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General Petr Pavel was elected the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee as the first CHOD from new NATO nations

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Two New Jaguars

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In October 2014, another group of NATO civilian employees went through training in survival and in how to behave in crisis situations

Survival course for NATO civilian employees

Instructors from Training Command – Military Academy in Vyškov train NATO civilian employees who are going to be deployed in high-risk areas. The special course puts an emphasis on coping with potentially dangerous situations as well as possible natural disasters. Those who have undergone the course are ready to face threats and to provide first aid to themselves and their colleagues.

It was the final (fourth) course this year with the participation of twelve civilian employees, who all successfully completed the training. Ever since the first courses which took place seven years ago, several hundreds of civilian employees have been trained.

"It is a general course, which does not concentrate on a particular location such as Afghanistan. What we teach is universally valid and can be used in any crisis situation even one which is not primarily caused by the human factor, e.g. natural disasters such as earthquakes, fires or landslides. The participants complete the course enriched by valuable skills and competences, which will guarantee that they will manage life-threatening situations that they might face. They are particularly ready to face the danger in the form of traps brought about by illegal checkpoints, improvised explosive devices or ambushes. The aim is to master potentially dangerous situations with honour, i.e. save one's own life and the lives of colleagues," says LTC Pavel Šebesta, servicemember of Training Command – Military Academy.

His words confirm what we saw during the final phase of the course, which takes place on location and lasts two days. Teams fulfil difficult tasks which verify their understanding of theoretical knowledge in practice in carefully imitated realistic situations. There is shooting,

factsheet

The survival course for NATO civilian employees began in 2007 on the initiative of NATO Command International Staff and on its requirement for national support in the domain of preparing international civilian personnel for deployment in operations and missions approved by NATO Council. The participants are prepared for one week, in one of the four rounds, every round consisting of max. forty students.

explosions and smoke, as well as psychological pressure, stress and fear.

Team 1 (red) drives on a mine with a vehicle and the damage prevents the crew from going on. The explosion causes a leg injury to one of the soldiers, who is put out of action. With the help of covering fire performed by fellow fighters, the injured is taken to a safe place and given first aid. The injury is covered with



The physical and psychological preparation is crucial, but the aspects of work when on mission require a more complex approach. That is why the training also comprises international humanitarian law in relation to peacekeeping operations and missions as well as topography and engineer training. The participants are also expected to be able to drive a vehicle in difficult terrain, communicate with the media or inhabitants and, naturally, also to negotiate.

Some participants are more efficient, others less. Those who have served in the military turn out to be more skilled. The physical and mental strain is enormous, everybody touches the ground. The realistic performance of the course, tough preparation and professional work of instructors and teachers from Vyškov help the NATO civilian employees cope with their work in missions and prepare them for possible serious situations in which they find themselves – unlike soldiers – unarmed.

a compression bandage and the leg is immobilized. It is done in a professional, qualified manner and very quickly. Team 2 (blue) is moving on foot while minding mine fields. On the way, they come to a checkpoint which they have to pass through. During the check, a gas mask is discovered in a backpack of one of the team members. The checkpoint commander gives an order and the group finds themselves in an uncomfortable situation. They have to lie on the ground and pose no resistance while their baggage is being inspected. They are facing weapons pointed at them.

by Michal Voska

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Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces General Petr Pavel on wartime force structure and everything related

Restraint not on the agenda

The events we have seen to take place in the Ukraine recently both shortened the warning time, during which we would be alerted to the possible threat of war, and shifted our focus much more from peacetime force structure to the wartime one. General Pavel elaborates.

The last two decades furnished a comfort to us of no impending conflict and we focused on peacetime force structure rather the wartime one; was it not a mistake?

It exactly corresponded to the spirit of the times. If we would take a look several years back, we all lived in hope and expectation that we faced only a period of peace, constructive cooperation and mutual dialogue. If anybody would say in the first half of 1990s that there would be several serious conflicts in close proximity to us, they would not be trusted. In relation to that era, it was completely apposite in my opinion. Including that we counted on a long warning time, which the intelligence services, including those from NATO nations, estimated at five to ten years. According to them, with such a lead time we would have enough indications that something was going on and could get ready for that.

The generations before World War I and World War II nevertheless thought the same way. They were convinced the mankind grew wiser, that the war they had been through was the last one. Is it not a sort of a mistake that we are unable to learn from our own history?

I believe it is natural. If people were to live in permanent fear of facing a conflict in a short period of time, they would not enjoy their lives. The fact that we perceive the situation rather positively and tend to see it rosy for a long time is perhaps a natural human self-defence. On the other hand, the important factor is also that national economies, if there is not imminent danger, naturally invest more money into social domain rather than defence. At the end of the day, that is what increases the quality of people's lives. That is also why governments generally tend to underestimate defence spending at times when international tensions alleviate and there are no threats.

The conflict in the Ukraine has already lasted months and led to the revision of the warning time before imminent threat emerges. Have there been any specific measures adopted to facilitate an accelerated activation of our wartime force structure?



A whole range of measures were taken, not only those instant ones, highly visible and discussed on NATO level as the capability to defend ourselves. First and foremost, some aspects were reinforced in the East of the NATO Alliance, be they the air policing in the Baltic States and activation of surveillance assets. The number of exercises also increased; both planned and unplanned ones. NATO's ability to flexibly and timely respond to emerging threats was also reviewed. Those are all measures already underway or to be realised shortly or in the long run. On national level, the Ukraine crisis catalysed the discussion on inadequate defence appropriations. It also speeded up the discussion on additional measures such as revision of the reserve force concept and the mobilisation concept. All of that is conceived for our armed forces to be able to respond to an emerging crisis much faster than it has been the case so far.

That is also on the agenda of the upcoming NATO Summit you will take part in. What are your expectations, how should the Summit elaborate on those measures?

I do not have too high expectations concerning the NATO Summit. While it is a venue where major decisions are expected to be taken, those decisions must be discussed and prepared in depth beforehand. The space in which consensus was reached is pretty narrow at this time. I would personally very much like to see a more specific commitment in the Summit declaration by the nations to increase their defence spending. Yet, this will probably be the most controversial domain. Every nation has a different perspective. That will not change despite the fact that all nations concur on the verbal level that defence spending should increase.

Completion of operation ISAF in Afghanistan will also be crucial, much the same way as

assignment of forces and assets for the operation that will follow. In this respect, we are not in position of a country that would have its decision-making done on those issues. The mandate for our soldiers has not been authorised yet. It is assumed based on the discussions so far that it should only be endorsed after regional elections in Czech Republic, i.e. sometime in November.

The Summit is also expected to shape NATO's attitude on what is called the level of readiness. It is the ability to respond to crisis referred to as hybrid ones. It is a threat that is not posed by a state, is not specifically military one and frequently uses paramilitary means impossible to confront by a direct military response. In that regard, there is a great room for NATO to do in both policy and practical terms.

There have been extensive discussions recently about the amendment of the Defence Act, and specifically about introducing liability to conscription. Is that one of the measures that should help us in the years ahead?

It is one of many measures the state should adopt in order to be able to respond to crisis emerging in vicinity faster and more flexibly. A more flexible and timely reaction will be primarily enabled by changes in the law. That pertains both to the Defence Act No. 585, but also the Act on Service of Reserve Soldiers, Act No. 225 on Ensuring Defence and some other laws. It also relates to the mobilisation concept and the active reserve component concept. Those were approved in 2013. To be brought to life, they need amendments of the standing legislation.

In practical terms, it will require an increased funding in order for the measures provided for under those Acts and concepts to be resourced adequately.

The public did not react too positively to the information on the liability to conscription. We had an all-volunteer force for ten years; is it not the case that the society transferred the responsibility for national defence exclusively to the military and is not willing to take part in homeland defence themselves?

I hold a consistent opinion, and it has nothing to do with the Ukraine crisis, that not only our society, but generally the public in European states are increasingly less willing to give sacrifices for own defence. Restraining oneself in favour of something more universal and long-lasting is simply not on the agenda. And it is not about some sort of sacrifice, but rather some sort of restraint. The very requirement for appropriating more for defence is a big issue in Europe at this time. For me, the reply of general public to the question whether people would be willing to stand up for defence of their country is a serious indicator of a lack of civic consciousness. When one hears the young generation saying they seek to avoid that only because it would mean certain discomfort for them, then it does show something. At the same time, those people voice that we have the military for that purpose. It is a system error, because there is no one to lead and educate the young generation



in that regard. The way it is set up, the whole system is rather oriented on preference for consumption. The values I speak about are today rather regarded abstract ones and belonging to the past as such.

Do we have a clear idea of the size of our wartime force structure and how many soldiers and airmen are needed to make up for losses in combat?

Same as augmentation of the wartime structure, mobilisation ranks among classified information in any country. No state ever makes public either the size of its wartime force structure or the quantity of necessary materiel. In general terms, peacetime forces are built so as to resist the initial assault and to be able to operate for a limited period of time. For any longer endeavour, the armed forces need to be augmented, including with numbers multiple times higher than the peacetime establishment. It suffices to take a look at the Ukraine at present. The country is not experiencing a classic war. It is a limited conflict, moreover not with a regular opponent; yet the Ukrainian armed forces, being bigger in size than the Czech military, had to perform multiple selective mobilisations nevertheless. They had to make up for the losses, get back the manning levels and fill specialty gaps. That is probably something any country would need to do. In our case, it would also be necessary for the Armed Forces to be augmented based on a selective or general mobilisation in long-term combat.

There have also been discussions recently about how long our stockpiles of ammunition and other critical war materiel would last in a conflict. Does it mean it will be necessary to increase the stockpiles in the future given the shortened warning time?

That is a matter that demands a well-balanced and reasonable approach. Military planners would naturally find it ideal to have everything on stock for mobilised armed forces. They would be sure to have sufficient quantities of vehicles, weapons, radios, medical materiel and all that it takes. Such status of affairs is however logically unsustainable and indeed makes no sense. To hold on stock the materiel that can be relatively

easily and quickly purchased would be a huge burden for national economy. No country follows that path. Therefore, people seek solutions for mobilisation stocks only to comprise the materiel enabling the initial build-up and all the rest to be augmented as needed. It is completely clear with all the materiel subject to respiration, such as food, medicaments, fuel and other products. It is always about striking the right balance between necessary stocks and resources the state wants to invest.

As you pointed out, we have already very low stockpiles of some types of ammunition. On the other hand, we planned considerable funds for FY 2014 and 2015 to fill the most pressing gaps in those stocks, the way that the amount of ammunition be more or less the same in all types of ammunition, so that we would be able, for at least thirty days, as stipulated by a NATO standard for all Allies, to operate without any limitation.

But it will not be possible to buy everything in a state of emergency. Do we have an idea about what types of materiel will not be available in case of a conflict?

That is one of the things we voiced in the discussions on applicability of the system of deferred need and the necessity to review the system. Relying on sufficient warning time could lead to that the materiel hardly procurable already in peacetime would be completely unavailable in crisis. With those articles, delivery times would grow considerably and the price would increase too. We try and include those considerations into planning for possible crisis or war. It would be ideal to have manufacturing of those articles secured in the Czech Republic. Or that we would at least be able to control the capacity of such manufacture and have some basis ready for it. The VOP Nový Jičín enterprise stands a good example: it has the capacity to manufacture armoured fighting vehicles. Although those vehicles are not produced at the moment, it is in the interest of both our military and the state that the company kept that capacity. As a matter of fact, those assets could be out of our reach in crisis. It goes without saying



When the White Paper on Defence was in the making, there were discussions that our armed forces should be built so that every soldier is prepared to hold one post higher. Thus, rifleman or gunner should be able to act as a team leader and team leader to be a platoon leader. Have any measures been taken since then to provide a sufficient cadre of commanders to man wartime force structure?

Training of commanders to higher echelons only takes place as part of career growth. In other words, all military professionals prepare themselves to perform their current assignment. So, it is not the case that every platoon leader would prepare concurrently to serve as company commander. Something along those lines only pertains to the commanders with a high potential of future growth. Preparation of commanders for mobilised armed forces is a challenge in general. Soldiers who have served their conscription service and are in the compulsory reserve may not be called up for training exercises in peacetime. Training of soldiers in the compulsory reserve component is not covered under the current legislation. It may only take place after extraordinary measures are activated and those soldiers called up for service.

Where do we stand with the training capacity? Will we be able to train a high number of people concurrently in case needed?

That is also a pretty serious matter. It is not just about having sufficient funding for mobilisation or force build-up. We should also have sufficient quantity of necessary materiel, accommodation and training capacities. All training is presently done at the Military Academy in Vyškov and in conjunction with the units. For training of reserves, not only all training areas and free capacity of units would be used, but also the capacity of units that would have deployed for performance of missions as part of NATO defence. Moreover, units not involved in training at that stage directly will reinforce training units at Vyškov. The Military Academy has so far primarily concentrated on training individuals or teams, whereas lead-in training is to be realised already at regular units. The draft Armed Forces Development Concept envisages that the Armed Forces would increase its capacity to absorb soldiers for both basic and lead-in training so that we would be able to train a higher number of soldiers in a shorter period time than we have been so far.

There were so-called framework units in the past. They had their necessary armaments and materiel already in stock and basic command structures were available too. Something like that would significantly accelerate transitioning from peacetime to wartime force structure, would it not?

The term of framework unit is no longer recognised in present legislation. On the other hand, the principle of framework units has not disappeared completely. The Armed Forces Development Concept envisions that some units will be manned to lower levels. There will even be units with just a basic cadre of commanders to be fleshed out with new soldiers called up from the reserve component. It is a concept that is

fastest and simplest from the viewpoint of preparation. Such concept enables the newly formed units to be incorporated into the standard way the military operates. It is a system that will have its say in the future. We count on and will elaborate on it in order for us to be able to tell the reserve soldiers beforehand which unit they would be assigned to and what post they would serve in. That will enable them not only to identify themselves better with the unit, but also progressively begin training with the unit.

The new Active Reserve Component Concept envisages just five thousand and initially mere two thousand reservists. Is it not an ambition too low in the light of recent events?

It may perhaps be even more than our society is able to offer at this time. There is certain recruitment pool in every country, given its demography and economy. Considering those circumstances, the number of five thousand reservists is maximum practicable. At the same time, it is important to note that the Active Reserve Component is the initial bumper that would cater for the armed forces' increased need of human resources. After the active reserve, further reserve elements would be called up on compulsory basis. A five thousand strong active reserve is in my view sufficient for the size of our armed forces and our nation. In proportion, it is adequate to reserve components in other countries.

Would it not be better for the Czech Armed Forces to engage more in military outreach activities in the future? For instance, people who have shooting as a hobby find it relatively costly to get a shooting license, there are amateur radio operators, individuals indulging in skydiving etc. Should we not support those activities somehow?

I believe those matters should be seen in several aspects. First is the education viewpoint. And I believe some steps are already on their way. That involves preparation of citizens for national defence. That is an initiative already launched. It takes on the form of lectures at schools and other organisations in order for the young generation to have at least a basic concept of defence. Then we have the expert dimension. That should serve for citizens to get familiar with operation of weapons, as well as with means of protection against weapons of mass destruction, first aid training and other subjects. All of those are skills majority of people do not possess as they simply do not need them for day-to-day living. But in case of emergency, including natural disasters, they would not do without those skills. If there is an earthquake, landslides or floods, or any large-scale disaster, every individual knowing how to provide first aid and capable of surviving in aggravated conditions has much higher chance of standing the test. In addition, they can help others to survive. In my view, those are affairs the pursuit of which makes sense. And the Armed Forces will definitely be involved in them, both in the educational and specialist dimension.

by Vladimír Marek



A Tribute to General Tomáš Sedláček

On Wednesday, September 24, a memorial with a bust of General Tomáš Sedláček, a patriot and an extraordinarily brave and modest man, was unveiled in the barracks in Čínská Street in Prague.

