot training (PPL) and completed his first solo flight. During flight tests of aircraft Hercules C-130J and HC/MC-130, he served as a technical liaison officer between scientists and pilots.

Nonetheless, Gabriel Bugajski returned back in Brno to his original sports inclination and together with his mates from the Defence University Brno he strengthened the team of Geofyzika Brno, in underwater rugby, and all together participated in international tournaments in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Austria. He was involved in school life even in other extracurricular activities. For example he participated in excursions in aircraft factories and at Czech Air Force bases he took part in professional examinations or in football training during physical preparation. For the Department of Air Force and Aircraft Technology he represented a welcome revival, with new insights into a number of problems, always with active, enthusiastic and friendly approach. His stay in Europe he capitalised for a better understanding the continent: "In my free time I enjoyed not only sightseeing and attractions of the Czech Republic, but also of other European countries, actually I visited fifteen of them," says Bugajski.

"Although some aspects of the functioning of the Defence University are surprising to me, I rate my two-year stay very positive. I appreciate openness to different opinions, high level of expertise and broad range of knowledge and skills of department staff, or effective solutions to technical problems. The amount of time the teachers spend with military students is also admirable," Captain Gabriel Bugajski summed up his experiences.

His stay at the Defence University ended in mid-September, when Captain Bugajski returned back to the United States. His first task at home is to master the officer course for captains.

For the First Time “On His Own”

The hot August weekend suggested that paragliding fans would properly enjoy this year's meeting. At a meeting place, near the town Králíky, there arrived even Warrant Officer 1st Class Michael Šnajdar, member of the 25th anti-aircraft missile regiment at Strakonice, to lecture on the medical first aid. He did not know however that before his lecture, he would have to fight for the life of one of the participants.

This summer reached out to nearly all temperature records, so that paramedics had to drive to many cases of collapse just from high temperatures. Therefore it was not surprising when one collapse occurred even during the meeting of motor paragliders.

Correct Diagnosis is Essential

“I was sent for because someone collapsed,” recalls WO1 Michael Šnajdar. “At first I thought it must be the heat, so I only would lift legs of afflict and the problem would be solved, but a short look at the man turning blue quickly demonstrated the opposite.”

When Michal Šnajdar reached the place, two men had already started cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Fortunately, thanks to the lecture he had everything he needed with him. Because the person was not breathing, he used an automated external defibrillator (AED), and the man lying unconscious gradually completed three shocks. Meanwhile the trio of rescuers tirelessly continued resuscitation. “Both comrades, a veterinarian by profession, another was a policeman, had already similar experiences, which was a big plus,” says Šnajdar and adds: „Shortly after the arrival of emergency medical services, we managed to force the patient to breathe. It proved our initial diagnosis that the man had a heart attack.”



During the narration, the paramedic commemorates also annoying things during similar situations, namely disturbing groups of curious onlookers. “There stood relatively young people. Guys, come and help us, I asked them. In vain, only a 60 years old pensioner offered his help,” he says sadly.

To Keep a Head Cool

“In retrospect, I realized that the rescued man had certainly family, friends, but at that moment those ideas and everything else were set aside,” recalls Šnajdar. “I trained CPR in school, and therefore I know how important is

to maintain a cool head and especially do not cause confusions.”

It was not his first emergency resuscitation; he met them already in his professional work on ambulance stations of medical rescue services.

“But for the first time I intervened, to say, “on my own”, without the presence of civilian paramedics, and I myself became an officer commanding of emergency resuscitation,” WO1 Michal Šnajdar recounts moments of his rescue intervention.

His professional approach was appreciated even by the organizers of motor paragliding. One of them, Jaroslav Šilar, later sent a letter of thanks to the Strakonice unit, in which he wrote: “His intervention was rapid, highly professional, and as we subsequently learned from a doctor from the air ambulance, without his help, the patient would have died. We are very pleased and proud that such professionals serve in the Czech army.

“I’m only glad that all went well, I do not want to exaggerate my merits,” notes modestly Michael Šnajdar. “I just did my job.”

A Paramedic in the Army

Michal Šnajdar joined the Czech army at the age of nineteen; he was a student at the University of Defence, Faculty of Military Health Sciences, in the field of paramedic. At the end of the last year, he and his schoolmates were offered to choose a place where they would like to start their career after school: Bučovice, Chrudim, Jindřichův Hradec, Žatec or Strakonice. Finally, the anti-aircraft missile regiment prevailed. “I chose Strakonice, mainly due to the Air Force training centre for CLS (Combat Life Saver), as this centre is really the best in the eyes of medical community,” WO1 Šnajdar evokes his beginnings. “In connection with this centre, I came face to face with the reality of military administration and bureaucracy, as the centre was much neglected materially. In the last six months things have moved forward slightly, and we hope that the Air Force command will pay us more attention—not only financial.”



Biggest Plus for Aid Station is a Team

He currently works at the aid station of the 25th anti-aircraft missile regiment at Strakonice, and this work suits him, particularly because of its variability—backing exercises, schooling, professional experience, training CLS. “The biggest plus for the aid station is our team,” the paramedic confesses. “We understand each other, no problem is too difficult for us to find a common solution, and despite of very considerable workload we are able to fulfil all tasks under the command of WO1 Marie Mindlová.”

He would like to see more space for professional practice in health facilities and stations of emergency medical services; nevertheless because they have to meet the prescribed fifty percent of working days, including practical training, it is the question of additional medical personnel. The lack of time for prescribed professional experience is also the problem of other aid stations in the Czech army. “The manuals are one thing and reality is another,” shrugs Šnajdar.

A Born Medic

He knew he would live in a health care environment. It was in his blood. “We have healthcare in our family, as nearly half of the relatives are health professionals—from general nurse, over radiological assistant, to medical lab technician, so all the time I have been very close to medical specializations since early childhood,” smiles WO1 of air defence.

For that reason, in the final year of secondary school in Ústí upon the Orlice, he decided to become a trained paramedic. He chose the Faculty of Military Health because he thought that this faculty would prepare him best for this field of work. “Of course, financial and material support was also tempting for me, along with job security after graduation,” WO1 Šnajdar adds.

He gained professional experiences specifically in the Pardubice Regional Hospital, Teaching Hospital in Hradec Králové and at the Territorial Emergency Medical Services Centre of Pardubice region in Ústí upon the Orlice, during his studies at the Faculty of Military Health. “I must thank them all, because everything I know, I’ve learned through the staff experts; you can get self-confidence only through practice, not theory,” says in conclusion the assertive paramedic.

I Would not Hesitate to Join the Mission

In his spare time, WO1 Michael Šnajdar relaxes especially while jogging, but his hobbies also include history and literature. “The physical condition is for every soldier his background and running cleans his head,” the young medic smiles. “And mission? I’d go right now, unfortunately, for the Strakonice unit there is a minimal chance. But I certainly would not hesitate.”

Authors: Jana Deckerová and CAPT Jana Samcová,
photos: Archives of the 25 anti-aircraft missile regiment



Africa Attracts Him

That August day last year in Afghanistan was very really hot. Nevertheless, it was exactly the same as other days. Sergeant Radek Kopáč went to do some sports after breakfast. Even though he had a free afternoon, the very challenging night awaited for him. His unit had to go to one of regular night patrols.

This mission in Afghanistan was in fact an opening night for Radek Kopáč in this country. Even though he participated in 2006 in the KFOR mission in Kosovo, this was something completely different. Anyway, he was not a newcomer in the army. He completed compulsory military service in 2002. Even then he came to the conclusion that the military service was pleasing and rewarding, and so he applied for reenlistment. He wanted to become a professional soldier. In early 2003 he began to work as a senior operator with the 46th airborne artillery battalion in Pardubice. There he served for seven years. But in 2010 there was a reorganisation and the unit moved to Jince. After

two years, Sergeant Kopáč decided to transfer to the 43rd Airborne Battalion at Chrudim. Here he has been serving in the position of the commander of the mortar group of the 1st Airborne Company, up to the present. Gradually he went through parachute and mortar courses, course for topography specialists and through several artillery courses.