The unveiling ceremony combined with a tribute to commemorate the personality who has left a mark in the hearts of many people who knew him was attended by many guests, including Jiří Hamáček, Speaker of the House of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic; the President was represented by Vlastimil Píček and Colonel Zdeněk Ševčík, and also present were Deputy Minister of Defence Bohuslav Dvořák and General Petr Pavel, Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces. It was actually the CHOD who had assumed the aegis over the project of the memorial to General Tomáš Sedláček on July 24, 2013.

The spontaneous initiative of military and civilian personnel of the Prague Garrison HQ to

build the memorial commemorating their honorary member was born shortly after General Sedláček's demise (August 27, 2012).

"His life resembles an adventure story with both heroes and villains; the righteous and honourable face many dangers which, however, they are able to deal with, not giving up even in seemingly hopeless situations, and everything ends with a victory of truth over lie and humanity over mercilessness. It is good that stories like this are not just made up by writers, but also happen in real life and their heroes have names and faces. The life story of General (ret.) Tomáš Sedláček is a proof positive of the fact that a man is not born a hero, but becomes one, and that it is only up to him how he manages to walk



through his life – whether with his head up, or with his back bent," was General Pavel's recollection of the man who had fought in WW2, been trained in the United Kingdom, and experienced the ordeals of both the western and the eastern fronts. He mentioned that General Sedláček had always been full of élan and spry, and admitted that the General had offered him to be on first-name terms when he had visited him last in the hospital.

Many of those who knew General Sedláček agreed that he would not have cared much about the tribute in the form of the new monument. He was too modest for that. However, the opinion of the personnel of the Prague Garrison HQ was different. The monument will remind them of the man who continues to be a paragon for all his successors. Thanks to the understanding of the Academy of Fine Arts and after a lengthy ordeal to achieve compliance with legal requirements, the memorial has finally been completed. Petr Singl, Professor of the Academy of Fine Arts, complimented the author of the winning design, Petr Lacina, who had won by a close margin (4:3), for a job well done; he also mentioned that the runner-up, the design of another promising sculptor Vojtěch Macha Žižka, had been purchased by the municipality of Lázně Toušeň, where the unveiling ceremony had taken place already this June.

Lubomír Adamus, a long-time friend of General Sedláček and now also the Chairman of the Association of Friends of General Sedláček, and Colonel Milan Virt, CO of the Prague Garrison HQ, thanked to all who had made a donation to the memorial, thus helping preserve the memory of the unique man.

by Mirek Šindelář

An International Exercise in Retrospect



The multinational tactical exercise **Ample Strike 2014 (AMSE 14)** took place on September 3–15, 2014, in five training areas in the Czech Republic and saw the participation of 1,273 trainees, of whom 280 were from foreign countries. In total, 12 NATO nations with 30 air assets and 50 vehicles were involved.

Approved by the Government of the Czech Republic under Resolution No. 32 dated 8 January 2014, the exercise was designed to integrate pilots of tactical air units with operations by Forward Air Controllers (FAC) in support of land operations and to maintain and develop the Czech Armed Forces' capabilities of providing host nation support to international forces on their operations in the Czech territory.

Exercise AMSE 14 followed on the tradition of successful and highly valued exercises Flying Rhino and Ramstein Rover organised at the Náměšť Airbase from 2003 through 2013. The difference was that organising exercise AMSE 14 was fully in responsibility of the Czech Armed Forces. The exercise was realised in cooperation with NATO nations, their foreign contractors and with assistance of the NATO HQ AIRCOM Ramstein.

Who, where, how many...

Deputy Commander of the 22nd Helicopter Airbase Náměšť Colonel Miroslav Svoboda was the Exercise Director, and the exercise directing staff ran the whole effort from the Náměšť airbase. Specialist activities by the trainees were overseen by his subordinates. Major Pavel Procházka was in charge of flight activity and Major Martin Kříž supervised performance by forward air controllers. Logistic support was organised by Lieutenant-Colonel Michal Vecheta.



The multinational training event was further supported by flight activities operated from the 21st Air Base (Tactical) Čáslav and 24th Air Base (Transportation) Prague-Kbely. Mission training sites were located in the Boletice and Libavá Military Training Areas, Vícnice site nearby the 22nd Helicopter Airbase and a former military airfield at the station of the 15th Engineer Regiment in Bechyně.

Besides the Czech Republic, eleven NATO nations took part in the joint training effort

– Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

In addition to the Air Bases, the Czech Armed Forces contributed to the exercise with service personnel of the 7th Mechanised Brigade Hranice, 13th Artillery Regiment Jince, 14th Logistic Support Regiment Pardubice, 15th Engineer Regiment Bechyně, 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment Strakonice, 53rd Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare Regiment Opava,

103rd CIMIC/PSYOPS Centre Olomouc and specialists from other military units.

Apart from the air assets involved in previous exercises, including L-39 Albatros, L-159 ALCA, F-16, JAS-39 Gripen, PC-9, LearJet and Mi-24/35, Mi-17, Mi-171 helicopters, U.S. AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and the C-295M CASA transport aircraft also joined the effort.

Náměšť airbase in the host role

In general, the most time consuming and most complex part of preparations for multinational military training exercises is planning the logistic support. In case of AMSE 14, one of the primary objectives was to exercise and hone the Czech Armed Forces' Host Nation Support (HNS) capabilities in favour of foreign units' operations in the territory of the Czech Republic.

For such a logistic game of chess, exercise AMSE 14 with the largest international



representation and five mission training areas was ideal. Moreover, the Náměšť airbase is earmarked for providing HNS for NATO forces. It is equipped in line with requirements defined under relevant NATO regulations and documents specifying airfield infrastructure, flight lines, aprons, hangars or lighting systems.

"We begin preparations for exercise logistic support nine months before the actual event. We invited the foreign participants to the initial planning conference in January to define the requirements they had for our logistic support. Once training scenarios were developed, we got an idea of the needs of the Czech forces. Subsequently, we developed the logistic support concept and requested materiel and possibly specialists from other Czech Armed Forces units in support of the exercise. In July, we developed EXOPORD with our enclosure that exactly defined the way trainees would be supported across the spectrum of logistic services," deputy exercise director for logistic support Lieutenant-Colonel Michal Vecheta describes the several months' planning effort.

"The most challenging part of the whole logistic planning process is to deconflict and harmonise capabilities among individual military units and their timing. The most difficult phase of preparing the exercise comes up right before it starts as the logistic support concept turns into reality and we finetune the slightest details," Lieutenant-Colonel Vecheta says.

The most interesting logistic missions include setting up an airstrip for Mi-24/35 gunships and about a hundred of personnel from Náměšť Airbase, which the logistic team built virtually from scratch in the Libavá training area. A similar task, but on a plain level concrete area, was to build a Mobile Operation Centre (MOC) for the U.S. contingent at the Náměšť airbase, comprising container shelters and a modular tent shelter system.

Both Czech Air Force and Land Forces extensively supported the training event with their materiel and servicemembers. For example

the Air Defence Missile Regiment Strakonice operated primarily in the Boletice training area, where the missileers, besides their involvement in the scenarios, provided messing for trainees there. Refuelling was the responsibility of the 153rd Engineer Battalion stationed in Olomouc, whereas housing and field ammunition depot was located at the 22nd (Helicopter) Airbase and depot security was performed members of the 13th Artillery Regiment homebased at Jince. The 7th Mechanised Brigade Hranice operated in the Libavá MTA augmented with logistic support unit of the 13th Artillery Regiment Jince, 15th Engineer Regiment Bechyně and 14th Logistic Support Regiment from Pardubice.

Communication of the controllers

The hub of multinational exercise Ample Strike 2014 was the exercise directing staff comprising representatives of the Czech Republic,

Estonia, Germany and Slovakia, located at the 22nd Helicopter Airbase Náměšť. The DISTAFF controlled activities on the exercise in permanent contact with the Supervisor Forward Air Controllers (SUPFAC) posted in all exercise mission training areas.

"The revolutionary thing for us this year is the interconnection among all training forces at all standalone sites using the Czech Staff Information System. We created temporary accounts for foreign staffs for the needs of the exercise, which were then closed on the end of the exercise. It greatly facilitated and accelerated the communication we had," describes Major Pavel Procházka, who was responsible for flight activities in the exercise Directing Staff. During the previous Ramstein Rover exercise series, connectivity was provided by the means of a NATO agency, but it was nevertheless limited to individual DISTAFF facilities. "The communication with the standalone sites only took place in the form of planned briefings previously," MAJ Procházka adds.



New FAC training technology

An intensive and effective training of forward air controllers involving flight activity is very costly. The exercise organisers therefore planned from the very beginning for using a comprehensive simulation technology that may serve not only to check on whether the FACs use standard operating procedures before exercising them live, but also for developing scenarios that would be too organisationally and financially demanding for realisation. Last but not least they also furnish an excellent alternative in case of no fly weather.

The training exercise employed three various types of sims, one of which was a military one borrowed from the Netherlands and two commercial provided free of charge by companies from the United Kingdom and the United States.

Simulators for forward air controllers are complex systems generating most realistic tactical situations for the trainees. Working closely with FAC instructors, the sim operators rehearse compliance with procedures relevant for forward air controllers. "We decided to support this exercise, because it is a value added for us too. Our firm offers more than just technology like this. We offer comprehensive training. We develop scenarios for FACs that meet real situations on foreign deployed operations to maximum extent," commented one of the sim operators, working the one lent by Close Air Solutions, a British company.

"We monitor and evaluate responses by exercise trainees and then consult with them. For us, it is about seeking the limits of stress FACs are able to bear and according to which we adjust next episodes of the scenarios. The more experienced controllers, the more modifications in the scenario we do," the operator explained.

"Simulator training is very effective in the initial stages of FAC training. It is instrumental in gaining necessary confidence prior to the first hot run. State-of-the-art simulators introduced at the exercise Ample Strike were nevertheless an excellent tool for advanced FACs too. These simulators make it possible to practise virtually any type of operation, while the software simulates intentionally erroneous decision by the force commander on the ground for example, which makes the situation ever more realistic," explains one of the longest serving Czech forward air controllers, Warrant Officer T. P.

On the last flight day of exercise AMSE 14, the weather unfortunately worsened substantially and flight training was suspended. Bad visibility and quickly changing cloud amount did not allow flight activities, and so the last forward air controllers had to complete the remaining scenarios on the simulators.

The world is small – a lasting friendship

Members of NATO forces participating in specialised exercises meet virtually every year.

"Exercise Ample Strike 2014 was a unique experience for all of us. I trust that everybody found something that will help them down the road, either as an exercise trainee, or members of exercise planning and directing staff, or those providing logistic support," exercise director Colonel Miroslav Svoboda commented on the outcomes. I hope we will continue with the exercise in the years ahead and extend its realisation phase adequately, in order for us not having to end at the best and not depend on weather. As a matter of fact, two-week exercise realisation phase with the previous exercises Flying Rhino and Ramstein Rover turned out optimal," Colonel Svoboda added.



They share experience they gained downrange and pass it on to novices. Trainees turn into instructors and colleagues become friends. People meet each other after long time and unique life-long friendships are forged.

That proved to be the case this year as well, particularly with Exercise Director Colonel Svoboda and two Lithuanian Air Force pilots Lieutenant-Colonel Marius Matulaitis and Major Vytautas Požėla. Ten years ago, the Lithuanian Air Forces participated for the first time in the multinational exercise Flying Rhino with their forward air controllers. In 2014, they supported the training effort with L-39 aircraft with aircrews.

Major Požėla met Colonel Svoboda for the first time in 2005 at the Air Forces Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, US. They met again two years later, when Colonel Svoboda was on the team that planned the first deployment of the Czech Air Force for the NATO Air Policing mission in the Baltic in Shauliai, Lithuania. On that occasion, he met with Lieutenant-Colonel Matulaitis. They had actually met only in 2013 at the Air War College in Alabama for the first time.

"It is amazing to come together again after such a short time from our studies in the United States," LTC Matulaitis commented. "It is truly unique for us to get together again, on an exercise this time. I hope we will stay in touch

and meet again during our future service," Major Požėla says. "I personally always find encounters like these very pleasant and I should say I have met additional four alumni from Slovakia here on this occasion, both from university and from studies later in the U.S.," Colonel Svoboda admitted.

Lessons for everyone

The exercise had three parts – planning, realisation and assessment. Over the first three days of the exercise planning phase, hardware and equipment for all 11 contingents and materiel from other Czech military units were flown or transported into the relevant locations. Actual planning of activities and training followed. "Five training areas and eight scenarios generate 40 events daily, which the DISTAFF has to plan and coordinate with standalone sites and subsequently monitor and assess for use on the following day," Major Procházka explained.

On the next five flight days, the exercise trainees completed 401 controls of aircraft by forward air controllers and 180 controls using simulators. Only 20 of those were unsuccessful. The total of 202 hours were flown in support of the scenarios and 151 flights including transport missions. There was not any single complaint concerning noise or low flyovers, just a couple of inquiring questions. No serious injuries were noted either.

"A low percentage of unsuccessful controls attest to high training standards displayed by FACs and to the ability of pilots to cooperate," Colonel Svoboda commented on the exercise stats during the so-called Hot Wash-Up that took place as part of Phase 3 in attendance of all national contingents at the close of the exercise in the main hangar on the base.

All deputy exercise directors covered their specialty areas in terms of both the preparatory and realisation phase. When they finished, the trainees had an opportunity to engage in discussion. "Let us get back to the basics. Do not rely on electronics that much. Minor differences in a calibration of pilot's and the controller's instrumentation – and here we go with a difference that may be fatal in the end. Use all of your support materiel to learn the situation. Concentrate on teamwork with your colleagues," one of the Czech FAC instructors, who was posted in the Boletice MTA, described his key observations.

"In my perspective, the exercise was excellent and we need such exercises in NATO. But it was short. I hope we will meet here again for the next run," one of the foreign participants commented. Logistic support was also seamless according to them.

by MAJ Magdalena Dvořáková
& CAPT Jana Skřivánková, JMIC AMSE 14
photos by AMSE 14 JMIC Team



Historical success for the Czech Republic and the Czech Armed Forces:

General Petr Pavel was elected the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee as the first CHOD from new NATO nations

General Petr Pavel was elected into the post of the Chairman of NATO Military Committee on Saturday 20 September 2014 in the MC session in Vilnius, Lithuania. The choice was made out of three candidates. Besides General Pavel, the other candidates were General Luigi Binelli Mantelli of Italy and General Michail Kostarakos of Greece. The Italian candidate dropped out in the first round. General Petr Pavel won in the second round by a clear majority. He will be assuming his new office on 26 June 2015, and will stay the Czech Chief of Defence until then. General Pavel did not hide he already had a clear vision of who could succeed him as the new CHOD and communicated his thoughts to the Defence Minister and the President, who has the authority to appoint the new Chief. The CMC term of office is three years and may be extended. The Chairman of MC is NATO's highest military authority and the principal military advisor to the NATO Secretary General. General Pavel will therefore work closely with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

General Petr Pavel

Throughout his service career and particularly in the last two years as the Chief of General Staff Czech Armed Forces, fifty-three year old Petr Pavel won a high reputation not only in domestic and foreign political and military circles, but also with simple soldiers. He is regarded a true military professional fully dedicated to service. In the interest of building a truly high-quality armed forces, he displayed tenacity vis-à-vis politicians populistically seeking savings at the expense of the armed forces.

General Pavel started his military career at the Military Grammar School in Opava and then continued in the reconnaissance study program at the Army College at Vyškov. In 1983, he joined the Special Regiment in Prostějov. Later on, he served with the Military Intelligence. At the beginning of 1990s, he served a tour in UNPROFOR in the territory of former Yugoslavia. During that deployment, he volunteered to join an operation to rescue besieged French soldiers, for which he was awarded French Military Cross with Bronze Star and later also the French Legion of Honour. "No one pondered then whether we would go or not. The situation was very unclear and called for a quick solution. We followed basic human and military instincts. The lives of soldiers, our comrades, were at stake. We could easily find ourselves in similar situation a week later," he commented on his decision later on.

From 1994, General Pavel served as deputy Defence Attaché in Belgium. He completed studies at the State College in the United Kingdom and was subsequently appointed the commander of the 6th Special Brigade homebased in Prostějov. After eighteen months, he left to serve as a coordination officer and later military aide-de-camp to the Director for Operation Planning at the NATO regional command in Brunssum, Netherlands. "At a pretty short notice and before standard time in post expired, I left the post of commander special forces brigade with the assignment to fill a Colonel post as military aide-de-camp to Deputy Commander Operations at what was then the Allied Forces Command Central Europe (AFCENT) in Brunssum. With certain impatience showed by MoD management, small "scouting" teams were sent to positions in international staffs already two weeks ahead of our entry into the NATO Alliance. Along with Milan Koutný, Oldřich Souček and Roman Kunc, we arrived full of commitment, but also expectations and uncertainty with a MoD Skoda car and a pack of US dollars in our pocket (it was not possible get hold of Dutch guildens in such short time) to make the first military footprint at the NATO Command HQ in the Netherlands," General Pavel described earlier. "Nothing went in standard way and according to the plan. They did not admit us to the HQ, because we were not a NATO nation yet. We could not even look for housing, because we had not been assigned there officially, but just on a service trip. In addition, the rules we were to follow had not been made clear by then. Housing, flat furnishings, financial, materiel and medical support, schools for kids, insurance and many other things, absolutely essential and common for normal way of living, all of that was being born on the way, often through the trial and error method. A number of strange and funny situations ensued. But our military changed enormously over those fifteen plus years. Despite negative aspects, such as downsizing service personnel strength, equipment, bases and budget, it is now light years ahead on the quality scale. I am very glad to have been a part of it."

In July 2002, Brigadier General Pavel became Deputy Commander 1st Mechanised Division in Brno and the Commander of Specialised Forces in December later that year.

In 2003-05, he served as Deputy Joint Force Commander and then was appointed Deputy Director of the MoD Operations Division – Director of the Ops Branch. Then he was sent to the Royal College of Defence Studies in London, UK, at continued studies at the prestigious King's College, where he earned M.A. in international relations.

General Pavel spent the next four years in foreign posting again. In 2007, he started his endeavour as the Czech Deputy National Military Representative in EU in Brussels: "From the very beginning, I took it as an optimal opportunity to learn something new. On first announcement that I would be the Czech Republic's Deputy MILREP in the European Union, I was not really happy, because like most people I held certain disrespect for real possibilities of the EU. I progressively changed my opinion. Disrespect turned into respect."

Then he served as the Czech National Military Representative in SHAPE at Mons, Belgium. In July 2011, he was appointed Deputy Chief of General – Chief of Staff. At that time, he also joined the efforts drafting the so-called White Paper on Defence, a strategic policy document. In May 2012, he was commissioned Lieutenant General. He was appointed the Chief of General Staff Czech Armed Forces on 1 July 2012 and commissioned four-star General in May 2014.

General Pavel enjoys travelling, motorcycling, diving, skiing, photography and books.



The Military Committee's role in the NATO structure

The NATO Headquarters is located in Haren in Brussels. It houses national delegations, liaison officers and diplomats of Partner nations and an international team of civilian and military personnel. The total number of NATO's permanent staff is roughly 4,000.



The principal political structure of NATO comprises the North Atlantic Council, the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group. Those bodies are superior to principal committees tasked with specific assignments in policy, military and economic domains. The highest executive official is the NATO Secretary General, who is appointed by the NATO nations as the chairman of a number of NATO deliberation forums. The Secretary General is responsible for shaping and promoting consulting and

decision-making processes in NATO. The SG presents items on the agenda for deliberations and is entitled to use his services in case of disagreement among the nations. Since 1 October 2014, ex-Prime Minister of Norway Jens Stoltenberg is incumbent in the office of NATO Secretary General.

NATO's supreme military body is the NATO Military Committee. Along with the highest NATO authority, the North Atlantic Council, the Military Committee is the only NATO

body authorised by the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty.

The Military Committee is headed by a Chairman. As the 32nd CMC, the Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces General Petr Pavel was selected to fill the post. The Chief of Military Committee is elected by NATO nations' Chiefs of Defence normally for a three-year term. One of his first duties is to set up his international team comprising roughly fourteen individuals.

The Military Committee is entitled to submit proposals and recommendations to the North Atlantic Council, the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning group. Same as on the North Atlantic Council, each nation is represented on the MC with one (military) representative. The Military Committee is in session at least once a week. And seeking consensus among all the twenty-eight nations will be one of the crucial tasks for General Pavel.

As speaker and representative of the Military Committee, the Chairman is answerable to the Committee. In his capacity, he also has an important role in the public as a high military speaker of NATO in contact with the media.

The CMC serves as the principal military advisor to the NATO Secretary General. The incumbent in office of the Chairman of Military Committee is General Knud Bartels of Denmark from 2012.

There are two strategic command headquarters subordinate to the Military Committee: Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk, USA. ACO is based at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, and is headed by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Philip M. Breedlove. Supreme Allied Command Transformation (SACT) is General Jean-Paul Paloméros.

First Chairman of Military Committee

The first CMC was the legendary General of the Army (five-star General officer) and World War II hero Omar Nelson Bradley.

He was born on 12 February 1893 in Clark, Missouri. As a young officer, he was assigned to the Mexico campaign, served in World War I and World War II. He was also involved in the Korean War and acted as advisor to President Johnson on tactics and strategy during the War in Vietnam.

During World War II, he won the reputation of a problem mitigator. In the Allied invasion of Sicily, he was in command of the II Army Corps, a part of General Patton's 7th Army. Later on, serving as the Commander US 1st Army, he led the Allied landings in Normandy. After success on the Omaha and Utah beachheads, he was tasked to lead forces from the breakthrough into central France. He was a caring commanding officer and displayed a genuine interest in planning and logistics.

He was elected the Chairman of Military Committee right after the establishment of NATO in 1949.



Taking note

Mr. Jiří Ovčáček, spokesperson of the President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman:

"The President regards the vote a great success for the whole Czech Republic and extends congratulations to General Pavel. The President has supported the nomination of General Pavel into such an important post throughout the candidacy."

Mr. Bohuslav Sobotka, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic:

"It is truly a great success, including thanks to the fact that it is the first representative from new NATO nations of Central and Eastern Europe, to have been given the opportunity to fill the important positions. It is definitely a great acknowledgement of General Pavel's service career. But it also involves recognition of the capabilities shown by the Czech Armed Forces and the Czech Republic's willingness to deliver on its NATO membership commitments."

Mr. Martin Stropnický, Minister of Defence of the Czech Republic:

"It is a great, binding success. It is for the first time for a high-ranking General officer out of those who are still referred to as the new member nations to assume that post. It is a good news. I take it as a sort of reward for our conduct in NATO over the past fifteen years, and for the progress we achieved transforming our armed forces."

General Petr Pavel, Chief of General Staff Czech Armed Forces:

"I am proud of the confidence the Czech Republic has been entrusted with. This is on the basis of a reputation built by hundreds and thousands of Czech soldiers, airmen and civil servants not only on foreign deployments but also in postings to international military structures. I feel a growing sense of responsibility for the tasks facing me in the years ahead. There may be some doubts about whether one will be able to embrace it all and display good time management. It will be demanding to say the least and rather different from the job I am doing now. On the other hand, I am a friend of challenge."



Chairmen of Military Committee since the formation of NATO:

1. General of the Army Omar N. Bradley (USA): 1949 to 1951
2. Lieutenant General Etienne Baele (Belgium): 1951 to 1952
3. Lieutenant General Charles Foulkes (Canada): 1952 to 1953
4. Admiral Quistgaard (Denmark): 1953 to 1954
5. General Augustin Guillaume (France): 1954 to 1955
6. Lieutenant General Stylianos Pallis (Greece): 1955 to 1956
7. General Giuseppe Mancinelli (Italy): 1956 to 1957
8. General Hasselman (Netherlands): 1957 to 1958
9. Lieutenant General Bjarne Øen (Norway): 1958 to 1959
10. General Belezza Ferras (Portugal): 1959 to 1960
11. General Rüstü Erdelhun (Turkey): 1960
12. Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten (United Kingdom): 1960 to 1961
13. General Lyman L Lemnitzer (USA): 1961 to 1962
14. Lieutenant General de Cumont (Belgium): 1962 to 1963
15. General Adolf Heusinger (Germany): 1963 to 1964
16. Lieutenant General de Cumont (Belgium): 1964 to 1968
17. Admiral Nigel Henderson (United Kingdom): 1968 to 1971
18. General Johannes Steinhoff (Germany): 1971 to 1974
19. Admiral of the Fleet Sir Peter Hill-Norton (United Kingdom): 1974 to 1977
20. General Herman F. Zeiner-Gundersen (Norway): 1977 to 1980
21. Admiral Robert H. Falls (Canada): 1980 to 1983
22. General Cornelis de Jager (Netherlands): 1983 to 1986
23. General Wolfgang Altenburg (Germany): 1986 to 1989
24. General Vigleik Eide (Norway): 1989 to 1993
25. Field Marshal Sir Richard Vincent (United Kingdom): 1993 to 1996
26. General Klaus Naumann (Germany): 1996 to 1999
27. Admiral Guido Venturoni (Italy): 1999 to 2002
28. General Harald Kujat (Germany): 2002 to 2005
29. General Raymond Henault (Canada): 2005 to 2008
30. Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola (Italy): 2008 to 2011
31. General Knud Bartels (Denmark): 2012 to present



General Knud Bartels



by Vladimír Marek, photo by Vladimír Marek and A Review

The mission is clear: take control of the airport and neutralize a company-strong opposing force in the shortest timeframe possible. Location: Bechyně airfield. Operation start: 12:00 hrs

Operation MERCURY

A radar station with surface-to-air missiles, the airfield control tower, entry gate and a guard post. Four targets and four quickfire attacks for two airborne companies of the 43rd Airborne Battalion from Chrudim reinforced with a weapons company.



Artillery fire, then short repeating machine-gun bursts, white smoke, flashes and a handful of fully seated Kajman vehicles at full fire: an indubitable proof that the operation just started. Everything happened in several places concurrently. Shots were heard all around.

Target One: radar station

Radar station with two RB-70 air defence missiles had to be neutralised first. "Only then the air support may be called in," Deputy Commander of the 43rd Airborne Battalion MAJ Ivo Zelinka informs. "Seventy airborne troops with parachutes were prepared for the first airborne option, with two CASA airplanes and two transport helicopters in a single wave," MAJ Zelinka.

The weather is however not in favour of the airborne troops. The decision was taken a couple dozen minutes before the attack. The air may not be used. Therefore, the second option is used operatively. The airborne soldiers have to manage on the ground. The force is used for a surprise quick attack to take over and eliminate the radar station. Before the opponent managed to recover, it was all over. The attack took just a couple of minutes. Another two attacks were launched almost immediately after the

first one, targeting the control tower and the entry gate. "The gate is the only point of access to the airfield; we must have it under control," Major Zelinka continues. "Only then the decision will be taken whether some additional points of passage will need to be established."

The tower resisted twelve minutes

The weather is chilly with wind and the fog is coming down. The opponent has already re-died on the tower. They expected the attack as flashes and smoke of the ongoing attack were seen at twelve o'clock. Fully seated and up-armed Land Rover 130 Kajman suddenly dashed out of the cloud of smoke. Once the vehicles pulled in abruptly, some of the crew dismounted towards the tower under the cover of fire and blue smoke grenades. Absence of air support showed there too. The operation was initially to work like a sandwich with airborne troops abseiling from a helicopter down to the roof and the opposing forces were to be eliminated both from the bottom and from top. The decisive moment has come. Soldiers take positions along the building and make a forced entry into the building. Shots are heard. Hit. One of the airborne troops falls to the ground; two others provide cover. Others go on upstairs. Fire again. First floor cleared. They signal it immediately with a well-visible yellow tarp on the building. The opponents have barricaded themselves on the first floor. There is a ladder leading to the roof; some of the attackers separated and secured the roof. Shots are heard again. The second floor is also under control, the opponent has been neutralised. The airborne troops have

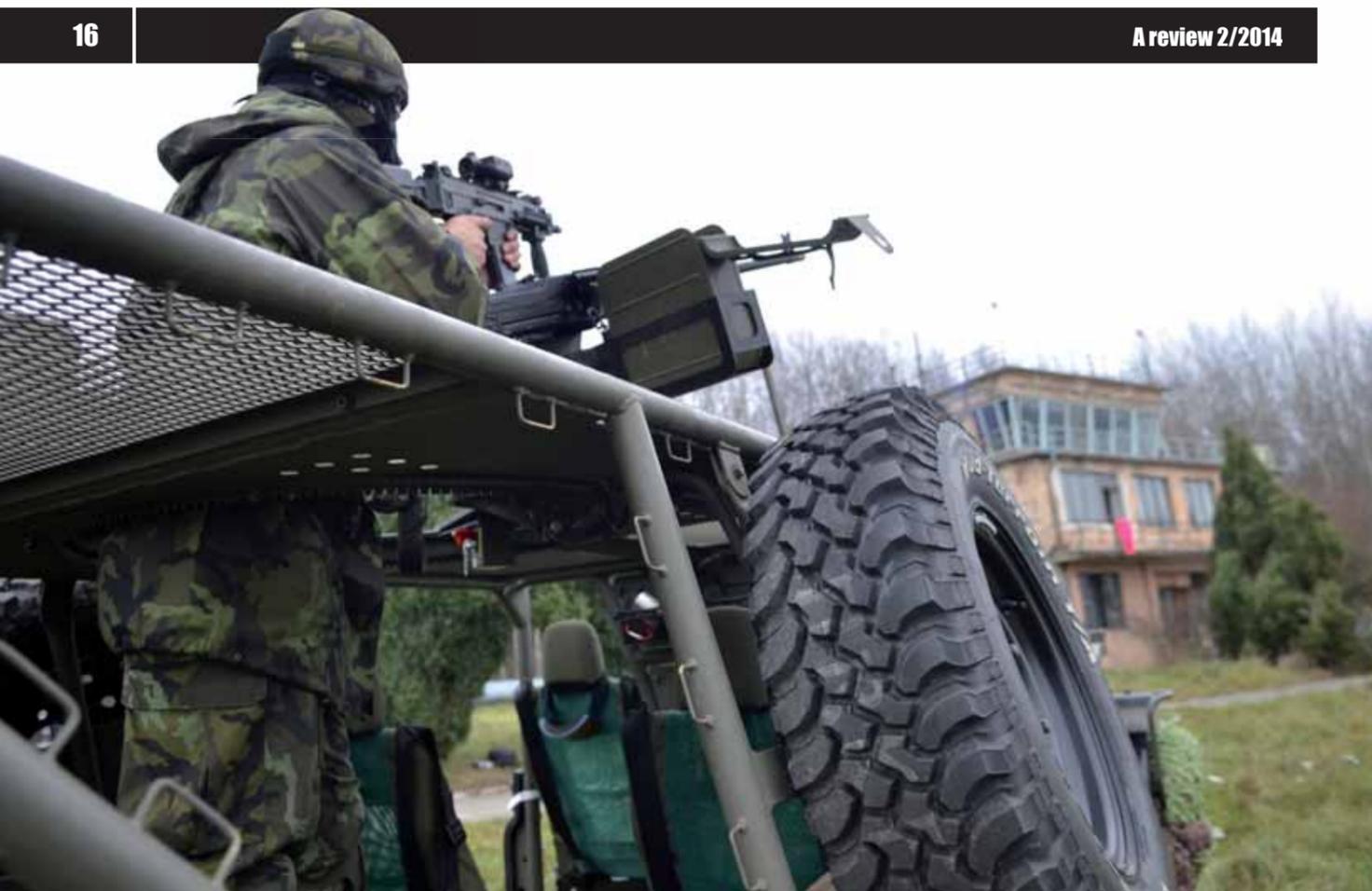


the tower fully under their control. A yellow colour again pops up on the second floor signalling the building has come under control of the attackers.