In April 2014 he came to Afghanistan's Bagram with the 2nd guard company. From the very beginning, one hundred and fifty members of this unit have gained the respect and recognition of American soldiers. It was strengthened by President Barack Obama's visit, during which the Czechs protected the space around

the base. At that time the whole unit was deployed off the base. A series of preventive measures were adopted, in order to prevent any attack on the base. It was the biggest security operation in the history of Bagram that took place. The Czech unit fulfilled its role perfectly. Some of its members spent in full combat readiness thirty-six hours. Also thanks to their deployment in Top Gun Shield operation, the American president could meet with his troops and thus to honour the memory of those who died fighting for freedom.

Ambush on the Gladius Road

After lunch, the unit of Sergeant Kopáč started to prepare for a night patrol. Every day the 2nd guard company completed several patrols. Some of them were longer than twelve hours. They were to check the historical launching platforms for rockets aimed at the Bagram base and

to guard its surroundings. The soldiers also tried to communicate with the local people, so that they could get them on our side and to acquire the necessary information about possible attacks. From Tuesday, July 8, 2014, when a suicide bomber attack killed five members of the Czech unit, passed more than a month. Yet the soldiers in his thoughts kept going back to that fateful black day, when they lost their mates. But still it was necessary fulfil the tasks. The announcement of the combat command was followed by the preparation of weapons, ammunition and vehicles. Roughly at six o'clock p. m., the column left the Bagram base. A sleepless night was waiting for soldiers.

Sergeant Kopáč was in the vehicle MRAP, behind a grenade launcher AGS-17. At first, the night patrol proceeded without major problems. The column was moving along the communication Gladius. And just on this road, they fell into an enemy ambush. Enemy forces started to fire at the column from small arms from the close vicinity.

Under the Fire

"Immediately, after a first shot, I turned towards the enemy. After his positive identification, I opened fire on him from mounted weapons AGS 17. When later there was a re-examination of the point of contact, it was found that my fire killed one of the insurgents. He was subsequently identified as one of the leading commanders in the region," Sergeant Kopáč recalled. "In contact with the enemy, our vehicle was hit in engine parts by hand anti-tank grenade launcher. Fortunately, its operability was not disrupted. At the command of platoon leader, we went faster, away from a contact with the enemy. After about five hundred meters we turned and waited for



the platoon Bravo that ought to reinforce our unit." When it arrived, the damaged vehicle returned to the point of contact. There most of the soldiers dismounted and continued the pursuit and search for the enemy who quickly withdrew. The damaged vehicle was assigned to the platoon Bravo to return back to the base. "This incident was my first encounter with enemy fire. Yet I was oblivious to any danger in that situation. Everything happened very quickly, the first priority was to answer the fire on the enemy. Only in this way I could protect other vehicles of our column from the enemy's attack," Sergeant Kopáč explained. For literally lightning response that helped to protect other soldiers, he was awarded on a spot by the US commanding Brigadier General Stephen Townsend. After the end of the mission and on his return to the Czech Republic, he received from the hands of the Czech Defence Minister the Merit

Badge of the Army of the Czech Republic and the Badge for Combat Contact.

"Of course, when we came back later to the incident, we discussed it from every angle. But each time we agreed upon the fact that thanks to the drills of certain situations, we managed this event properly," Radek Kopáč stressed. "After that, the rest of the mission was relatively stable. Except for minor clashes with the locals, because of stoning our vehicles during patrols."

Radek Kopáč would like to continue serving with the 43rd Airborne Battalion at Chrudim. They are said to have an excellent team and he likes the service. He would like to take part in other missions. He is most attracted by Africa, in particular by the mission in Mali.

Author: Vladimír Marek,
photos: Archives of Radek Kopáč



factsheet

The biggest Allied base in Afghanistan, Bagram, is located about fifty kilometres north of Kabul, at an altitude of fifteen hundred meters. It also includes a large airport. The first local runway was built in 1976. At present, there are two basic runways on the base: three thousand meters long and three thousand and five hundred meters long, which allows setting down even the largest planes. This base played an important role during the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan in the late seventies of the last century. A number of Soviet troops were stationed here. Allied troops have used the base since 2001. The Czech soldiers have been guarding this base since the beginning of 2014. They have been quartering in the section called Riverside.

Almost five hundred servicemembers from five NATO nations joined the multinational ground based air defence exercise Tobruq Legacy 2015.

One Team

An armed conflict occurred between two states. The attacked country of Panau defends against military invasion by the neighbouring state of Sodor. A violent occupation is impending. The state under attack therefore requests a military intervention by the Union of States international organisation. A part of the land task force the Union of States deployed into the crisis area has been a ground based air defence unit. Its mission is to support the land task force in defending and repelling the attack by Sodor army.



That was the scenario for exercise Tobruq Legacy 2015, where training of such nature and scope was performed for the first time the Czech territory under the baton of service personnel of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment home based at Strakonice.

Tobruq Legacy

At the turn of June and July, a part of the Boletice Military Training Area belonged to Czech soldiers as well as teams of service personnel from Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia and the United States of America. They formed a multinational team that demonstrated the ability to deliver Washington Treaty Article 5 commitments to collective defence of NATO nations.

While the Czech military professionals made use of the first days of the exercise for rehearsals and unit integration, foreign trainees were arriving in turns to the military training centre located in southern Bohemia. "One of the primary goals of the exercise is to declare interoperability among NATO ground based air defence forces," said Brigadier General Jaromir Šebesta, Deputy Commander of Czech Air Force, in the opening

ceremony and went on to say that although not an easy goal, it was our ambition to prove our soldiers were rightly a valuable part of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System.

The exercise was initially planned just for Czech and Slovak soldiers. The 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment from Strakonice and the Air Defence Missile Brigade home stationed in Nitra, Slovakia, honour the legacy of Czechoslovak soldiers who engaged in fighting for the seaport city of Tobruq in north Africa in World War II. Honorary names of both units (Czech unit "Tobruq" and Slovak "Tobruq Defenders") were also the source of inspiration for naming the exercise Tobruq Legacy.

Two states clashing

The fictive state of Sodor carried out a military invasion into the neighbouring country of Panau with the objective to occupy it. The state of Panau requested international assistance. The ground based air defence unit was a part of that military intervention. "Their mission was to support the land task force as the contained and repelled the attack by the Sodorian army,"



informs Major Martin Tesař, an intelligence officer.

The core of the unit comprised two common batteries (Czech-Slovak and Lithuanian-Hungarian), equipped with very short range man-portable air defence missile systems. Czechs and Lithuanians trained with RBSD-70 systems that are laser guided. Slovaks used the Igla systems and Hungarians had the Mistral systems. Both of them use the optronics self-homing system. The unit also comprised a Czech battery with SA-6 Gainful air defence missile system.

American liaison

Transmission of air picture data from the Control and Reporting Centre (CRC) in Stará Boleslav into the principal command post of the units in training at Boletice MTA, that was the mission for U.S. forces, for which they used the FAAD command and control system. The CRC served as a source of air picture data. In practice, they had surveillance of the airspace over Boletice MTA generated by radars located across the MTA and obtained the air picture data on the airspace beyond from the CRC.

Lithuanians a live target

The tactical exercise started early in the morning at six a.m. Some three hours later, the second Lithuanian team became the target to an artillery assault. Soldiers are running for the shelter except for one. He remains prone on the ground and cries out. He bleeds from several parts of his body. Injuries are very serious. A time trial starts. While soldiers provide first aid to the casualty, the team leader reports to the superior echelon and requests medical evacuation (MEDEVAC). A BV 206 tracked vehicle arrives in no time to transport the injured service members to the designated helicopter landing zone.

Time is relentless, it is about seconds. Soldiers make to the heliport in several minutes. A medic jumps out of the helicopter to take over the casualty and load it into the helicopter to be taken into a Role 1 field medical facility.

That was one of many incidents staged to prove the skills of the soldiers during the



Exercise trainees generated the air picture using inputs from the CRC Stará Boleslav and systems deployed in Boletice MTA, including the SURN surveillance and tracking radar, the ReVISOR surveillance sensor, the Hungarian MCP system, U.S. Sentinel radar and the Lithuanian Giraffe Mk IV system.

"We tested the distribution of air picture information from those sources and how the information was processed by individual systems and disseminated further on," explained Major Bronislav Kavka, who was responsible for connectivity as well as communication and information systems on the exercise.