First aid to casualties

In the meantime, the casualty is provided first aid on the ground floor. He is conscious and already on stretchers. "It is OK, a smooth perforation, but it bleeds," the soldier providing the first aid treatment shouts while fire is still ongoing on the first floor as he writes down the choke time for subsequent aid. The casualty is stabilised and carried away into safe area by reinforcements, where a medic takes over.

The airfield control tower resisted a little longer than the two previous targets: full twelve minutes. Immediately upon taking control of the building, another unit comes to clear it up. "It was necessary to keep the concrete building and not to do any damage; that was why the attack lasted a little longer," Major Zelinka explains. "Right after it is cleared, the operation command will move into the building and it will



become a strategic post for performance of subsequent missions."

Airfield under control

The last target of the shock operation was the guard post housing the highest number of the opposing forces. The assumption of the highest resistance proved true. But the post only resisted a couple of minutes. The opponent has been partially eliminated and partially captured. End operation. Mission accomplished. The airfield resisted the attack by the 43rd Airborne Battalion mere twenty-five minutes. End operation MERCURY: 12:25 hrs.

Preparation phase important

"We essentially need three pieces of information for such an operation," Major Zelinka elaborates. "Eight days before the attack, a long-range recon was performed to find out about whether it was possible for the airborne battalion to take the target. The next phase saw our platoon doing own reconnaissance three days ahead of the attack to establish specific positions of the opposing forces and their habits in order to identify the targets to be attacked. The third source of our information are the tactical Raven UAVs that covered



the whole area and focused on the targets we needed."

Development of specific operation plan was informed by those sources in order for us to go the path of least resistance. While it was not possible to use air support for the operation, the airborne forces had to do with artillery fire, own mortars and heavy weapons they thankfully have. The airborne option would see the use of two CASA airplanes and two Mi-17 transport helicopters to carry and drop 70 airborne on parachutes for a shock operation. Those waves would be repeated three times. Eight paratroopers would abseil onto one of the targets of the attack – the control

NATO Response Force (NRF) provides integrated and fully interoperable land and air forces under a joint command whenever requested by the North Atlantic Council. They may operate anywhere on the globe for a limited period of time without additional support across the spectrum of NATO operations from humanitarian and rescue efforts, through crisis management up to high intensity combat. "It will be for the first time in the history of the Czech Armed Forces when we assign brigade headquarters for NATO to be in command of foreign forces," Commander of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade Colonel Miroslav Hlaváč explained. The Czech Republic undertakes to provide forces and assets for NATO operations according to Article 5 Washington Treaty at relevant level of readiness, with equipment and capabilities meeting individual NATO operating standards. "We are ready for the NATO Response Force. So far, we have assigned only units for the NRF, now we will be able to provide command and control to other NATO nations' battalions," Colonel Hlaváč added.



tower – to neutralise the enemy and secure the building from above.

Anywhere on the globe in fifteen days

Taking place in the Bechyně airfield at the end of November 2014, Operation MERCURY had a single goal: to prove readiness and integration of the Czech Armed Forces 43rd Airborne Battalion. Certification was then granted by the Czech Land Forces Command and the evaluation of the declared capabilities took place on national level in compliance with the

NATO CREVAL (Combat Readiness Evaluation) standard.

The certification comprised two elements: the first one required that the unit proved its readiness in terms of the number of weapons and personnel. In the second phase, the airborne soldiers demonstrated they had been trained up to standards required for the NATO Response Force. That was what they showed in practising the attack in the Bechyně airfield area. "The whole 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade is certified for 180 days notice-to-move, but the airborne battalion has now been certified in category 3, which means we are able from January 1st till throughout the year 2015 to operate as part of the NATO Response Force anywhere in the world except for polar zones within fifteen days from activation," Major Zelinka concluded. "Quick shock operations are typical for our battalion. That means to eliminate quickly but also to re-deploy fast. We are therefore the first unit to go downrange when an operation is launched in a foreign country."

The 43rd Airborne Battalion is the unit that shows the highest manning level, is best trained and has a rich body of experience operating together with other NATO forces. They were the first unit to man the Czech deployment in Mali, Africa, a year ago.

"We have a long-standing cooperation with the US 73rd Airborne Brigade stationed in Germany," Major Zelinka expands. "When the problems started with Russia and the Ukraine, a battalion of the US brigade deployed in the Baltic States and Poland as a deterrent against Russia. As they are our partner unit, it is conceivable for me that we would deploy shoulder-to-shoulder and provide some deterrent along with them."

The airborne troops are on a higher readiness alert than other forces and may deploy faster. So far, they were at 30 days notice-to-move, now they are certified for 15 days.

by Jana Deckerová



Exclusively about aerobatic flying with the JAS-39C Gripen supersonic fighter with 1LT Martin Špaček and with the L-159 ALCA subsonic aircraft with 1LT Ondřej Španko

DISPLAY PILOTS

from Čáslav Airbase

A JAS-39C supersonic fighter flying over the runway is something spectators find very attractive in airshows. Flying at a speed exceeding one thousand kilometres an hour at thirty metres above the ground plus the deafening roar produced by the RM12 engine incite adrenaline with the audience. Most of them consider it one of the most demanding manoeuvres of aerobatic performance, unlike the pilot. He boasts another aerobatic element: a negative turn!

Before we take a peek behind the scenes of public flight demonstrations performed by the members of the Czech Air Forces display team, it is worthwhile to mention the very beginnings of military aerobatic flying in the public. That is because piloting by Czechoslovak and then Czech airmen has enjoyed a high credit both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Airshows ninety years ago

In 1920s, airshows were held at various locations in the then Czechoslovak Republic, with the involvement of the Masaryk Aviation League and military airmen from 1927. The names of aerobatic pilots, including Staff Captain František Malkovský and later František Novák, Ján Ambruš, Josef Hubáček, Petr Široký and others, became a part of the Czech national pride and tradition. They flew both solo and formation demonstrations on airplanes designed and made in Czechoslovakia. Those primarily included Avia BH-21, BH-22 and BH-122 aircraft. On 26 September 1929, Kbely airfield was the venue to a large airshow, which the local community also benefited from. No wonder that big military airshows met with a warm appreciation and support of local political and business leaders as well as small tradesmen in the following years of 1933, 1936 or 1937. Demonstration performances by military pilots on the occasion of Sokol society gatherings, where airmen performed both formation flying and group aerobatic flights, also became famous.

The 1934 marked a turning point for great achievements of Czechoslovak aerobatic pilots on the international scene, as they took part in an international aerobatic meeting in Vincennes at Paris. In shortest possible timeframe, the AVIA factory was tasked to build two special airplanes that would meet the stringent requirements for top aerobatic flying and were able to withstand

extended flying on back, tailslips or inverted spins. Thanks to the design team led by Mr. Novotný, the Avia Av-122 airplane was built and tested within six weeks' time. Although airmen got two ready machines just a month ahead of the contest, František Novák of Czechoslovakia ended up in the fantastic fourth place then.

Tradition of demonstration performances continued even after the Czech lands had been occupied by Nazis, when Czechoslovak airmen

emigrated in droves to join the foreign resistance, so as to fulfil the oath of allegiance to the Czechoslovak Republic. They also performed aerobatic flying at allied airfields, for example before President Edvard Beneš in England. Piloting the Spitfire fighter in particular, test pilot Václav Jícha won a high reputation and respect on the British Islands.

A mention should also be made that the first post-war airshow, attended by roughly five hundred thousand spectators, was organised at Prague-Ruzyně airport on 15 September 1946. The program demonstrated the airplanes that fought in World War II fronts, those seized from Luftwaffe and the first jet aircraft appeared as well. Czechoslovak fighters led by Colonel Hlad'o demonstrated assaults on ground targets with twelve Spitfire airplanes. Staff Captain Josef Flekal flew top-level aerobatic performance with a C-4. By the way, the calendar for 1947 brou-



1LT Martin Špaček

ght about an unprecedented number of eighty-nine airshows for Czechoslovakia!

"Mertič" started it

Current developments are equally interesting. With all due respect for dynamic demonstrations of individual types of Czech Air Force aircraft, let us begin with aerobatic flying with JAS-39C Gripen supersonic aircraft from the inventory of the Čáslav-based "Tiger" 211th Tactical Squadron.

It was Captain Tomáš Merta who started premiere demonstrations in airshows with the Gripen – an eight-ton fighter jet. He enjoys recalling his three-year endeavour on the Display Team: "I was addressed by then squadron commander Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Borůvka. I decided to go for it. One does not reject such offers."

It was sort of a professional handicap that Tomáš had not logged a breath-taking number of flight hours by then – something about two hundred. Moreover, it was a premiere JAS 39-C solo aerobatic flying, so he could not build on experience gathered previously. "I started from scratch. I believe that should be the case with any aerobatic pilot: to come up with own demo flight and imprint his soul in it. Some elements can be changed subsequently to increase attractiveness for the spectators. Aerobatics needs to be squeezed into smallest space possible in order for all the manoeuvres to be observable from the ground," says the pilot.

He chooses surprising words to describe the most difficult manoeuvre in his eight-minute public performances. "It was so-called minimum – in reality, flying at about one hundred and

eighty kilometres per hour. Outsiders thought I would just program the computer and the job is done. But that is a big mistake. I had to keep the machine on near-stall angle and maximum throttle. So to say "shake" the throttle and the stick all the time. It would take just a minor mistake for a big problem to occur. Coordination in control needed to be absolutely precise," CAPT Merta explains.

First-Lieutenant Michal Daněl took the baton from "Mertič". He, too, did not hesitate a single moment to take up the offer made by then Squadron Commander Major Jaroslav Míka. "Although solo aerobatic flying with the Gripen substantially differs from how Quick Reaction Alert pilots fly in the framework of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System, aerobatics in proximity of the ground, getting to know the machine at its limits and additional knowledge about the airplane's energy is something extra for pilots on top of standard flight training. In reality, you gain further professional experience you would otherwise find difficult to obtain," the military pilot says.

One of the manoeuvres he performed for the public were barrel rolls for deceleration. "It is a sort of fine element for reducing speed that I did before going to the minimum and then before extracting gear for landing," 1LT Michal Daněk recalls his engagement in the Display Team. In public demonstrations with the Gripen, he was succeeded by First Lieutenant Martin Špaček.

Aerobatic flying with the L-159 ALCA and JAS-39C

Dynamic demonstrations with the L-159 ALCA (Advanced Light Combat Aircraft) provided a good basis for First-Lieutenant Martin



Špaček to fly solo aerobatics with the JAS-39C Gripen supersonic fighter. He flew public performances in 2007 and 2008. As he says, he had a good luck in nomination for the display pilot to fly the one-five-niner. "I always liked aerobatics. During the selection of a new L-159 ALCA demo pilot, I said to myself, if it only went for me. I had flown with ALCA to airshows before, but just for static demos. It came off well and I was delighted," says the pilot from Čáslav, who progressively flew Zlín Z-142CAF, Aero L-29 Dolphin and Aero L-39ZA and C Albatross aircraft.

Although aerobatics with the one-five-niner had been performed before by pilots Jaroslav Míka and Jiří Řezáč, Martin Špaček started according to his taste. In other words, he did not adopt the flying programme from his predecessors, but created an original one. Once he composed the manoeuvres out of those he considered the best ones, he started practising it on a simulator. After weeks of drill on the ground, he proceeded to training in the air. "First I practised a kilometre above the ground. Then I progressively went down and began flying more aggressively. After the first year, the program was subject to change. I did not do the minimum

speed, because it does not sound that well with ALCA. Instead, I included elements with negative G force, inverted turn plus inverted roll and dive out of climbing," Martin recalls and admits that quick transitions from positive to negative Gs and vice versa represent the biggest strain for pilots.

During his two seasons on the display team, he flew almost thirty performances with the L-159 ALCA subsonic aircraft. Tens of thousands spectators applauded his demonstrations both in the Czech Republic and abroad. He enjoyed that especially in the Aviation Fair airshow, because his piloting career began with elementary flight training there in Pardubice.

After the L-159, he successfully achieved another progress as he retrained for the Gripen. At the turn of 2012 and 2013, he was faced with another professional challenge: display pilot on the JAS-39C supersonic fighter aircraft. Although he knew very well from demo flying the L-159 what it entailed and that there was much additional work to be done, he accepted the offer. His old dream could continue.

Martin also honoured the unwritten rule that the previous display pilot's program is flown in the first year. He took over the high version

(determined based on current meteo situation, especially the cloud base) completely from Michal Daněk and partially adjusted the low version. As a result, he presents maximum possible of his professional practice and takes the Gripen to the very edge of its performance envelope. "It depends on the demo pilot. Some build on multiple low passes over runway or slow rolls. I seek to have it as dynamic as possible while staying in the spectators' field of view," 1LT Špaček describes.

His flight demo with the Gripen lasts roughly ten minutes. The machine flies between 180 to 1,100 kilometres per hour, from ALT 100 ft to 10,000 ft. G force during the flight goes from minus three to plus nine. Obviously, it is a very challenging job, during which the pilot gets close to the end of his tether, both physically and mentally. "It is about serenity, maximum concentration and good decision-making. I do feel a little tense before every flight. But that is over when I release the brakes and start off," 1LT Martin Špaček says and specifies he had twelve public performance with the Gripen last year and there is a plan for eight demonstrations in 2014, because of the deployment of JAS-39 aircraft for air policing over Iceland.

Martin's current professional service can be described as three in one: flight training with the 211th Tactical Squadron, QRA duty in the NATINAMDS and aerobatic performances at airshows in the Czech Republic and abroad. Sadly, his day also lasts only twenty-four hours ...

Extra work and hours

It would be unfair not to continue with the story of the other display pilot from the 21st Tactical Air Base Čáslav. The individual is First-Lieutenant Ondřej Španko who performs aerobatics with L-159 ALCA subsonic aircraft at airshows.