Joint training against aerial threats

The tactical training event peaked in a live fire exercise involving the air defence systems. For the first time in the history of the Czech Republic, a live fire of VSHORAD systems from the inventory of multiple NATO armed forces took place in a single day. Czech and Lithuanian soldiers also used the BORC device for the first time during night live fire of the RBS-70 MANPADS.

The live fire was also attended by leading representatives of the Czech and foreign armed forces. The Chief of General Czech Armed Forces Lieutenant General Josef Bečvář was also present in this unique exercise. "In my perspective, the importance of the exercise Tobruq Legacy 2015 is that ground based air defence units from several NATO nations are able to engage aerial opponents together," General Bečvář highlighted the exercise goal. Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, the Commanding General U.S. Army Europe, also valued multinational cooperation. "Such exercises are extremely important, especially in these turbulent times, for NATO to demonstrate its cohesion and cooperation among individual nations," General Hodges concluded.



exercise. And because there were ground based air defence units on the exercise, the soldiers also had to tackle many attacks from the air in addition to ground attacks. Their opponents were simulated by the JAS-39 Gripen aircraft, Mi-17 and Mi-24 helicopters as well as drones.

Information crucial

For the servicemembers of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment, this was the very first experience with integrating such a number of foreign units. The multitude of air picture sources used in the exercise was also a premiere setup for them.

For the first time ever, the Czech Armed Forces played the key role in a multinational brigade task force during exercise Allied Spirit in Hohenfels, Germany

All won

The Asvar community was veiled by a kilometre-long cloud of smoke. Air and artillery support of NATO forces was responsible for that. Fierce fire broke out instantly. Supported by T-72M4CZ modernised tanks, BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles and Iveco light multirole vehicles, Czech soldiers sought to fight their way into the community and clear the whole area. But the opposing forces strongly resisted.

That was one of the episodes of the multinational exercise Allied Spirit II held in the U.S. JMRC in Hohenfels, Germany, in which the 7th brigade task force with commanding officer Colonel Josef Kopecký played the pivotal role. The Czech Armed Forces joined the exercise that started in mid-December last year with fourteen hundred soldiers and over four hundred combat and support vehicles. In total, the exercise involved around four thousand service personnel from the Czech Republic, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Serbia, Hungary and Georgia.

"The order of battle of our 7th Brigade task Force comprises a British, American and Czech manoeuvre battalions. Further, it includes a Czech reconnaissance battalion, combined U.S.-Czech artillery battalion, combined Czech-U.S.-Canadian logistic support battalion and numerous smaller components," Colonel Kopecký explains. "It took us nine months to get ready for this exercise. We had to develop standard operating procedures and all associated matters – and primarily prepare the people. There had been a series of table top exercises and rehearsals under the aegis of the 7th Mechanised Brigade. We also invited representatives from Hohenfels for a joint training with us in the Libavá Military

Training Area. Probably the most difficult part was the integration of combat support and combat support service units. It showed that our brigade had been a little more ahead of those units. The challenge is that foreign deployments are primarily covered by the 7th Mechanised and 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade. The regiments rather concentrate on training in their respective specialisms. They assign their units into brigade task forces only secondarily. But eventually we managed to finetune all problems."

War for oil

Exercise Allied Spirit II was conceived as a NATO operation taking place in the territory of fictive nations on the Caucasus. In May 2014, the Government of the State of Ariana raised several claims in relation to the oilfields in the neighbouring country of Atropia. The claims were supported by the ethnic minority of Arianans living in border areas of Atropia. Ariana made use of the ethnic minority to create tensions in the neighbouring country. Many provocations and guerrilla attacks occurred. Ariana finally used force under the pretence of the national minority's being oppressed. On 9 August 2015, Arian military forces crossed the state border

and began to attack with the objective to seize the capital of their neighbouring country and naturally the key oilfield infrastructure.

In this situation, the UN Security Council decided to deploy the ISF international allied forces into the territory of Atropia. "NATO deployed three multinational corps here. One of those is the Hohenfels Corps and the 7th Brigade Task Force I am in command of is a part of the Corps. Our mission is to stop the opponent, push them out of the territory they captured, and renew



national integrity with all functionalities," Colonel Kopecký points out.

"On Sunday evening, we received order from the corps commander and on the next day we issued full orders in English to subordinate battalions. We managed to get individual sites operational and establish connectivity. We created the command system and included the subordinate battalions into the order of battle. We already have everything fully operational at the moment. We are evaluated progressively on everyday basis and those are no diplomatic statements. According to the reports, we have even been doing better than U.S. forces in some cases."

MILES and cameras

The huge benefit of exercises held in the U.S. Joint Multinational Readiness Center is their realistic nature. Thanks to massive deployment of latest generation MILES laser engagement simulation system, the training is very close to realworld situations. The system can also be fitted on heavy hardware, including tanks. Inputs for evaluation are obtained from the MILES connected to the central evaluation computer system, from evaluators as well as from cameras. There are several cameras positioned in all fourteen training facilities in Hohenfels. Everything is shot from several angles and the footage can be replayed for every situation and zoom in when necessary during the evaluation. After the training ends, there is instant data about the losses and experienced instructors are able to review possible mistakes.

Awaited ambush

Tough fighting goes on at the moment to win control of the Asvar community. Opposing forces in black uniforms played by U.S. forces stationed at Hohenfels are not really willing to give up. "Our offensive phase started with

attack by two heavy units that put the community under siege and took defensive positions so, that they could not be engaged by Arianan heavy armour. They were followed by light company that is now seeking to take control of the community and secure the local police station. That is where the weapons cache allegedly is for Arianan special forces," commander of the 74th battalion task force Lieutenant-Colonel Martin Botík explains.

Penetration by tank and mechanised forces on the left flank of offensive operation however did not do without certain complications. The opposing forces put up a tough resistance on the nearby hill. "We were tasked to capture the strategic hill above the Asvar village, take control of that area and prevent the OPFOR from accessing the community area from the west. We proceeded in two directions. My tank platoon reinforced with a mechanised element advanced from south to west so that we were

able to cover the south side of the hill. Along with another our component, which attacked north of us, we were finally able to capture the hill and push the opponent out," says Lieutenant Jan Holíček, commander of Czech tank platoon. "We proceeded with a high caution. We identified certain locations suitable for ambush. The terrain we were going through was very suitable. So, we did not hurry and thoroughly searched all suspicious places. In those instances we sent ahead squads from infantry fighting vehicles. Our suspicion however did not prove right. The opponent put up a tough resistance only shortly before we reached the hilltop. The OPFOR defended the strategic location was with one mechanised and one tank platoon. We finally managed to join forces and push them out. The opponent lost one tank platoon and one mechanised platoon. Our losses were relatively low and represented a half of tank platoon."





Lieutenant Holíček also alerted to the fact that even the most advanced laser simulators are not flawless. For example, the opponent may defend against the laser beam by taking a shelter in the forest. The system then does not register hits. That needs to be counted with and work with the evaluators to achieve that the target is evaluated as killed.

From zero to ten

The Czech service personnel were able to prove all of that during company level exercises that were organised in the initial stage of their stay at Hohenfels. Those were phased according to the level of difficulty. "On day one, we were not subject to intensive activity by the opposing forces. The point was to identify their locations and enter into contact with them. But they progressively stepped up their resistance against us. They have perfect settings here, going up from zero level difficulty to level ten. Their resistance escalates



from day to day. It is preset so, that they increased our wear progressively. The armoured combat vehicles against us are highly manoeuvrable off road and very fast," Sergeant First Class Vladimír Menšík explains. "We are here along with infantry fighting vehicles, and U.S. offroad vehicles support us too. I believe we complement one another very well. The lighter hardware performs reconnaissance type of missions and secures crossroads. The heavy hardware then eliminates the opponents' armour. Although the weather has been scorching throughout the exercise, the equipment works better than we expected. The people inside the vehicles have a substantially bigger problem with that. Contrarily to armoured vehicles of some of the NATO armed forces, our tanks are not equipped with air conditioning. With all systems switched on, the temperature inside makes our life considerably harder."