1LT Ondřej Španko

1LT Španko is not a tyro on the Czech Air Force display team. His piloting technique has been already known to the public. He started with aerobatic flying four years ago when he still served at the training squadron of the Náměšť Airbase and used to sit in the cockpit of the L-39ZA Albatross. At that time, he became the chosen one to materialise the vision held by then Náměšť Airbase commander COL Libor Štefánek (presently Brigadier General Štefánek, Commander Czech Air Force), to enhance awareness of the unit. "As a boy, I always admired aerobatic pilots flying in airshows. I take it as great honour that the decision eventually went for me, by coincidence to an extent. I am not ashamed to say that my dreams have come true. Given the offer to fly public demonstrations with the Albatross, I did not hesitate a single moment," 1LT Španko admits.

Only aviation fans know about an interesting fact associated with the demo flying the L-39 Albatross. After years, 1LT Španko was the first and the last demo pilot of the thirty-niner! Why? Well, we need to go back to 1995, when famous display pilots of the Aviation Research Institute in Prague-Kbely Lieutenant-Colonel Vítězslav Nohel and Colonel Oldřich Pelčák had ended flying demos with the L-39 jet trainer. Solo aerobatics with the Albatross was then assigned to demo pilots Major Josef Seidl and Captain Tomáš Kadlec of the then Training Airbase Pardubice.

After several years' intermission, when the L-39 had not been flown publicly, the initiative came up at Náměšť and display pilot 1LT Španko appeared on the scene. "Unfortunately it was just one season. The thirty-niners were grounded for eighteen months following and air accident and were not included in the Display Team anymore. At present, there are only four operational machines in the inventory of the 213th Training Squadron, which is perhaps the key reason why they are not shown in the public any longer," says 1LT Španko, who flew the very last performance with the L-39 in an airshow.



The aerobatic flying program was an original made by First-Lieutenant Španko. "The thirty-niner is not really overpowered and so the machine needs to maintain energy throughout the demo. I built my aerobatic program on that fact," the pilot explains and recalls his premiere performance at CIAF airshow in Hradec Králové. "There was a sort of tense expectation. But that goes off you as you release the brakes. All of your concentration goes into controlling precision. You do not sense dozens of expert and public eyes watching you," 1LT Španko explains and offers his professional masterpiece: rolling turn!

A double change came up subsequently – Ondřej was reassigned to the 212th Tactical Squadron Čáslav and progressed from the Albatross to the L-159 ALCA subsonic. When there were considerations to select the successor to display pilot Pavel Švec, the proposal was for him. He took it up again. He went through everything necessary and obtained the public demonstration licence certificate in April 2014. "As opposed to previous L-159 demos, I perform more elements

from the edge of the flight envelope; I go to the limit. I included more dynamic elements into the program," 1LT Španko elaborates and adds the following parameters of what is roughly a ten-minute demo flight: altitude limits from 100 ft to 11,500 ft, speed from 200 to 850 kilometres per hour, G force fluctuates between minus four to plus eight. Out of all those stall turns, loops and rolls, it is difficult to depict a single manoeuvre and say it would not be a top one. All are impressive and difficult at the same time. "I continue to polish the demo. I try and fly new manoeuvres on the sim. If I am given the chance to continue in the Display Team the next season, I will definitely refine the performance even more," argues the ALCA pilot, who has the plan to perform ten public demonstrations this year, including an airshow in Malta.

Thanks to a forthcoming attitude by First Lieutenant Španko, we are allowed to be seated in the cockpit of the L-159 ALCA and hear his exclusive commentary on aerobatic piloting: "Contrarily to

the L-39, there is big progress here in the form of the Flight Vision FV-300 Head-Up Display, which shows flight data in a sophisticated way. That helps me a lot in demo flying. Views outside the cockpit and at the display are change at a high frequency. I also realign my position in the airspace all the time so as to observe the safety limits and stay in the spectators' field of view. Performance of individual demo elements is conditioned on the necessary flight parameters that I have to observe unconditionally. If not, it can get me into a bad situation. Of course, I must be prepared for those beforehand as well. You do not have the time any more whilst in the machine. There, it is about fractions of seconds, if anything went wrong. Although ten minutes is not a long time, trust me it is a very demanding piloting, both physically and mentally. A sweat-drenched T-shirt under the flight suit goes with that automatically," says the L-159 ALCA pilot First-Lieutenant Ondřej Španko.



Two New Jaguars

Rain, water and humidity. Those were the main companions of two students the Czech University of Defence, who joined the students of the Special Military School in Saint-Cyr earlier this year. Together they immersed into the depths of jungle in the largest French overseas department, in the French Guiana, for twelve days. They accomplished their mission and earned the prestigious badge with a jaguar awarded for successful completion of the course.

Sergeant Lukáš Grmolec and Sergeant Robert Pačík experienced one of the peaks of their studies at the University of Defence. Thanks to their role of instructors in the Commandos team at the University, they were offered an opportunity to take part in training organised at the camp of the 3rd Regiment of the French Foreign Legion. After a short stop in Paris and Saint-Cyr, they set out at the beginning of April with a hundred of student from the Special Military School for a many hours' flight into the seaside town of Kourou, from where they departed for the Legion's base in the middle of the jungle. For their stay in extreme conditions, their equipment was augmented with nine new necessary items including a machete and large tarp.

"The moment was absolutely distinctive," Sergeant Pačík recalls the instant when the instructors started the very course. "It was very tough but I knew I still had something in reserve." Two students from the Brno-based University of Defence were the only foreign participants on the course. They experienced it in separation, each in a different platoon comprising twenty-five men. They spent nights suspended in hammocks to protect them against dangerous tropical animals. Sergeant Pačík very much looked forward to his first night in hammock: "I was surprised at the end that it felt completely normal, as if I belonged there," he describes his feelings.

The daily program started with wake-up signal at 4 a.m. After morning routines, food and packing, we lined up at six o'clock to watch flag raising and off we went for a tactical training

session comprising various missions performed in the exotic environment of tropical rainforest. One of those tasks for example was to manufacture huge wooden hammers.

The core of training comprised various obstacle courses and trails – on lianas, in water or mud. And it was in mud where SGT Grmolec experienced the toughest moments as they dragged a "casualty" fixed onto a long log with his colleagues. "As everybody was running out of strength, communication and cooperation began to slack. Those at the back pushed constantly forward and so we at the front had a hard time keeping the casualty's head above the water surface at all." Robert Pačík recalls how he crossed the river with his team alongside the raft. "My shoelaces unfastened in the water and the stream took them away after a while. So kept my boots on my legs only thanks to clenched toes, which was pretty exhausting."

Both men from the Defence University knew even small abrasions could cause big problems, as they become an entry gate for infections into the body. Therefore, they were equipped with antiseptic means they tried to clean the scratches with. "I treated plenty of minor injuries but all healed with difficulty, because we spent much time in water," SGT Pačík describes the care for his health and adds: "When I managed as if by miracle to dry up one night, the next day could not begin with anything else than an event in the river!"

On the trails, the trainees' ankles suffered a lot – students jumped from high elevations into murky water not having a clue what was



Sergeant Lukáš Grmolec recalls:

Our stay at the Foreign Legion base included a three-day survival, during which we were to use the knowledge and skills we had obtained during training there. On the first day, we were allowed to make breakfast, which was nevertheless immediately followed by a very intensive and lengthy exercise that was meant to exhaust us. As I learnt afterwards from a Slovak instructor, the aim was to simulate escape from captivity, during which people are not really rested... After the exercise, they took all our items – kits, vests, everything from pockets and even T-shirts. The French even had to turn in their shoelaces, which we

under the surface. Sergeant Grmolec was therefore surprised that only one man caused himself a serious ankle injury, which put him out of the course.

The challenging course however peaked in a three-day mission with the main goal to survive. Ahead of the jungle survival, they had a prepping led by native Indian nicknamed Narcis employed by the local Foreign Legion unit. He demonstrated for the soldiers the fruit that can be eaten and how to prepare it; how to get food by hunting, how to make fishpots and traps to catch animals. In reality, the outcome of independent hunt for food is that soldiers practically do not eat anything during the training and their bodies get weaker as a result. Yet they have to perform many tasks on which they are scored.

Thanks to their constitution, strength and proven skills, the Defence University students from Brno won respect with their colleagues.

Overall results proved that; Sergeant Lukáš Grmolec received the highest score in his platoon for successful performance of missions. "I think he would win overall too," Sergeant Pačík assesses his colleague's results. SGT Pačík was also successful- he ended up sixth in his platoon.

Allowed by University of Defence to put their abilities to a test in tough rainforest conditions, both students appreciate their success would not have been possible without the assistance and support by numerous individuals. Among many, they named Associate Professor Zdeněk Flasar, who furnished them with a perfect preparation in the framework of the Commandos team, and First Lieutenant Hana Michálová, who was extremely instrumental in settling many administrative steps associated with preparation and the course itself.

by Viktor Sliva, photos by CMM 39EI



escaped, because we do not have buckles on our boots. To make completely clear we do not take along anything prohibited we had to strip naked. What we had left was only a machete, compass and a whistle.

Then they took us on boats from jungle into a deeper jungle, where they dropped us and gave us plenty of tasks. We were told to build shelters for ourselves and for fire and set up a post for the whole platoon in the middle of jungle. We had to clear everything with machetes, but because we were dropped there only in the afternoon, we only managed to set up a shelter for fire. That meant we had to break the rule not to ever sleep on the ground. We had no choice but to pile up palm trees and lay

down on it. It was not really pleasant, because the first thing I saw during the survival was a huge spider and a scorpion. It rained almost all the time, which was unpleasant, mainly at night. Again, we could only use palm trees for cover. Exhausted, hungry and soaking wet all the time, you feel really cold at night. Only the next day we built shelters for sleeping, where we had to make beds for everybody at least fifty centimetres above the ground.

The name of the game was to find some food. We only managed on the second day. The guys killed an iguana or what, simply a big lizard. But there were too many of us: it was just a mouthful for each. Then we found palm tree pulp we had been taught about, and small crabs we

caught at the river. The next night was not any better although we spent it under the shelter. Yet again, it rained enduringly, it was cold and one did not get a good sleep on the wooden structures we built.

Another big task was to build a raft. For that, we used the knowledge of trees that we had gained previously, which also applied to building the shelters, making fire and the like. And then the final task came – to cross the river with the raft. It took us years, the river was huge. It is not such a big problem to spend three or four days without food, but a big energy expenditure is then very exhausting. We made a couple of steps or strokes and were incredibly tired.

It was an experience. We survived ...

In 2014, seventeen Czech Air Force flight personnel are certified for public demonstrations

AEROBATICS

in ground proximity

Seventeen. That is the number of Czech Air Force members certified for flight performances in the public in this year. The prestigious certificate was awarded to two pilots from the Čáslav Airbase, five captains of Mi-24/35 gunships and ten captains of Mi-171Sh transport machines from the Náměšť Airbase.



With airmen from Čáslav airbase, it is one pilot for each type of aircraft. The 211th Squadron nominated First-Lieutenant Martin Špaček for demonstrations with JAS-39C Gripen supersonic fighter and the L-159 ALCA subsonic aircraft is display flown for the public by a member of the 212th Squadron, First-Lieutenant Ondřej Španko. Aviation fans know the structure of the 21st Tactical Airbase Čáslav also comprises the 213th Training Squadron equipped with L-39ZA light combat aircraft from 1 December 2013 on. Those machines are however not included in the Czech Air Force display team for live demonstrations in 2014. The same applies to the W-3A Sokol multirole helicopter from the 24th Airbase Prague-Kbely, without which it was inconceivable to hold an airshow in the Czech Republic just until recently. The key factors to decide the case of the thirty-niner and the Sokol include financial limits, flight personnel workload and the remaining life of the machines. The top priority for the Czech Air Force is naturally performance of its assigned missions rather than public outreach.

It is not difficult to answer the question why helo guys are much more represented on

the Display Team. Given the flight performance on public demonstrations, it is easier for helicopter captains to become involved in flight demonstrations. Contrarily, it represents sort of a personnel deficit with the fast-movers, because there is no full-fledged substitute for them. In case of a slightest unexpected event, such as sudden sickness, it would entail negative consequences. In reality, solo aerobatic flight on a Gripen and ALCA would be deleted from an airshow program in such contingency.

First high up in the sky, then in proximity of the ground

Pilots from Čáslav were never missing on Czech Air Force display teams. At airshows at home and in foreign countries, their piloting mastery has been admired by thousands of spectators. In the past, display pilots Lieutenant-Colonel Josef Miler, LTC Ján Rehák and LTC Bohumír Zavadil flew MiG-23ML fighter jets for example; this year it is First-Lieutenant Martin



Špaček on the JAS-39C Gripen multirole fighter and First-Lieutenant Ondřej Španko on the L-159 ALCA subsonic light combat aircraft.

Their certification was completed on Wednesday 9 April 2014. The path towards that goal was however not easy at all and encompassed a thorough academic and practical preparation. First, both pilots had to peruse relevant flight regulations and master structural limits of their types in the context of procedures for emergency cases that could come up during demonstration performances, which could affect spectator safety. A high premium on flight safety plays a key role, and display pilots must therefore be ready for all contingencies. The academic training also encompassed observations from their predecessors experienced in flying public demos with the given type of aircraft.

If the demonstration is performed in accordance with the methodology that includes imagery of performed manoeuvres and completely in line with safety rules, the individual is granted a certificate permitting flight performances in the public. The pilot of the aircrew then flies the approved sequence of manoeuvres throughout the year. To complete the picture, methodologies for individual demonstrations by the Display Team are approved by the Commander of the Czech Air Force.

"We do not assess just the flight performance in the demonstration. We do not evaluate piloting as such, but only safety aspects. In reality, we observe whether the performance observed all safety parameters. I am able to judge that thanks to my extensive practical experience. If it is not in line with our concept, we consult with the display pilot. Additional flights may be performed in some circumstances. Our common priority is safety at all times. We are no repressive agency. Pilots may rather expect us to provide guidance. Their approach to our recommendations is forthcoming," COL Čermák explains.

It would be naive to think that a certified display pilot is the master of all skies in an airshow. Event organisers specify the no-fly areas, indeed spectator zones, for the pilot to unconditionally observe. The basic orientation point for the pilot is normally the runway, which provides the notional limit, known as display line. The display pilot maintains separation from the line based on the aircraft type and performed aerobatic element. Generally speaking, the distance from the display line is based on the aircraft type and the manoeuvre. That is because spectator safety is the highest priority of all. Fast-movers may not approach the display line when flying towards the audience to less than 450 metres and the limit for rotary wing assets is roughly one hundred metres. Violating the display line, pilot would get a yellow card, and going beyond it would mean a red card – an end to his performance. Pilots are also often given altitude limit for direct flight over the runway or minimum level of the flight demonstration as well as speed limit that may not exceed the speed of sound. No one however has the authority to change already approved demonstrations. It is not acceptable to request that a Gripen pilot repeated the most attractive manoeuvres such as minimum speed flight with the machine on near-stall angle and maximum engine performance. It would indeed make no sense, because watching the JAS-39C Gripen on the very edge of its flight envelope is an unforgettable experience as such. The very same applies for other demonstrations by the Czech Air Force display team. Their performances rank among the cream of the crop in airshows.

If everything is successfully accomplished, the time comes for display pilots to get their certification. The MoD authority to grant the certification is the Military Aviation Department of the Ministry of Defence (MoD MAD).

Safety in all circumstances

Public demonstration flight certificate is not something display pilots would get for a lifetime. "The certificate is issued for one calendar year and is in force from January 1st till December 31st. It is effective both for domestic airshows and for events abroad – as a standard in the NATO nations," says Colonel Václav Čermák of the MoD Military Aviation Department and makes a reference to the AFSP-P, or indeed the STANAG 3533 standard NATO agreement. The same happens in relation with public performances by foreign pilots in the Czech Republic. They are also required to hold a valid certificate from their national aviation authority.

To have the certificate in your pocket does not mean you would be automatically placed on an airshow program. In case of slightest doubt, the airshow flight director is entitled to ask the pilot or the aircrew for so-called check flight. If they do not meet the required criteria, the director is authorised to prohibit the demonstration. He may use a similar procedure when the aircraft is not airworthy.

But let us get back to certification of military personnel. In case the pilot or the aircrew are duly prepared for their demonstration flight, specialists of the MoD Military Aviation Department arrive the airbase together with Air Force Flight Safety Inspectorate to view the demonstration.

Co-sponsored by the Czech Republic, an international course training specialists for investigating improvised explosive devices was held in Hungary

Even explosions leave evidence

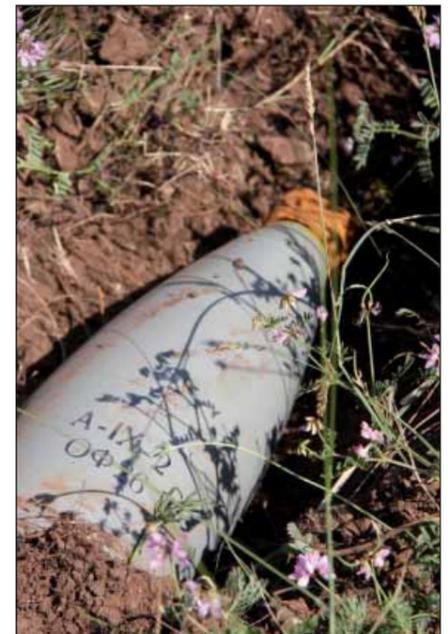
A massive explosion hurled the armoured vehicle into the air and let the wreck fall to the ground after several seconds. The cloud of smoke and dust started dispersing. The wreck could be seen already. Suddenly it flared up and a mushroom of black smoke started for the sky. The inside of the vehicle ignited.

The controlled explosion in the Hájmáskér training area in Hungary was set up by NATO EOD specialists. They planted a calibre 152mm artillery shell under a decommissioned armoured vehicle and detonated it. The scene was a part of training for the trainees in the Weapons Intelligence Team (WIT) Course organised by Counter Improvised Explosive Devices Centre of Excellence (C-IED COE) based in Spain in cooperation with Hungarian NCO academy at the end of June earlier this year.

Seven experienced instructors

The project is sponsored by Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk. It is co-funded by three nations – Denmark, Norway and the Czech Republic. The C-IED Centre of Excellence organises five such courses on annual basis. This was the third issue in 2014. By coincidence, preparation and organisation was the

responsibility of a Czech member of C-IED COE, Captain Michal Augustin. "The objective of this course is to train WIT specialists, particularly for deployment in Afghanistan. It is a three-week effort. The first six days are academic with short practical lectures on the premises of the Hungarian academy. What follows is practical training without the use of live ammunition, but as you could see, it sometimes does include it. The students are able to practise a number of specialist forensic procedures, such as photographing, collection of data, fingerprints, DNA traces etc. At the range, they are tasked to investigate the site after the explosives detonated," Captain Augustin explains. "The very course is led by ten highly experienced instructors. Every one of them served operational tours in Afghanistan as well as on other foreign deployed operations. One of the instructors is a member of the Czech Armed Forces. Others are from Sweden, France, Hungary, Romania, Ireland and the United States. Everyone has a different experience. The training systems in individual countries slightly



differ. However, instructors work in pairs so as to complement one another."

The C-IED COE sends an invitation letter to individual nations several weeks ahead of the course. Then it is up to the nations to identify nominees. The course accommodates twenty trainees. The C-IED COE makes the final selection. As a matter of priority, individuals slated for operational deployment in the next six months as WIT specialists are selected. Only when there are still vacancies, other students get their chance. The aim is to treat all nations fairly.

Sweden and France are highly experienced in terms of WIT teams, as they have specialised in this domain for years. The Czech Republic and Hungary are only at the beginning of building those capabilities. We are privileged to learn from those who are five or ten years ahead of us in this respect. "Operational deployments in Afghanistan were very important for us in that regard. Whatever people may say, operational deployment is something there is no substitute for. I am confident it has changed not only the EOD service but indeed the whole Czech Armed Forces," CAPT Augustin says.

Five explosions

There are five sites in the training area where live explosives were detonated. In addition to cars, explosions also targeted dummies. Explosion of a cal 125mm artillery shell tore a tactical vest literally into pieces. The plate was hurled twenty metres away. A Czech Armed Forces instructor, First Lieutenant Miroslav Hronek, operates one of the sites. He spent many years serving as a forensic expert; only then he started to specialise to work on WIT teams. He wanted to use the experience he gathered in his previous post and combine it with his EOD specialty; so he focused on this subject. There are more individuals like him in the Military Police. He is the first Czech Military Police instructor on this course. He works in pair with his Hungarian colleague and e does not hide they are on



excellent terms, because they already worked together in a joint team during an exercise in the Netherlands. "I do not say everything goes completely seamlessly. When you work in multinational teams, some difficulties always come up, especially in language proficiency. We understand each other on expert basis. The difficulties are rather with specialist terminology," 1LT Hronek adds.

The task of the team comprising a Norwegian, Belgian, German and Hungarian soldier is to search a car wreck destroyed by an unknown explosive. "Investigating the blast site and collection of evidence have certain meaning for EOD, but are much more important for intelligence guys and naturally for manufacturers and people who procure EOD equipment. The situation continuously evolves in this domain, there ever new developments and it is necessary to react continuously. That is particularly why everything is monitored and various databases are created to help us map the opponent out. We record traces leading to apprehension as well as the type of charge and initiator used, place of planting, explosion force and manner of detonation," CPT Augustin concludes. "IEDs used in Afghanistan

have gone through certain development. The French also come back from Mali with different experience. We are ready for a broad range of possible incidents. In continuing conflicts, terrorists run out of resources and they go from conventional to improvised munitions. What we can see is progressive transition to ever more trivial and improvised forms. We must be ready for such permanent development. It very much depends on the attacker's creativity. The only limiting factor is imagination. That was why we used a cigarette pack for example as an initiator during this training event. Those are the most difficult matters for EOD specialists."

Twenty commanding officers

A clear benefit of the course is that all members of the team rotate in individual posts. Thus, they have an opportunity to act as team leaders, photographers, evidence collectors and note-takers. Czech instructor First Lieutenant Miroslav Hronek explains a task to the students. He watches every step they take from the very first



moment. In the initial stage, the point is not to damage evidence. The explosion destroyed the car. Hundreds of small projectiles are scattered all around. Some of them penetrated the body and made it to the other side. "We can have thousands of EOD teams in Afghanistan, but still we are fighting the fire after it has already broke out; we are not after the cause. To find out, and try and remove the causes should be the task of the WIT team. The team should investigate the incident and communicate the information to intelligence services and Military Police. Based on the obtained data, both components will seek to remove the causes of those matters. Collection of fingerprints and DNA samples may play an important role in that regard. That evidence may lead to the manufacturer of improvised explosive devices," 1LT Hronek underscores. "It is nothing new. NATO pursued such concept of



samples and other evidence. Transfer into WIT should not be a problem for them. What we are missing however is a real operational deployment. According to our WIT specialists, that will happen, sooner or later.

"In the general public and indeed the Czech EOD community, the concept of countering improvised explosive devices is often limited to the very IED plus EOD operations associated with the disposal. But that is where everything only starts. After the EOD, Weapons Intelligence Team specialists go to the site to exploit it for evidence to be sent up the command chain to work the data further on. Only the outcomes of the whole process may result in an effective countering of the whole network behind the original explosion," CPT Augustin adds.

A higher Czech representation on the course is not by coincidence. That is where a broader cooperation between the Czech Armed Forces and their Hungarian counterparts is born. Hungarians addressed a request to the Czech Republic in the past for creating a small multinational WIT team that would operate in the framework of Visegrad Four countries. Mutual cooperation among our armed forces has developed successfully so far. Hungarians already built three WIT teams one of which is presently deployed in Afghanistan. "Those guys are very close to us. All Hungarian WIT teams perform to excellent standards plus they are very well prepared in terms of language. When it comes to any type of cooperation, there is no problem," 1LT Hronek says.

Awarded a certificate at the end

The only Czech course trainee was present in investigation of the incident that involved the explosion of the armoured vehicle. The

WIT team had a more difficult job because the subsequent fire destroyed much evidence. The condition of the site notwithstanding, they still managed to identify traces that could lead to the perpetrator. Master Sergeant Michal Žehra of the Military Police Command in Olomouc completed the basic Class A pyrotechnical EOD course quite some time ago. Moreover, he was qualified in terms of language proficiency requirements. And so he was offered the opportunity to take the course in Hungary. The initial phase of the course is very tough for most trainees. But they nevertheless manage to overcome all challenges and they perform to the required standards. "I did not think it would be so demanding, both in terms of expertise and language proficiency. During the course, we were confronted with many specialist matters. I have encountered many specialist terms in the past, but as concerns higher level of the subject of EOD and forensic procedures, I had certain shortfalls in specialist terminology. The more demanding it was for me," Master Sergeant Žehra describes. "But it was a great experience on the whole. I had a chance to try out both forensic and tactical aspects of our activity, moreover in multinational environment. I had to develop my own report that I briefed to others later on. I find this work very meaningful. At the end of the day, it helps save life."

This year's edition was also unique given the attendance of representatives from U.S. EUCOM as observers. The objective of their presence was to evaluate options for them to become involved in lecturing. At the end of the course, all trainees were presented a certificate of possessing a minimum WIT capability according to STANAG 2298.

Castle Guard snipers exercised in the Hradiště training area with new CZ 750 SNIPER I rifles



LIKE DRIVING a Mercedes-Benz

Everybody gazed into the ground cover in front of them for several minutes. But they did not manage to discern anything suspicious, not a slightest motion or at least something that would not fit into the landscape. The commanding officer eventually had to command: Snipers rise. Only then two perfectly concealed soldiers appeared in the front of us.

Camouflaging, tactics, shooting and a number of other skills were a part of training for eighteen snipers of the Castle Guard, which took place in the Hradiště Military Training Area at the end of April. From the previous training, it primarily differed by the fact that instead of Soviet SVD Dragunov rifles, Czech made CZ 750 SNIPER I rifles were used.

Not just protection, but also defence

"You just had an opportunity to watch training of the Castle Guard 1st Battalion's sniper team. They are newly familiarising themselves with weapons issued just two months ago. We make sure our soldiers learned to operate the new weapon perfectly. There are three practice sites here in total. The first site offered

familiarisation with individual parts of the new arm. On the next one, we practised covert onward movement for snipers in the terrain. At the third site, we trained shooting over the range of 650 metres," Commander of the Castle Guard Colonel Radim Studený explains.

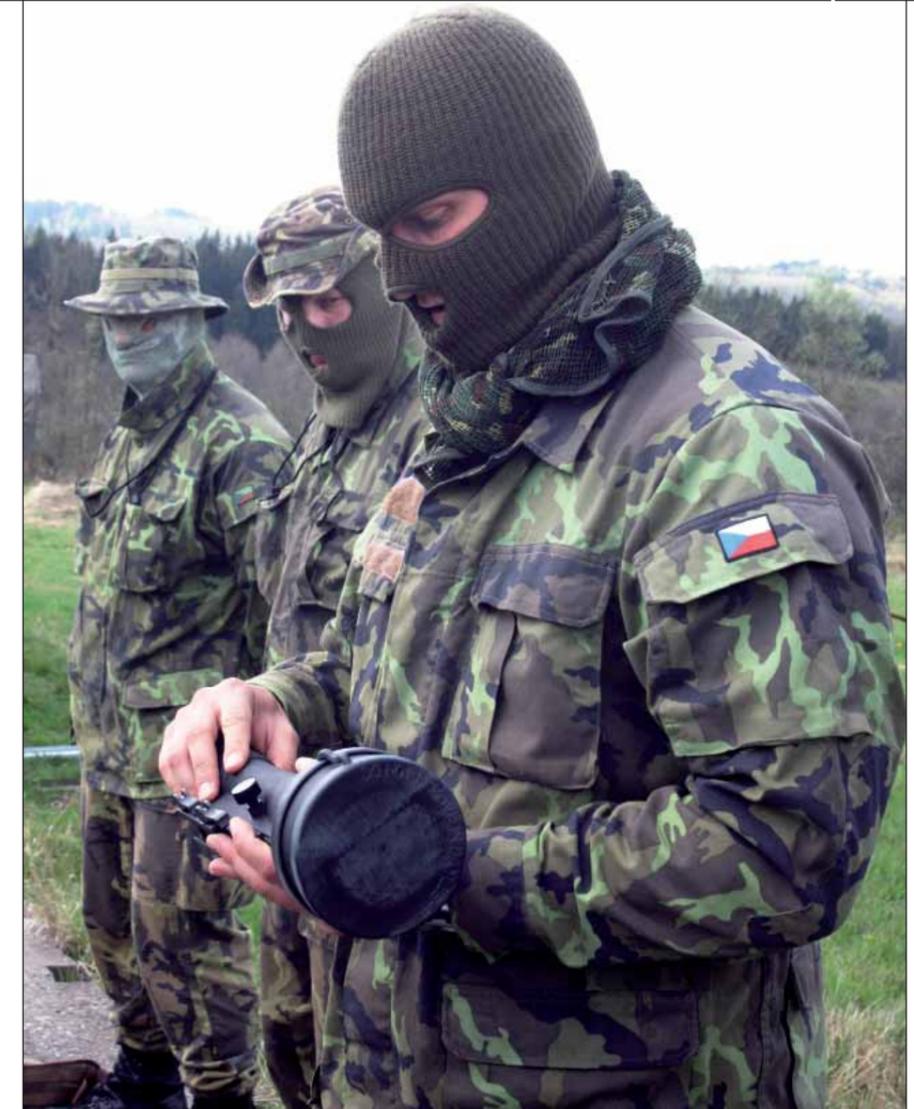
"The Castle Guard has had sniper rifles in its inventory for quite some time. That was why some opinions that it ought not to be the case came as a surprise to me. The Castle Guard's mission is clear: to ensure protection and defence of the seat of the President. The Castle Guard is an infantry type of unit. Introduction of a rifle with effective range up to 800 metres into its inventory clearly fits into the concept of providing security to the seat of the President. The Dragunov sniper rifles absolutely do not compare to the new weapon. It is a quantum leap of at least thirty years."

The clear benefit is naturally that all handguns used by the Castle Guard are manufactured by a domestic supplier, the Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod. Apart from sniper rifles, that involves the CZ 805 BREN assault rifles, the short-barrelled CZ Scorpion EVO3 A1 submachine guns and CZ 75 SP-01 Phantom pistols. That naturally facilitates supplies of spare and the logistic support as such. Compatibility with the Czech Armed Forces, which introduced those weapons too, is also a considerable benefit.