Not omitting anything

The A infantry company underwent similar company level exercises. A convoy of Iveco LMVs, Land Rovers and Humvee were just negotiating their way through a forest to a camp. "Our task was to search for the opponent and eliminate them. Training with MILES forces soldiers not to omit anything and do everything they would do in realworld combat. They have to take cover consistently not to get hit. The opponents are high-quality forces played by experienced soldiers. Moreover, they have been here for a longer time, so they have a very good familiarity with the local environment," explains the commanding officer of 1st infantry company, captain Michal Mamkin. "I am in command of a light company, which is a bit of a handicap. We may not eliminate all enemy equipment. We seek to use all antitank weapons we have

available: RPGs and Javelin antitank missiles. When we hit a tank with the RPG, that does not necessarily mean a kill; the tank may only be damaged. It depends on the number of hits and type of weapon used. The tank may only lose its mobility but the weapon is still operational. Or the way round, we put out the weapon system, but the tank can still move. We often request fire support in those cases. We have managed to complete all exercises to very good standards. We do have some shortcomings and we discuss those during after action reviews."

Double capture

Czech soldiers finally managed to get into the Asvar community. It looks like they will eliminate the final resistance by the opposing forces in a couple of minutes. But fighting is suddenly suspended. Commanding officer of the 74th battalion

task force is not happy with how his forces proceeded and so he returns them to the initial attack line and calls in the company commanders. Using specific examples, he explains where they made mistakes and how should they proceed next time. "It is not the point of this exercise to identify the winner. Our goal is to rehearse training objectives we set for ourselves and draw lessons from this training event. This phase of the exercise showed that we need to get more down to the terrain and speed up. The manoeuvre should be substantially faster. Its power is in speed, massive employment and fire superiority," LTC Botík says.

In the second run, the Asvar community is definitely captured and occupied. Weapons at the police station are seized. Exercise Allied Spirit II nevertheless goes on. Soldiers are still up to its main part, which involves a full-scale field training exercise. "This is one of the largest exercises for our armed forces in this year. The 7th



Mechanised Brigade has been evaluated as an excellent unit on a sustained basis. The question came up what to do next. We proposed to the Commanding General U.S. Army Europe that we would set up an exercise on the level of Brigade task force. And that is where this whole thing came from," underlined Lieutenant General Josef Bečvář, the Chief of General Staff Czech Armed Forces. "This exercise has also showed that we are no rookies in NATO. We have excellent commanders and Colonel Kopecký has proven that on everyday basis."

Further editions of the Allied Spirit exercise series are to be held in the fall and in spring next year. "I am not in the position to say whether and in what numbers we will participate in those exercises. Available funding will be the key. Such international exercises are naturally extremely valuable for increasing the quality of our armed forces. Reviewing the missions performed here by the 7th Mechanised Brigade, I am very proud of our soldiers," general Gurník concludes.

by Vladimír Marek

Unmistakable roar produced by the Mi-24 Hind helicopter and skills possessed by Czech pilots are something that goes far beyond the boundaries of our country.

Italian Blade 2015

Italian city of Viterbo hosted multinational interoperability exercise under the auspices of the European Defence Agency. Demanding two weeks tested the skills of pilots, mechanics, ground personnel and logisticians. High temperatures, various aircraft and different environment heralded new experience as well as suprising situations.

Interoperability, new experience and mutual testing of skills and abilities, that was an exercise that took place roughly 80 kilometres north of Rome in the Monte Romano polygon and in adjacent areas from 22 June through 5 July 2015. Pilots from ten nations were up to a host of interoperability flights, coordination with forward air controllers, and integration of land forces into air operations in the form of paratroops, perimeter support and mutually coordinated flights. That was the primary goal of the exercise with involvement of more than a thousand of soldiers and forty air assets. Exercise Italian Blade slightly differed from other foreign exercises usually held under NATO aegis. The European Defence Agency took over the lead this time, although it draws on joint NATO policies to an extent. The objective is naturally to harmonise procedures and improve plans developed over years. Mr. Miloš Pecha, an EDA representative specialising in helicopter forces and procedures, says: "The European Defence Agency seeks to complement training performed in the frame of NATO; the helicopter program exercises focus on training interoperability and standardisation of training procedures, mission planning and performance. Italian Blade was the eighth exercise in a row where we already managed to bridge the differences in training and procedures of countries participating in the program. It was necessary to prepare aircrews operating

different machines for a perfect harmonisation and communication. We are glad that the Czech Armed Forces was represented in the second highest number of rotary wing aircraft in the program's history and participation of the Czech Air Force Mi-24s was welcome."

International mentoring

Procedures and policies are one thing and their integration for training and use in practice is something completely different. The task for mentors, more precisely tactical instructors from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, is to supervise the introduction of guidelines and evaluate missions, procedures and their correct performance. It is logical – when pilots fly in their homeland, it is different than when they have to perfectly communicate and cooperate with servicemembers from other NATO nations, coordinate flight operations, do composite flights involving aircraft of different categories and provide communication with the Forward Air Controllers (FAC). It is also worthwhile to mention close air support to land forces and search and rescue operations. It is also logical that the Mi-24 multirole attack helicopter, with its performance envelope, service ceiling, cargo capacity and overall firepower, can do more than machines originally designed for civilian purposes (Augusta Westland A109

and the like), and hence interoperability exercises help pilots to be able to fly together with machines of different categories. The tactical instructors evaluate every flight, highlight mistakes that need to be redressed and completely eliminated in the years ahead. They inform the European Defence Agency accordingly to do the final assessments or provide recommendation for future exercises.

Different environment

It is naturally attractive for pilots to take part in an exercise outside the home territory. Every flight is different, unique in certain aspects, but the environment is the same all the time. That is why it is essential to hone one's skills in international exercises that offer a different climate, largely different conditions and with respect to NATO readiness also the familiarisation with hardware used by the NATO Partners. Italian organisation was not completely flawless at all times, but the Czech military professionals of the 221st Squadron, including after foreign experience and operational tours in Afghanistan,



are able to perfectly accommodate any requirements. They have no problems with adapting themselves, and so even in Italy, close to Rome, there was not any problem to prepare everything one hundred percent. The important factor were also high training standards of our fifty-member ground personnel team, including their excellent language skills. English was an everyday part and did not cause trouble to anyone, which the instructors also highly valued. The organisation of such a large exercise, when it is necessary to provide everything from housing to food, to fuel and maintenance facilities requires not only seamless coordination and excellent skills. That was underscored by the fact that it was the first time for the Czech Armed Forces to participate in an EDA exercise at Viterbo. There is no room to be nervous and everybody is pulling at the same rope. Every machine needs to be perfectly ready, each flight log thoroughly studied and evaluated. The ambient temperature magnified by the airfield surface and the scorching noon sun did not mean relax and rest for the Czech mechanics as work always goes first. But it was not always the case all the time with everybody

and the more we can appreciate the excellent job our mechanics and ground personnel are doing.

Different machines

Given the tender for new multirole helicopters prepared at the Czech MoD, it was useful to review the equipment our NATO Partners use. For example, the advanced triple-engine AW 101 Merlin helicopter is an impressive machine with a huge transport capacity, the NH90 is a futuristic multipurpose helicopter equipped with state-of-the-art avionics, same as the CH-53, not to speak about the transport capacity of the famous but old Chinook CH-47. It was pleasing to see the threesome of the Czech Air Force Hinds (Mi-24) to become the focus of interest by all airmen and soldiers. No doubt it is too early for the Hinds to be scrapped. In the exercise, the Mi-24 gunship was able to perform nearly all mission thanks to its versatility, high use value and the transportation capacity. In the context of the interests in our legendary machines, Major Jan Vanický of the 221st Squadron said: "Not

only our aircrews but also aircrews from other NATO nations' air forces highly value the this machine when they see its performance envelope, manoeuvrability and what we can do with it." Although it is an aged Soviet platform, its firepower and capacity are practically unsurpassable. It is also chronically reliable and easy to maintain. What needs to be taken into account however is the possibility to repair the machines, deliver the spare parts and sustain them operational in general over decades. That is becoming ever more difficult. That is why efforts are underway to select its successor. Whatever system is selected, its implementation will always be compared to the Hind in the eyes of pilots.

From extreme to extreme

Long flights lasting several hours, high temperatures, demanding mountain environment and sand the wind brought in from the Tyrrhenian Sea will herald even more difficult conditions for the pilots. The next edition in the exercise series, which will prepare almost arctic conditions, will be Cold Blade in Finland in March next year. According to Mr. Miloš Pecha, it will be a similar exercise with specific focus on SOA (Special Operations Aviation), CSS (Combat Service Support) and CAS (Close Air Support), but temperature well below zero degrees Celsius will force the pilots as well as mechanics and the ground personnel to go to the very edge to their abilities in interoperability flights. The participation is expected the same as in Viterbo. After Finland, Belgium is scheduled with exercise Black Blade to primarily cover the support of special forces.



The 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion took part in the contest for special and counterterrorism units in Amman, Jordan

Warrior 2015

The Jordanian special forces training centre hosted the seventh edition of a competition for special units from all around the world. It was a premiere participation for the members of the battalion of General Karel Paleček, which brought about many lessons, achievements and also disappointment.

Eight-member long-range reconnaissance team of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion tested and compared their skills in the King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC). The recce guys were up to a challenging contest that compared their skills and abilities with special forces from nations such as the United States, Russia, Canada, Jordan and other Arab countries. In a four-day contest, they had three events every day, in which they had to prove their ability to take decisions quickly, precisely and effectively eliminate targets, but they also needed to show endurance and dexterity.

Thorough preparation

Ahead of the very opening ceremony, in which the Ambassador of the Czech Republic in Jordan Mr. Petr Hladík wished much success to the Czech team, the teams underwent a thorough check of mandatory equipment and armaments of all teams. In addition to weapons, the competing five-member teams had to complete the whole contest in body armour and helmet weighing at least eight kilos. Team members could not be substituted during individual events. The climate in Jordan is also very much different, and one cannot fully prepare for it.

Competition events

During Day 1, the teams were up to events named Urban Assault, Hostage Rescue and 3-Gun Gauntlet. On Day 2, the Czech recce guys went through Desert Stress Shoot, Trijicon Urban Assault, Airbus Seizure.

At the end of the contest, our team underwent events entitled Cross Country Stress Shoot, Shock & Awe and Ironman Stress Shoot.

Testing one's power

For the last day of the competition, the organisers prepared a true King's Challenge. Eight and a half kilometre long stage competition with five shooting events and mandatory water obstacle right at the start verified readiness of all the participants perfectly. Despite a major physical load,

the mental aspect was perhaps the worst as it was affected by adverse weather, strong wind and low quality weapon equipment. Weapons were borrowed, because due to the organisation and last moment invitation, it was impossible to take own, well-proven and zeroed-in weapons the soldiers are closely familiar with.

Inadequate weapons

The mentioned weapons largely affected the overall course of the contest. A high quality weapon is the key and – as Major Malát says – “we calculated from the very start with using weapons lent by the contest organiser. What we however did not count with was the condition of those weapons and that we will not have the chance to even zero in the pistols”.

After arrival, we were issued five M4A1 carbines and five Glock 21 pistols unfortunately



With quality weapons

As opposed to completely inadequate M-4s and Glock 21s, one could tell a high quality weapon. Two Accuracy International AWM sniper rifles were in perfect condition, our marksmen praised them and it showed in the results too.

and overall support, and familiarity with the environment with the home team played the key role in their success.

Rules not always fair

It is correct to say that we even beat elite teams in performance of some of the tasks, but the attitude by organisers brought us down on our knees from time to time. Rules were subject to change on everyday basis and the inability to disqualify teams (intentionally not referenced here) when completing the task just in part (which was clearly defined in competition propositions) had a major effect on the results. Not everything turns out according to how we imagined it, but rules are nevertheless always binding and it is not possible to change or bend them all the time. That would need to be eliminated in the future to maintain the prestige and dignity of the whole competition.

Future training centre

Jordanian environment was also a perfect demonstration of a high-quality training facilities for the Czech soldiers. The KASOTC even boasts a 600-metre shooting range with automatic evaluation and computer controlled target system.

The built-up area resembled a real-world city. CQB can be practised with live fire both from the buildings and at targets positioned inside the buildings. Overall, the KASOTC is a one of the most advanced training facilities on the globe, which saw investments over USD 200 million.

Future competitions

The primary goal for the Czech team was not to compare with others in the contest. First of all, it was necessary to get familiar with the facilities offered by the KASOTC. As long-range reconnaissance teams primarily train for performance of different missions, some sort of comparison was hardly possible. Perhaps only stress fire goes along with the tactics used by long-range reconnaissance teams. Therefore, if there is the possibility to take part in the future editions, we may draw lessons from the 2015 run, make sure all arrangements are in place – and most importantly: manage the transport of own weapon as we have them zeroed in and are familiar to soldiers. That is not an easy task preceded by many administrative actions. Some of those may take even months.

by Michal Voska, photos by MAJ Václav Malát



With that rifle, the Czech team managed to keep abreast with their competition and surpass them in many instances. Precision shooting over several hundred metres remedied what the other weapons spoiled. While this was the first participation in events that are not common for the members of the 102nd, the representation of the Czech Armed Forces was excellent.

First participation, not last

Due to a premiere participation of the Czech team in the contest of special and counterterrorist units, no stunning result was expected, but the 28th position overall out of 37 teams was nevertheless disappointing for all the members of the Czech team, especially as they did not perform badly in individual competition events. They cooperated without problems and motivated each other for better results with teams from Canada, the United States, Columbia and – perhaps surprisingly – also Russia and China. At the end of five-day contest, the teams of Russia, China and the home team of Jordan rightly proved the best. With the first two, maintenance

Service with the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade is one of the more prestigious and toughest ones. Is it easy to abandon it after two decades and start a completely new life?

Time to move on

An airborne soldier, warrior in body and soul, but especially a fair chap. He was with it, when the rapid deployment brigade was in the process of forming. He underwent a tough training and has been through several operational tours in Kosovo and Afghanistan. On the last tour, he even came in death's way, but managed to escape. Command Sergeant Major Miloš Prášil a.k.a. "Baron" made farewell with the Czech Armed Forces and red berets in April earlier this year. He felt he had nothing left to give to the armed forces after two decades.



"It is time to move on and pay the debt to the family, I was just pushing it in front of me since my children were born and just watched them grow before my eyes," Miloš Prášil confesses. "No one will do for you the final decision that will turn your life around, but I felt for some time already that I was at the end, that I had nothing left to give to the military. The toughest part was to admit it for myself."

Straight to the airborne

He joined the armed forces as a conscript at the age of eighteen in 1994. He was offered in the draft to enlist as an airborne soldier and join the newly forming unit in Chrudim. "I had done skydiving in civilian life before, I did sports, so I said to myself why not to become an insider," Miloš Prášil recalls. He saw major replacements of equipment, arms, personal items, various locators tested, new technology developed, and he even encountered the Svatava combat reconnaissance vehicle. "I still recall how our Allies looked at us in disbelief, when there were heavy tracked vehicles in the inventory of our airborne mechanised battalion," CSM (Ret.) Prášil smiles.

He also remembers then First Lieutenant Aleš Opat, who was at the birth of the new prestigious unit of the Czech Armed Forces. "It was

a tough school with difficult beginnings, but its thanks to him that we are today where we are," Mr. Prášil reminds the merits of General Opat.

Thirty days with the Canadians

A big experience came up when he managed to go with additional airborne soldiers as first ones for a thirty-day training event to the United States, where they could train with NATO forces. As a platoon, they were assigned to a Canadian unit. They had already been through deployment in the Balkans, but their equipment was still bad. "We were there together with soldiers from other eastern bloc armed forces and it was quite funny because we were running around in red boxer shorts and T-shirts, so we were a live attraction for NATO soldiers," Prášil recalls. "But it was a big school, to try out the airborne western style, that was beyond all academic training."

Moving over carrot field

The Czech airborne soldiers familiarised themselves with equipment and weapons used by service personnel of NATO nations' armed forces directly in training. Funny moments occurred on many occasions. "The Brits do not have tipping targets and they shoot until the commanding officers assumes the target has been eliminated," CSM (ret.) Prášil recalls. "I still recall our company commander telling us: 'Look how far they are able to throw the smoke hand-grenades, nearly one hundred metres – you can do nothing, you have to learn a lot.' So we told him those were not our heavy smoke hand-grenades, but firing light grenade launchers that we only have in our inventory today. He just gave us a look, but correct to say he admitted that."