Second specialty

The Castle Guard had sniper rifles in its inventory in the past as well and only replaced them with substantially newer and accurate types. Castle Guard members also concurred on the fact that the replacement feels like they would change from Trabant to Mercedes-Benz cars. It is not fair to say that the Castle Guard would step up its firepower either, as it decommissioned UK-59 machineguns from inventory without any replacement some time ago.

The Castle Guard presently has 610 PE posts for military professionals and 43 for civilian employees. The meaning level is roughly ninety-eight percent. Besides the command, staff, personal staff and logistic support element, the



CG comprises two Guard Battalions, the Castle Guard Band and Support Company. Both Guard Battalions are manned with 232 soldiers and comprise three platoons. The first two platoons are guard subunits and the third is a fire support platoon (they comprise gunners with RP-G-7 rocket propelled grenades). Each of the teams comprising the fire support platoons includes a sniper and an observer to provide all necessary support to the sniper. In total, the Castle Guard has eighteen snipers and eighteen observers. But it does not mean at all that those soldiers would only do sniping. As a matter of priority and same as others, they perform missions associated with the protection of the Prague Castle and the Lány Chateau. Sniping is another occupational specialty they have.

At least two hundred shots

The new CZ 750 sniper rifles come with high-quality accessories. The very weapon is equipped with the Leupold MARK 4 riflescope. It has a mount for muzzle brake and for a bipod. The MNV X6 night vision device is a great benefit. The snipers also have available Leupold RX 1000 laser rangefinders equipped with a small computer capable of calculating ranges including at

certain angle. They also have the Kestrel 4500 NV weather meter helping them to evaluate factors such as wind speed, temperature, pressure, altitude and position. The type of ammunition and length of barrel has to be taken into account as well. Those are all parameters no truly professional sniper can do without.

"I had an opportunity to try and shoot the Finnish Sako TRG 22 sniper rifles introduced in some units of the Czech Armed Forces. I am convinced our rifles match those. They are, of course, new, so we have to get some things settled yet. Every new rifle needs at least two hundred shots before it is finetuned right. The barrel has to settle down, the marks of technical and workshop processing must get worn a bit. Now we are in the phase when we learn to operate the weapon. Only then we will precise our training and focus on accuracy. For instance, we also have to try out practically in what conditions it is more effective to shoot with the muzzle brake and when without it," sniper K. J. notes. "Subsequently, we will also need to focus on methodology and tactics for using such high-performance sniper rifles in the conditions of the Castle Guard. In that respect, we would like to cooperate with Czech Police snipers serving directly at the Prague Castle."

by Vladimír Marek

NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion exercised in the Březina Military Training Area at Vyškov, Czech Republic, in this year

Exercise Sharp Lynx 14

Military Police officers woke up into a very sleepy morning. The drizzle reduced visibility, including for the guards at the entry to the Forward Operating Base Eagle. A car engine suddenly roared and brakes screeched. All of a sudden, a truck dashed in front of the gate. Unknown militants jumped out and in no time opened fire on MPs guarding the entry gate. They answered the fire and sought to prevent the vehicle from getting inside. After several minutes, the aggressors were forced to withdraw.

That was one of the episodes on the exercise Sharp Lynx 14 training the Multinational Military Police Battalion (MNMPBAT), which took place in the Březina Military Training Area and the Centre of Simulation and Trainer Technology at the end of September earlier this year. Besides the servicemembers of the Czech Military Police, the NATO MNMPBAT comprises MPs from Poland, Slovakia and Croatia. Representatives of individual nations rotate in command posts in turns. In 2014, the battalion commanding officer is Lieutenant-Colonel Mateusz Dadal of Poland. The unit has trained since October 2008 every year in one of the countries assigning personnel to the battalion. For the first time ever, an MNMPBAT exercise saw the participation of the service personnel of U.S. 18th Military Police Brigade stationed in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.



Assistance to the state of Tribunad

Exercise Sharp Lynx was conducted along the following scenario. A fictive state of Tribunad in the middle of Europe got into serious trouble. Everything started with increased tensions among population groups of various religions. That impacted on national economy and security forces in the country were underfunded as a result. Chaos broke out subsequently. There

were cases of torture, murders, assassinations; illegal drug production grew rapidly. The international community had no choice but to respond to the situation and deploy the Multinational Corps North East as a part of Operation TRAFOR III to include the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion.

In the past, the MNMPBAT had training exercises with all forces in the field. This time, it was a command post exercise with some minor exceptions. "The MNMPBAT staff had some personnel replaced and so exercise Sharp Lynx 14 was a combined effort. It primarily took place in the Březina Military Training Area, particularly in the B-hut camp and its immediate vicinity. The remainder was run on computers at the local simulation centre," Exercise Director Colonel Pavel Fejfar explained. "We focused on improving the commanding officer's and staff's ability to provide continuous command and control over forces during preparation as well as during performance of MP missions. Integration of

factsheet

The idea to form a Multinational Military Police Battalion was tabled at the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002. Originally, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia and Bulgaria subscribed to it besides the Czech Republic. Bulgaria however withdrew from the project in 2005.

The lead nation role is played by Poland. Poland mounts the executive company and support company. Further, the battalion comprises platoon-sized subunits mounted by Czech Republic, Slovakia and Croatia. Croatia assigned the elite members of the Military Police response unit for the battalion. A multinational investigating team forms another MNMPBAT element.

individual staff teams and executive units was not omitted either."

Art of negotiation

Another turmoil occurs before FOB Eagle. Local militants have gathered there to claim amnesty and reward for turning in arms and explosives. However, official documents only promised them to have impunity. Exercise trainees now have to prove their negotiating skills and manage a situation that could come up on a real deployment. An arms amnesty is one of the assignments frequently pursued on foreign operational deployments.

The range of missions exercise trainees had to tackle was quite broad. The most common ones included investigation of traffic accidents, crimes, escorting convoy and VIPs. Much more



difficult though was coordination of displaced persons in affected areas, or investigation of war crimes after discovery of a mass grave.

"This year we have focused particularly on activities associated with extensive search operations such as cordon end search. Those are designed to search for weapons caches and other means used by dangerous persons. Apart from that, we naturally fulfilled the TRAFOR III operation order in the sense of stabilising the situation in the area of responsibility of our battalion," MNMPBAT commanding officer Lieutenant Colonel Mateusz Dadal adds.

Reserves involved

Almost one hundred of professional MPs training in exercise Sharp Lynx were augmented for the first time ever with a reserve component unit, specifically the Czech Military Police reserve company. The MP reservists were assigned to provide security of Camp Eagle. "They performed so-called force protection missions. We react that way to the current trend of increasing involvement of reserve forces in performance of the Armed Forces' missions the way it is stipulated under the White Paper on Defence," Colonel Pavel Fejfar explained.

The exercise was observed by monitors from the U.S., Germany, France, Poland and Montenegro. The evaluation team comprised members of the Military Police Centre of Excellence based in Bydgoszcz, Poland. What they could see represented an important feedback for them concerning the capabilities the Multinational MP Battalion possesses. Exercise Sharp Lynx 14 delivered on its purpose. It was the last test before recertification scheduled for next year. That will be organised as exercise Compact Eagle 15 in Poland in November 2015. It is co-organised by the Multinational Corps North East headquartered in Szczecin, under whose command the MNMPBAT is assigned.



A report from a patrol flight by one of the Czech Air Force JAS-39 Gripen pilots involved in providing security to the airspace over Iceland in October and November earlier this year



GUARDING the volcanic island

"Keflavik tower, Amber zero one flight, holding point runway zero two, with clearance radial zero eight five, distance four seven from kilo echo foxtrot, flight level one eight zero," says on the radio the leader of the pair, Michal, Macro according to his badge, but for us simply "Daňour". We have just returned from the ground frequency used for controlling aircraft on taxiing to the tower frequency. The tower told us we were on the holding point of runway 02. We were cleared for departure along radial 085, flight level 18 thousand feet to the distance 47 NM from VOR KEF - omnidirectional radar situated at Keflavik airport.

"Amber zero one flight, line up runway zero two," the reply goes and both of our jets set into motion to take departure positions.

I stop right from the lead pilot's aircraft and signal I am ready. Half throttle, seat armed, landing light switched on. Adrenalin before flight, which you never get tired of!

Take-off clearance comes in no time. The leader airplane's nose goes down a bit as maximum thrust pushes on the nose leg shock absorber. I also check values at maximum thrust. My thumb goes up in an O. K. sign.

Maximum afterburner

The head in the helmet in front of me nods sharply. That signal means he is releasing the brakes and our flight starts. I watch the main gear wheel and when it starts moving, I let go the brakes. When the Gripen in front of me opens the exhaust nozzle (afterburner mode), I shift the throttle to maximum afterburner position. Both aircraft accelerate at that moment; I can distinctly feel the engine thrusting

the plane forward towards the lift-off point. I slightly take the throttle down to keep my echelon right position. I copy all movements of the lead aircraft. I gently pull the stick as the nose goes up. Our planes leave the airport surface.

We gain on speed and altitude every second. At the very same moment as the covers of the leader's landing gear start to move, I also close mine. We keep the climb angle, the seashore zooms by below us and we start turning right to radial 085°. I adjust the separation. A take-off in pair must always look perfectly! But now I take a more comfortable position. I can watch the space around me and not concentrate just on maintaining the position a couple of metres from the other machine.



We climb to the assigned flight level as an amazing view of the Icelandic seashore opens up below us. We fly into the Charlie zone situated over the island; we nicknamed it the "central court". Today's "sea state", height of waves, does not allow us to fly into areas over the ocean. "Metal skies" or clear sky almost without any clouds promises an outlook to the incredible landscape of Iceland: infinite glacier surfaces and sinistrous peaks of seemingly inactive volcanoes. At this moment, we are moving at a speed of Mach 0.8. Thereby we eliminate the time of transfer into the mission area. Distances are different to what we are used to back at home.

"Amber flight, contact LOKI on channel one zero," the air traffic controller invites us to go

for the tactical frequency. "Push one zero," Michal commands once he confirmed he copied the command. I select the channel and double push the push-to-talk (PTT) button to indicate for Daňour I am on the required frequency. Without calling me, he starts communication with the flight controller. Some people are simply delightful to work with! No futile talks and downtimes. With the "LOKI" callsign, there is a team of ground controllers there, who control us onto aerial targets. In case of practise flights, "tango scramble", we are controlled onto one another. Contrarily, on "alpha scramble" the outcome of cooperation is control into the rear hemisphere of the airplane we intercept for visual identification (VID) in our case.

In target role

After necessary procedures and exchange of standard phrases with the controllers, I am commanded to disengage from the formation and fly into my Combat Air Patrol (CAP). That is the position I will start my control onto the target from. I go to maximum rpm and roll the airplane on its back. I roll and dive out into opposite heading and gain on speed. Everything in good keeping with the old saying that a fighter pilot is either on the back, assaulting, or on parachute. That last case naturally only after being outnumbered ten versus one! I start so-called G-warm up. It is a set of manoeuvres with varying G forces. In essence, it is a warm-up exercise to get my body ready for the upcoming portion of high Gs. At that moment, I am already on the frequency of my controller and report to the leader: "Amber zero two g-warm up completed, FENCE-IN completed." FENCE is an expression for a sequence of actions taken to set all systems and sensors for successful engagement. I play the target role and have assigned levels 5 through 9, i.e. F250 through 290 in this case. The zone is limited with F180 through F290, the interceptor may therefore use block 0 through 4, that is F200 through F240. The objective of such division is to maintain safety. The pilot in the role of interceptor may not enter



the block without visual reference. In case the pilots would not see one another, no collision may occur.

I use the time, during which Michal performs his job intercepting me to perform visual identification, to watch the land beneath me. Icy bare land whipped by searing wind does not really look amiably, despite the fact that it is basking in the soft light of low laying sun. In this season, the star closest to us does not climb too high over the horizon in this corner of the world. You have the feeling it is always evening or morning.

Performing commands by the controller

"Terminate, terminate," the controller ends my sightseeing. Yes, Michal completed the whole procedure, rolls away and flies back to his CAP. I can see the belly of his Gripen and afterburner on. He disappears in the crystal clear air below me, honouring the unwritten saying.

It is my turn now. "Amber zero two, turn right, heading two four zero." I immediately start a right turn to heading 240° and accelerate to M 0.9. After saying "fight's on", the controller starts his onslaught of target information. I listen to him stating the target position values in reference to my position, its altitude and speed. I am commanded to adjust the heading and change altitude in order for us in cooperation to achieve the position of roughly one and half nautical miles behind the target horizontally. In the context of all data I received, I set my onboard locator so that it looked into the target area. In this type of control, it is the controller who creates the whole geometry of the flight. My task is to perform his commands as precisely as I can. I am taking over the initiative as soon as I get visual reference. I manoeuvre the aircraft into a position behind the target so that I would be able to recognise the type, colour scheme, weapons carried, insignia and markings. Everything is the question of a couple of minutes.

We continue to take turns in the role of target and interceptor, this time already in a control for practise firing of infrared seeking missiles. As the time allocated for our flight today draws to a close and the fuel indicator tells it is necessary to fly back, the reward for us is the view of Holuhraun. That is where lava from the Bárðarbunga volcano thrusts its way onto the surface of Iceland. Literally a gate to hell. It is a fascinating view, but low fuel commands us to return. We turn to heading for Keflavik VOR, currently some 150 NM away.

Thanks in native tongue

After retuning to KEF, we request visual approach to runway 20. We descend above the ocean surface to 2,000 ft and fly to the airport at the speed of 350 kts. After tuning to the tower frequency, we are given: "Amber flight, clear for visual approach runway two zero, brake to the right." After turning to runway heading, we continue in a tight formation as far as the airport. Roughly at the middle of the runway, Michal signals split. I nod in agreement and see him separate in a manoeuvre turning right. I reduce to idle three seconds after him and do a right turn with a high G force to help decelerate the aircraft before extracting the landing gear. I realign the airplane into opposite heading of the runway and watch the lead just less than a mile in front of me. "Gear, gear go," the command resounds. I shift the gear control stick into the extracted position. The familiar sounds are heard, three green lights shortly indicate the landing gear has been extracted and secured. The speed drops under 200 kts, I maintain the distance and start a mild right turn to go into the finale. I adjust the angle of descent and head for the left-hand side of the runway, which we call the "fast strip" in this procedure. The other side is named the "slow strip" and when the pilot is in control of the speed, he crosses into the slow lane. That clears the "fast strip" for the aircraft landing behind him and poses no obstacle at the same time for repeated take-offs by additional aircraft in case needed. I increase the angle of attack, watch for the heading and decelerate slightly. The runway threshold dashes by below; I keep the plane at the right angle and reduce rpm to minimum. The nose wheel touches down; I reduce the throttle to ground idle and apply the brakes. The canards automatically turn into the position with highest aerodynamic resistance and aerodynamic brakes deploy along with them. I go into the slow strip and perform after landing procedures. "Amber flight, vacate first to the right, taxi to west end and call Keflavik ground," is the last command from the tower. "Amber flight vacated twice, changing to ground, proceeding to west end, Takk," I report to have cleared the runway and that we return to the ground. We proceed to our place in the western corner of the airport. I make farewell in the air controller's native tongue.

by CAPT Milan Nykodým, pilot of the 211th Tactical Squadron, 21st Airbase Čáslav, photos by CAPT Nykodým

Czech air defence missileers of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment based in Strakonice took part in exercise Iron Sword 2014 in Lithuania

Raising the Iron Sword

Seventy soldiers of the 25th Air Defence Regiment joined the multinational exercise Iron Sword 2014 held in mid-November 2014. Together with a Lithuanian platoon, they formed an air defence battery – a combat support element for the Brigade East – whose mission was to provide air defence coverage for the brigade command post and the Sword battalion task force throughout the operation.