Under supervision of NATO colleagues, they underwent a comprehensive training including assaults on buildings, and cleared the area in a three-day training session that included foot movement through a carrot field. "We were



hungry and I still recall the carrot tops hurled everywhere overhead; we have completely captured the field," Prášil smiles.

It was a great training school. They also had a chance to see combat engineers at work, when they prepared a way for the airborne to cross a stream. It was for the first time that they saw and tried an infantry footbridge with a line, which was narrow and swung in the water. "They only gave us one advice: do not ever stop!" Miloš Prášil recalls. "Many of us sank into water there."

The red berets went beyond the borders to gather experience many times, be it Spain or the Netherlands and learned lessons everywhere. In the meantime, there were operational deployments – Macedonia/FYROM, Kosovo. Miloš Prášil was then already a member of a newly formed sniper team and served many operational tours in that service assignment.



In the NATO kitchen

During familiarisation jumps with the Brits, they also found out the British meteorology know-how. "It was raining, we went into the cook-house to get something to eat and suddenly an order came to finish our meals quickly, there would be jumps in thirty minutes," the airborne recalls. "And yes here came a window over the airfield and a slot that we all jumped and it was raining everywhere around us. I jumped as the last one and the window was already closing, the conditions were no longer that good, I hit the runway and my heels went over my head, I landed on my coccyx and scraped my elbow. But I had to be quick to clear the runway, because the Skyvan had already been landing, and it started to rain heavily. Amazing school."

Challenge – Afghanistan

Then the breaking point came: he served at home after several foreign tours. He completed studies at Moravská Třebová, got married at the age of twenty-five, first child was born and then



the second one. Another challenge came up in 2007 – Afghanistan.

"I recall we joined the unit on the very same day we arrived," CSM (Ret.) Prášil reviews his memories. "It was getting dark soon, we got our weapons issued, and familiarised ourselves with the environment as we went. We had to settle with the high altitude and temperature differences. And the dust was also unbearable. The environment and people were completely out of our apprehension. 'Truly strange feelings,' the then sniper adds."

As opposed to Kosovo, security measures were incomparable. The soldiers had their stuff packed all the time should they have to leave the camp. But he also recalls the great progress made by the unit in their professionalism from the beginning.

The fateful patrol

His platoon deployed in Badakhshan and was sent for the first patrol. He was assigned as



a sniper. Two hundred and fifty kilometres there and back, three days in the field. "In one patrol, as we were returning from our mission, the weather began to worsen," Prášil recalls. "Local weather deterioration is common between the rocky hills, it started to darken, and we had to find out a suitable place to stay overnight."

There were four vehicles on the convoy. Suddenly they lost contact with the last vehicle. It was not possible to turn the vehicles around in the narrow canyon, and the commanding officer decided to send a team of two to find out what happened. "It was myself and my buddy Kolya to run up to the vehicle," Prášil says. "We saw straightaway that the road shoulder collapsed under the vehicle and the crew got stuck. They were not injured, but we had to secure medical materiel and weapons."

Both descended under the collapsed shoulder and secured weapons. "I heard a terrible noise, I did not know what was happening and suddenly I was swallowed by a landslide," Mr. Prášil lives through the fateful moments again. "I said to myself, this is the end. Memories of home flashed through my mind, thoughts that I will never make it back again, my wife, children, everything was a fast movie."

Instincts worked

It threw him up in a completely different place, it was dark around, mud and rocks rolled over and he sought to get out of it. But another slide came and it dislocated his leg. He did not care about pain, there was no time. He emerged in a river. The water was cold, he did not

perceive pain thanks to that and he could not believe to be alive. "The river flooded, rainstorm, there was nothing to get hold of in the canyon, I was cut off from the world," the soldiers describes the situation. "Drilled instincts nevertheless worked out. I found out I already ridded of my vest, because it would drag me to the bottom and that saved my life."

He managed to catch on a stone, and the he stayed there hanging on for several hours. Exhausted, dead beat, resigned to one's fate and reconcile with that it was the last place for him on earth. The break of dawn came; locals found him, and then finally Czech soldiers appeared. "I was very lucky, the abseiled to me, asked how I was, and I only remember me telling them: do not care about that and pull me out, get me out of this place fast," Miloš smiles. Then he does not remember anything, he was only woken up by the warm as he was transported into a medical facility on a helicopter.

Survived

"When they gave me the details of all those injuries, I was lucky to be alive at all, and when I had the chance to call home and speak to my wife, it was a wonderful feeling," Mr. Prášil collects all those moments.

His injuries were serious and many surgeries awaited him. During his stay, he was also told his buddy Kolya did not make it. Czech soldiers had to excavate his body from the rocks and mud. "When I learned that, it was terrible for me, I do not wish that to anyone."

He is not completely out of it even today. When there is a storm or a flooding river, everything comes back to him. But the experience also gave him an enormous dose of self-confidence. "Even when you think you are over and nothing can be done about that, the important thing is never to give up," the experienced airborne soldier underlines and goes on to say the his life values turned upside down and he knows money will not buy you the most precious thing in life.

Return to the red berets

He was through heavy injuries, he did not know what he would do. Yet he did not give up even this time. He was motivated that he will make it. After all surgeries and almost a twelve-month convalescence, he got a chance to stay with the military. "I pulled myself together, although jumping was over for me, the injuries

limited me, but I trusted things will get better," the ex-airborne soldier recalls. He filled the vacant post of command sergeant major in Chrudim and then in Žatec, where he served in that assignment till his leave earlier this year.

The art of leaving at the right time

"I am thirty-nine and I trusted a long time that I will manage to pull myself together," Miloš Prášil reviews. "But I already see I will never be completely well; I realised I will have to quit and rearrange my life completely. I feel I have nothing left to give the military and the time comes to vacate the post for others."

After leaving the military, he wants to stand on own feet, return to the beloved Vysočina highlands and devote his time to the family and children. "It is the most important thing that is here to stay, so why should I just let those precious moments go," Miloš Prášil contemplates his future life.

He is leaving the military after twenty years, where he had many friendships, but he also lost many friends who were killed or still struggle with the consequences of the injuries they had suffered. And his experience from everything he has been through? "It is good to have step goals, be able to reflect on oneself and be content with little and especially with yourself," Miloš Prášil adds.

by Jana Deckerová, photos by the 4th RDBde

Birds protect airfields against unwelcome guests from the animal kingdom

Falconers

Biological protection is an integral part of airfield safety and security as a whole. Electronic systems are capable of monitoring the surroundings, guarding access roads in conjunction with humans and eliminate the risk of intrusion, but they are unable to prevent animals from colliding with aircraft, which may end up fatally. That is the job for trained birds of prey.

Although flash devices, sound effects from pyrotechnical devices or radio controlled drones are used, falconers will always be needed in airfields. Even the most advanced technology is unable for the time being to discourage small animals, especially small birds and hares. Common disturbance is not very effective. The reason is habit. Animals get used to noise and any kind of disturbance, but they cannot overcome the basic instinct, fear of predators, fear for their life. That is why falconers step in before every start and every landing as well as at other times. They work from dawn till dusk.

Demanding training

Aged two through five months, young birds of prey start to get accustomed to the falconer and its training is done at the airfield from the very first day to get the bird used to air traffic. The bird learns that the glove means a reward, receives food only on the glove and earns the reward after a couple of days by jumping on the glove on his own. First over several centimetres, and eventually, fastened on a line, over several dozen metres. In case the bird of prey is recognised as reliable, it receives a radio and is released for the first, usually very thrilling free flight. Next phases of training differ for individual species. Falcons learn to fly on so-called lure, eagles and other birds of prey train arrivals on the glove and then they learn to catch trailer (imitation of prey – fox or hare skin, and imitation of various bird species for falcon lures) tugged by the falconer, and later by car.

Before release

Before every release, the bird of prey is weighed with precision in grams. Falconers will not do much with a fatty bird, because it is simply not interested in flying. Contrarily, a thin bird of

prey will wait for a sure shot and spare forces. That is why a broad range of birds of prey are employed to take turns at work with respect to their behaviour in nature: they catch game, eat it and rest for two days. The variedness is also important of animals that could endanger safety of aircraft and the associated selection of the birds of prey. The subject of falconers are birds from sparrows to herons, hares and even deer.

In-depth familiarity with the airfield

In their job, they build on an in-depth familiarity with the airbase and its environs. The report on ornithological situation including tables and possible risks is submitted to air traffic management authorities and communicated to pilots in preflight briefings. Falconers also need to be able to judge the situation as concerns the seasons of the year and a long-standing experience. The falconers from the Čáslav airbase have their work also complicated, and their vigilance and

commitment must be higher because a major part of the airfield is open so to say. The fields adjacent to the runway offer food as well as shelter for small animals and a relatively dense traffic in the surroundings may drive animals as far as onto the runway.

Food for birds of prey

The birds of prey receive appropriate reward for every catch. Those outside duty get Japanese quails, lab rats or one-day old chickens from factory farms. Successful action does not always mean the prey is killed. If the falconer gets to the catch in time, he withdraws the prey alive and let it go into safe place, outside the airbase premises. The bird of prey is then rewarded from the falconer's bag, where there is always something good to eat. The bird deserves it: it saved multimillion hardware and human lives. Even a pigeon sucked into a turbine may cause a disaster.

by Michal Voska and CPT Tomáš Maruščák (21st TAFB Čáslav), photos by Milan Roudný





Colonel Miroslav Pelikán of the ARC has been in service for almost a year as an advisor for the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

He Once Experienced All this

Colonel Miroslav Pelikán has been working in the defence sector in logistics (formerly arms and technical support) for thirty five years. He held a number of staff and in particular technical positions at all levels of command, i. e. at tactical, operational and strategic ones. He previously worked as director for the development and construction of logistics—deputy director of MoD logistics and director of the Multinational Logistics Coordination Centre headquartered in Prague. In early November last year, he started in Kiev as a Czech advisor for the reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Where exactly is your office in Kiev and how long should you work in this county?

My office is located in the NATO Liaison Office, in a standalone building next to the University of Defence, in one of Kiev districts, on the west bank of the Dnieper River. The time of my mission was set for a year; I should go back to the Czech Republic on October 31, 2015. Nevertheless, at present the authorities at the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign affairs talk over the possibility of my further work in Ukraine. I work as an advisor for the reform of logistics of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which includes not only the military, but also the National Guard and the Border Guard.

You went to Ukraine from the post of director of the Multinational Logistics Coordination Centre. When you got this offer, was it a clear-cut matter, or did you hesitate?

The offer to work in Kiev came from the Multinational Headquarters in Brussels. It was based on the conclusions of the NATO summit in Wales which took place in September 2014. There had been agreed to create the so-called Trust Funds to help Ukraine, and the logistics was defined as one of five priority areas. The Czech Republic there also declared it sends some advisors to assist during reforms at the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and also for other power ministries and organisations.

Before my secondment to Ukraine, I went through admission process that I won. I agreed with this mission. As the director of MLCC I worked for three years and I reached all goals



I had set before entering this position. I consider as my greatest success carrying out the largest multinational logistics exercise Capable Logistician 2013, which was under my control. It was the largest Alliance exercise of this kind in the last decade. For the passage to Ukraine, I had to prepare all by myself, only in two weeks, in which I had to carry out all required issues, including the exam in English and medical examinations before leaving at the Central Military Hospital. Due to the previous urgency, I started to work abroad without any prior short-term attachment, which was not a problem for me, because I had been engaged in this field of international logistics cooperation for a long time.

What are your main tasks in Ukraine? What is your focus?

First it is a consultancy for the Defence Ministry of Ukraine, General Staff, and other institutions in security and defence sectors in the field of logistics and standardization, secondly it is the assistance during drafting strategic documents, concepts and doctrines. In the area of



logistics, it is chiefly preparing the so-called feasibility study, which identifies the main system deficiencies in logistics support, setting out proposals to eliminate them. This study is a unique document, never drafted before in Ukraine. Most likely, it should serve as a guide for the next ten years. It will become a base for all initiatives in the field of logistics that are going to be introduced in Ukraine in the future, under the patronages of the Logistics Trust Fond.

Do you represent our army in Kiev alone, or did you bring with you some colleagues?

I am the only representative of the AČR in Kiev. But there is another Czech national working at the NATO Liaison Office. He is Martin Linhart of the Interior Ministry and he is therefore in charge of the reform of the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine and the whole security sector.

We cooperate closely, especially when is necessary to solve the logistics of the National Guard and the Border Guard, as those components are under the Ministry of Interior. In Kiev operate also additional foreign advisers from

NATO member countries; they focus on the area of defence planning, command and control, as well as cybernetic security.

How are you satisfied with the cooperation with the Ukrainian Defence Ministry? Does they accept your suggestions and comments?

Initially, the cooperation with the Ukrainian MoD and GS was minimal. At that time, defence officials devoted all their energies to the solution of war conflict in the eastern front. The logisticians did not work both on reforms, nor concepts, but they tried to haul supplies (foodstuffs, water, fuel, field uniforms, and ammunition) to fighting units. It was a huge challenge explicitly in the winter months, because the soldiers literally suffered from hunger and cold. Therefore, the requirements for counselling involved rather practical issues, such as the supplies of canned food rations, transport containers to the east, or hunting spare parts for immobile vehicles.

Strictly speaking, the Ukrainian MoD was not able to concentrate on medium- and long-term goals. Even the ministry itself proclaimed that it would work only at short-term matters. This was obviously contrary the NATO objectives, which are primarily of medium- and long-term character. However I can say that all my proposals were always accepted and I did not get into conflicts with the senior management of defence department. For example I attended meetings with all defence minister deputies, who always listened to my suggestions and then, backed



my proposals, they issued appropriate decisions. I also had the opportunity to familiarise myself with the logistics of the Prime Minister Yatsenyuk.

Originally my access to information was very limited, so was the entry to ministerial buildings. I went through a period of screening, when every visit to the Ministry of Defence had to be reported two weeks ahead, and it was examined by the Ukrainian State Security. The situation improved considerably after the peace agreement in Minsk, when fighting retreated and we had enough time for conceptual matters. In April, army officers took their monthly leaves, remaining from the year 2014, when the leaves were not approved, because of conflict. From May our co-operation was good and even the questions of access to information were solved. Nowadays I just call a day in advance and I get even the admission into the Council of National Security and Defence, which is the highest defence and security authority in Ukraine. It is controlled directly by the President, who is also its chairman. It is a permanent body which issues binding decisions for cabinet ministers.

What is the state of the Ukrainian army logistics? What it needs to change or tune?

The logistics in Ukraine is in a very bad condition. The existing system of logistic support is ineffective and inflexible; it does not meet the needs of soldiers. We discovered enormous bureaucratic procedures concerning purchases for anti-terrorist operations in the east. Simply, the Defence Ministry was not able to buy needed supplies in time; the proceedings took often nearly two months. The logistical stocks are at critical levels. A major shortcoming is for example the lack of modern information technologies in warehouse management. All items are recorded manually into books. The regulations are from the fifties and sixties of the last century. So the President set the task to create a centralized system for logistic support in Ukraine in cooperation with volunteers. In order to manage existing problems in the system of logistics support, they established the so-called parallel logistic structures only for logistical support to anti-terrorist operations in the east. At last, the volunteers were able to deliver supplies through civilian companies to the east within a few days. This was not a systems solution, because it was constituted by two systems of logistics support. On the one hand, it was a legitimate logistic system created by MoD, and on the other hand, there was the improvised logistics system created by volunteers. Therefore we aim our effort to coupling those the two systems as soon as possible.

In Ukraine, there also still exists a system from the days of the old Soviet Union. All standards are from the seventies and eighties of the last century. The actual distribution, between logistics and technical service, reflects the period before our revolution. Our objective is to integrate these systems and create a single system of logistics support, which is one of my main tasks here in Ukraine.

It is said that logistics is above all about money. Is it really the main problem of the Ukrainian army?

The main problem, of course, is not just money. It is also the question of complicated organizational structures, swollen administration, low manpower of military units, poor quality of maintenance of weapons systems and vehicles, insufficient level of technical training and also a large dependence on Russia in spare parts, of which Ukraine must get rid of, as soon as possible. Otherwise it would generate a big security risk. The results of all those shortcomings are aging weapon systems and equipments, which have been in operation for over twenty years. For those reasons, it subsequently leads to their degradation.

Is there a chance to personally check some specific issues on the frontline?

I had the opportunity to visit some warehouses of joint support centres in Kiev and Odessa and I also visited the Sector "M" headquarters, for anti-terrorist operations, which was built in Mariupol. I can say that logistics works only thanks to using all possible and available resources. It's basically a combination of MoD

logistics, volunteer structures, city supply chain and humanitarian assistance. In car pools, there you can see on one side a large number of obsolete immobile vehicles, and on the other hand modern means of transport of civilian companies that were mobilized. The repairs of faulty weapon systems are performed free of charge, on the basis of solidarity, and also quartering soldiers is carried out by housing in local businesses and schools which are leased to the state for a symbolic price of one Hryvnia per year. Currently, the city of Mariupol is being fortified against a possible attack by Russia. The construction works evoke the idea of World War II. They build the trenches and dugouts and pile up bags, not filled by sand, but by a soil obtained during excavation. There is only a limited amount of engineering machinery and large parts of the excavation work are done by hand, using picks and shovels.

Is the language affinity for you an advantage, or do you communicate only in English?

The similarity of languages is obviously a huge advantage for me, because it is almost impossible to communicate in English with the Ukrainians. All meetings are delivered solely in Ukrainian or Russian that is sometimes restricted and occasionally even forbidden. Immediately after my arrival in Kiev, I attended a lot of meetings, where I was a single NATO representative, and my counterparts, numbered eight to ten officers, spoke only Ukrainian or Russian. It was very difficult to respond to all questions and took notes at the same time. However, I had to cope with it and so I gained the knowledge very useful for processing analyses. The interpreters are available only on formal high-level meetings, attended by Western advisers. To illustrate the situation, only one logistician in the Ukrainian General Staff speaks English. Also almost all documentation, with whom I come into contact, is exclusively in Ukrainian or Russian. I estimate, it is probably about ninety percent of the documents. The remaining ten percent are documents designed for work of officials, namely at the NATO headquarters in Brussels. But the translation of those documents is the time-consuming and costly affair. I therefore translate all by myself or rather I write down the main ideas of the documents directly into the analyses in English.

The Ukrainian army as well as ours once belonged to the so-called Eastern bloc. Is it an advantage for you to be better oriented in their technical equipment?

Compared with Western advisors, we have obviously the advantage. In the past, we had a similar system, so I immediately orientate myself in current problems of the Ukrainians. In essence, they still live in our eighties. I can say that I am immediately able to predict where they are headed by their decision. I fact, I have a strange feeling that once I experienced all this.

Author: Vladimír Marek, photos: author & archives of Miroslav Pelikán

A Handful of the Brave

According to London, the air Battle of Britain between the German Luftwaffe and the Royal Air Force started on July 10, 1940. At that time, Czechoslovak air units did not yet exist in the United Kingdom, but the utmost was being done to form them. They only managed to become involved in subsequent phases of the battle, but this fact does not diminish their contribution to the air defence of Britain in any way.

Duels between the British and German air forces continued without an interruption even after the capitulation of France and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force and other allied troops. On August 1, 1940, the Germans issued Directive No. 17, on the conduct of air and sea warfare against England, which ordered the destruction of the RAF and the British aircraft industry, disrupt Britain's food supply system, and inflict the highest possible losses to the Royal Navy and British merchant fleet. Another important date of the battle was August 13 (which the Germans regard as the start of the battle), when the Luftwaffe launched the so-called Adlerangriff (Eagle Attack) by strikes against multiple targets.

The five phases

The Battle of Britain can be divided into five stages. The first one lasted from July 10 to August 7 and was a warm-up round of sorts, with most of the dogfights taking place over the Channel. The second phase took only a fortnight, but was characterized by the toughest fights, with the Germans bombing airfields, radar picket stations, military facilities, industrial targets and coastal convoys.



The third phase started on August 24 and lasted until September 6, 1940. Experts view it as much more critical than the previous two. Civilian targets in London were bombed for the first time. Churchill decided to respond in kind, and

British bombers raided Berlin on the following night.

The fourth phase (September 7 to 30, 1940) opened with a first major terrorist raid on London. Hitler ordered it to retaliate for the previous British night bombing of Berlin. On September 7 only, 306 people lost their lives and 1,337 were seriously injured.

The fifth and final phase lasted from October 1 to 30, 1940. It was characterized by incessant overflights of fighter bombers over the south of England. The purpose of the operation was to



well-trained pilots. A decision was thus made to make use of foreign pilots who had escaped to Britain after the defeat of France. The Czechoslovaks played quite an important role among them.

The first to join the fight were the pilots of the 310th Czechoslovak Fighter Squadron, which was formed on July 12, 1940, in Duxford. Their first combat mission took place on August 26, 1940, with the squadron's aircraft taking off against a bombing raid threatening the airfields of 11 Group. Members of the squadron managed to shoot down three enemy aircraft on that day. The unit's total score during the Battle of Britain was 40. The first CO of the squadron, whose motto was "We Fight to Rebuild", was Air Force Major Alexander Hess. The unit was equipped with Hawker Hurricane Mk. IA fighters.

Czechoslovak pilots in Polish and British Squadrons

The final phase of the battle was also joined by the 312th Czechoslovak Fighter Squadron, which was formed on September 5, 1940, and operated from the Speke Air Base. Its mission was to defend nearby Liverpool. Its first CO was a Slovak, Air Force Major Ján Ambruš. It consisted of experienced pilots of our air force, who had already fought in France and escaped from there with their airplanes via Africa. This was why most of them arrived to the United Kingdom later than others. The squadron's pilots included, for example, Alois Vašátko, František Peřina or Josef Stehlík, to name but a few. This unit too was equipped with Hawker Hurricane Mk. IA fighters. It was these airplanes that achieved the first air victory on October 8, 1940, shooting down a German Junkers Ju 88A-1. The squadron participated in the destruction of four German aircraft during the battle.



The 311th Czechoslovak Bomber Squadron established on August 2, 1940, can also be credited with some participation in the battle. Its first combat mission, a bombing raid against a marshalling yard in Brussels, took place as early as on September 10, 1940. The last Czechoslovak air force unit, 313th Czechoslovak Fighter Squadron, was formed only in May 1941, when the Battle of Britain was already over. In addition, 25 Czechoslovak pilots were flying in British and Polish squadrons. They shot down 29 enemy aircraft during the Battle of Britain.

František and his seventeen kills

The most famous Czechoslovak pilot of the Battle of Britain, and not only of that, was Sergeant Josef František. A native of Otaslavice in Moravia, he joined the Czechoslovak Air Force in 1936. Two years later, he became a pilot of the 40th Squadron based in Prague-Kbely. Immediately after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, he fled, like many of his colleagues, to Poland. There he refused an offer to go to France and instead joined the Polish Air Force. When Poland was attacked by Nazi Germany, he started flying reconnaissance and liaison missions. He was shot down during one of them and was rescued by his

Polish fellow pilots who risked their lives to save him. It was probably this event that triggered off his very warm attitude to the Polish Air Force.

He also decided to stay with the Poles later, while flying in France and Great Britain. Another reason was allegedly a conflict with a Czechoslovak officer who reportedly wanted to arrest him for a breach of subordination.

After the evacuation to England, Sergeant František was assigned to the 303rd Polish Fighter Squadron. His first confirmed air victory was the shooting down of a German Messerschmitt Bf 109E fighter plane on September 2, 1940. Other successes followed in short order. By the end of September, he had achieved 17 confirmed and 1 probable kills, thus becoming the best foreign pilot of the Battle of Britain. Only two Brits, F/Lt Loch and S/Ldr Keller with 20 kills each, were better than him, but both took much more time to achieve their victories. On Tuesday, October 8, the airplane of Sergeant František crashed during a routine patrol mission. The cause of the accident was never explained clearly enough.

The total score of Czechoslovak pilots during the battle of Britain was more than 70 enemy aircraft, seriously damaging another eleven. Seven pilots paid for this indisputable success with their lives.





CZECHOSLOVAK
LT.A.A.RGT.M.E.