Field training exercise Iron Sword in Lithuania saw the participation of twenty five hundred military professionals from nine NATO nations (Czech Republic, Estonia, Canada, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Germany, the US and UK). Its primary goal was to prove interoperability of military forces from various nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in planning and common operations in a single multinational task force. At the same time, it was one of the series of exercises performed by the NATO Alliance to demonstrate its readiness and responsiveness in the wake of the situation in the Ukraine.

For the needs of the exercise the 25th Regiment assigned a task force comprising an AD platoon equipped with RBS-70 man-portable air defence systems. The subunit was complemented with a command and fire control system and a logistic support element.

RACCOS on rail for the first time

On Thursday 30 October 2014, the equipment was loaded at Divčice railhead on rail cars and set out for the Baltic States. It took them almost 51 hours to get to the town of Suwalki,

Poland, close to the border with Lithuania. The military convoy covered the last 170 kilometres into Rukla, Lithuania, in three hours. On Sunday 2 November 2014, the whole unit was staged in the location, including soldiers escorting the railway transport, as well as others transferred to the area on Czech Air Force CASA 295M aircraft.

"The movement of equipment worked out seamlessly thanks to excellent cooperation with the specialists of Transportation Branch of the Logistics Agency, who managed with their proactive approach what had seemingly been a mission impossible: the first-ever rail transportation of air defence battery command and control system – the RACCOS," emphasised Captain Petr Mach, chief of logistics section of the 25th ADM Regiment. The system had only been transported on road by then.

Deputy Minister kicked off the EX

Right after the exercise start, soldiers received a combat order from the superior HQ and started preparation for Operation Fury Fall. "The process of preparation comprises planning, developing and authorising own combat orders

of team leaders, preparation of materiel and equipment and issuing weapons and ammunition. It also involves rehearsal of selected tactical activities," commented the commanding officer of the Czech air defence unit Captain Peter Rabiňák and added that the preparatory phase culminated in integration of the whole battalion task force Sword.

Liaison officers posted with command post of their superior battalion and brigade played an important role in the exercise. One of those individuals was Captain Roman Dvořák. "My task at the superior echelon is to gain information on the concept of operations, which I subsequently pass on to duty officers manning the air defence platoon command post. In reaction, they start their own planning process the outcome of which is reported to the battalion command. During the operation itself, I communicate particularly the information essential for coordination of the units' activities," he described his job.

Operation Fury Fall

Actual interoperability of forces from various NATO nations was proven in Operation Fury Fall, indeed a four-day specialist tactical training event exercise held as a peak of exercise Iron Sword 2014. "Opposing forces are operating in the northeast sector of the Pabrade military training area. The eighth battalion of the Brigade East took field expedient defences to stop their onward movement. The task of the Sword battalion is to move into the area, relieve the eighth battalion, take defensive positions and eliminate the opponent in subsequent counterattack," Captain Peter Rabiňák described the play.

The crucial phase began on Sunday November 9, 2014, at six o'clock in the morning with



tactical move of the Sword battalion from Rukla into Pabrade. Several kilometres in length, the convoy of military vehicles arrived the location in five hours' time. The 25th ADM servicemembers immediately reconnoitred the area and started setting up the Czech-Lithuanian air defence battery command post. RBS-70 platoon members started for their assigned positions and built fire posts there to provide air defence coverage for the main command post of the Brigade East.

Everything came to a head in the afternoon on Wednesday November 12, 2014, when the Sword battalion launched a counterattack. The Czech air defence force was assigned to support the battalion. "During the night from Tuesday to Wednesday, the Czech soldiers relieved a Lithuanian air defence platoon to defend the land forces against enemy air assets," Captain Rabiňák added and explained that the Lithuanian unit withdrew to the brigade's main command post to defend it till the very end of the operation.

Capabilities of all coalition forces were put to a test in numerous incidents. The soldiers had to prove they were capable of eliminating the opposing forces' aerial targets, react in contact with the opponent, provide treatment to casualties or handle protesters blocking an important line of communication. "All of that contributed to enhancing confidence and cooperation between NATO partners and posed a number

of challenges we will jointly face in the future," Captain Rabiňák underscored.

Praise by NATO observers

The Czech force's command post was visited by observers from the Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum. The team lead, Colonel Hans Houf, did not spare words of praise and admiration addressing the command post functionalities and comprehensiveness of the whole Czech command and control system.

Members of RBS-70 teams were also highly assessed by evaluators, who carefully supervised the course of the whole exercise. They highly valued coordination of the Czech RBS-70 teams and the speed with which they resolved situations at fire posts in contact with the opponent. One-hundred percent performance on the Czech air defence missileers' primary mission, which was elimination of air targets, did not escape the evaluators' attention either.

Czech soldiers went down the history of the exercise, when they managed to eliminate a stealth drone with denomination KZO. Members of German Bundeswehr introduced the KZO drone in the exercise as a brand new product of research and development efforts in the unmanned aerial vehicles and stealth domain. The drone was designed and manufactured to minimize its radar cross section. The 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment servicemembers made another considerable achievement as they found out their new RVR radar was able to acquire stealth type of targets too.

Connectivity with the home station

During the exercise in the Baltics, Czech soldiers also tested, outside the tactical scenario, data transmission between own command post in Lithuania and the Czech Republic. According to Captain Dan Matějka of the 25th ADM Regiment's communication and information systems section, they connected the PUPoSy (standby system access point), employed on the exercise

as an air defence platoon command post, using a satellite link with the command post of the 25th Air Defence Missile Regiment at their home station (so-called SAMOC surface-to-air missile operations centre). It was the first field test of the kind during an exercise abroad.

The soldiers proved that they were able to distribute air picture, tactical drawings and formalised reports from the command post back in the Czech Republic into Lithuania. "That capability is increasingly important in the context of the possibility for 25th ADM Regiment to be assigned to the NATO Response Force (NRF) or the EU Battle Group," Captain Matějka added.

Cooperation of Czech and Lithuanian forces

On the exercise, the Czech unit together with a Lithuanian platoon formed an air defence battery. Czech troops took the initiative on command post's force protection and mentored their Lithuanian colleagues on individual tactical procedures. "We are more experienced in this respect than the Lithuanian soldiers. We practised with them concrete activities performed when the opponent attacks, including reactions to specific signals and the ways to develop one-liner and three-liner reports," elaborated MSG Jaroslav Nábělek, a Force Protection commander at the command post.

"It gives me a pleasure that we have an opportunity to train with Czech soldiers here. I am learning how their unit works and compare it to ours. I would like to use the experience gained here to make the training of my subordinates more effective," said the Lithuanian air defence battery commander, Captain Deividas Gaščiūnas. On his visit to the AD battery command post, Lithuanian air defence battalion commander Major Vitalijus Sadrejevas also confirmed the joint training benefited both nations.

by CPT Jana Samcová, Press and Information Officer
25th Air Defence Missile Regiment,
photo by CPT Samcová and Lithuanian Armed Forces



The 6th Competition of Recon Patrols took place in the Libavá Military Training Area

Duel of Willpower

A recon patrol reached the bank of a dam reservoir. The soldiers are gasping for breath, but there is no time for even a few seconds of respite. They have to cram all their gear and equipment into a polythene bag, blow it up a bit for buoyancy and set out onto the water surface. Awaiting them is several hundred meters of swimming in very cold water the surface of which is rippled every now and then by a wake of a motor boat. In addition, they are dragging, on a thin rope, an almost 20 weighing pack with the uniform and other indispensables needed to survive four days out in the boonies.

Every second counts. This event too is a part of the competition of recon patrols which had started a day earlier (August 25, 2014) on the premises of the Potštát Barracks Camp in the Military Training Area of Libavá.

Six-year history

This is an all-arms competition organized by the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion from Prostějov. Its purpose is to test practical skills and theoretical knowledge of recon patrols in a series of specific tasks. The competition took place for the sixth time this year. The idea was born in 2006, and the first competition was held a year later. The race was suspended in 2011 and 2012, as soldiers of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion were fully occupied due to their deployment to a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan and the subsequent restoration of the unit's combat readiness.

"The brainfather of the competition was LTC Jindřich Starý, then CO of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion; being an experienced member of a long-range reconnaissance unit, he was naturally very competitive and wanted to know who was the best among Czech scouts. He organized the first two competitions; the subsequent two events were organized by his successor, LTC Pavel Andráško. And I took over from him," explains LTC René Sabela, current CO of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion. "We evaluate the competition every year and analyze each of its events. We try to move it forward and eliminate disputable moments that have occurred or may occur. The first two competitions took place in the Březina Military Training Area; then we moved to Libavá which offers better opportunities to make use of the terrain and the training base. We could thus stage more attractive events. Since the very beginning, we have been trying to bring the events that we choose as close as possible to the real thing, i.e.



activities of a scout performing a combat mission. Our intention is to make the competition as different as possible from events of a predominantly sporting nature. We insist that only military equipment be used and all sports aids be ruled out. All events must be related to activities a scout is expected to perform while carry out a combat mission. In one of the previous competitions, for example, we tried tyre-rolling, but then we found out it had nothing in common with scouting and reconnaissance, so we cancelled it."

One for all

In the meantime, a fairly dramatic moment can be seen on the water surface. While three of the four members of the patrol are already halfway across the reservoir, the last one has not yet managed to make the polythene bag watertight enough. It is his time that counts for the team. The others have turned on their backs in the water and try to encourage him.

Initially, a record number of 20 patrols had been expected in this year's competition. This is also the maximum number which the organizers can handle and permit. However, two patrols did not make it. "The team of the 71st Mechanized Battalion did not turn up for medical reasons. The same goes for the Active Reserves Team. It is fairly difficult for reservists to appear here because of their jobs' requirements. As a matter of fact, they also have regular training which is also time-consuming," reminds Chief Umpire Major Václav Malát. "There are also soldiers who do not serve as scouts in their parent units among the competitors. However, all teams received the instructions, including events they may not have encountered in their regular training, well in advance. They too have had enough time to prepare."

In addition to the organizing unit, there were teams from the 4th Rapid Reaction Brigade, 7th



Mechanized Brigade, 13th Artillery Regiment, 15th Engineer Regiment and University of Defence. The organizers had prepared twelve rated events, plus four additional ones for which no points were awarded. During the four-day competition, the patrols have to cover approximately 80 kilometres, including a substantial vertical distance. "The first event, right after the start, was a night-time orienteering march, followed by a crossing of a water obstacle, removal of concrete road barrier, raid on a building, hostage rescue, scaling a rock face, following which is taking up a firing position. The competition naturally includes firing both short and long firearms. However, the most important segment of the competition is work at the observation post, i.e. surveillance and monitoring of targets in a defined area. This event is also a tie-breaker in the event of equal scores," says Major Václav Malát. "We try to make every next competition harder than the previous one. This year was no exception. Personally, I think the hardest event is the water crossing. It was included in

previous competitions as well, but the distance the patrols had to cover by swimming was just a half of what it is this year. Moreover, the event is intentionally placed close to the beginning of the competition. We want to see how the patrols have been prepared for crossing a water obstacle. In previous years, it did not matter much if the team and its gear and equipment got wet, because there was only a short distance to cover to the finish. If something like this happens this year, the patrol will have to survive two more nights out in the field, in fairly rough weather which has worsened quite significantly. And that will not be easy."

Within a tactical scenario

The organizers' worries about the water obstacle have been confirmed. Some soldiers failed to seal the bags containing their gear properly and water has got inside. For the time being, the times the patrols needed to get across are between thirteen and twenty-four minutes. The



factsheet

1st place:

Unit VÚ 3068 Prostějov, Team 2 (2nd Recce Coy) comprising: CPL Jiří Foltýs, CPL David Neumann, CPL Vlastimil Brandstetter, SGT Martin Cigroš

2nd place:

Unit VÚ 1837 Chrudim comprising: SFC Martin Hanuš, SGT Rostislav Procházka, SGT Karel Meloun, CPL Ivo Strnad

3rd place:

Unit VÚ 3068 Prostějov, Team 1 (1st Recce Coy), comprising: SFC Oldřich Sieklík, SFC Petr Hlaváč, SGT Michael Cekul, SGT Jindřich Jurajda

team which was waiting for its last member just a while ago is at the tail of the rankings. Its members rather sadly concede that the competition is, above all, a team thing. And that mutual coordination and help also play a big role. The last patrol composed of engineers from Bechyně crosses the water obstacle in a record time of ten minutes. A lesson learned last year – they had placed their belongings in watertight containers before placing them in their backpacks. This means they did not have to spend precious time packing them on the shore. They dragged their backpacks across the water back side up to prevent their uniforms from being soaked during the next leg. Regardless of the time they achieved, their competitors do not see it as a smart move. "I wonder how they will handle the backpacks now. Soaked with water, it weighs at least 5 kilograms more," is one of the comments.

The events follow one another. The time needed to pass through each of them is also important. One of the patrol's four members is the leader. If one or two soldiers fall out, the remaining

travel must be plotted in the surveillance log as accurately as possible. Information on which of the vehicles commenced firing, when and where must also be present. MRGS coordinates are radioed to the superior echelon of command.

Most of the patrols are already fed up with the gruelling competition. Strength is quickly ebbing. The hard race of scouts is coming to its end. The first four competitions left the winner's cup at home, in Prostějov. The last year, however, belonged to the team representing the 42nd Mechanized Battalion. LTC René Sabela, CO of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion, said that his subordinates would not allow anything like this to happen this time even during the competition. "True to our Latin motto, "Spem Retine", we hope we will win again this time and

the cup will return to Prostějov. We will not let anyone else have it," he smiled, perhaps a bit too smugly. However, his assessment was right. One of his unit's teams finished first, the other third, with the patrol of paratroopers from Chrudim sandwiched between. GPS trackers of patrols that have made it to the finish line offer interesting information. The average distance the patrols covered was 105 kilometres. Their average speed was between 3.5 and 5.5 km/hour. However, they were sometimes marching at 9 km/hour – with 20 kilograms on their backs and in heavy combat boots. This information shows that the winners are in fact all who finished the demanding competition. They at least overcame themselves.

by Vladimír Marek

ones can go on, but will not be included in the rankings. If the number drops to one, the patrol is automatically eliminated. If the patrol fails to fulfil any of the tasks, it can also go on, but with a time penalty. Throughout the competition, the patrol moves within a tactical scenario, with weapons at the ready and with all necessary equipment. A medium-sized 60-litre backpack for scouts weighs about 20kg. "The soldiers must do with what they carry on their back. They have all their overnight gear and food in their backpacks. They are only allowed to refill their water bottles and replace batteries in their transceivers. All of them have been doing well so far; only one the teams skipped the water obstacle. We will penalize them, but they can continue," Major Malát adds. "Those who regularly train in Libavá know that the mobile signal is not available everywhere. Each patrol has a GPS tracker sending its position via a satellite. We thus know at any moment where the patrol is."

Surveillance tipped the balance

Halfway up the hill overlooking the lake, the soldiers have to blow up concrete barriers. Here too they manage to do so within the time limit. It only takes to bring Bangalore torpedoes up the hill as fast as possible and place them properly.

The next raid on a building is mainly about fast and accurate shooting. The teams use handguns with FX marking cartridges. Members of the patrol that has just completed the task agree that the most important thing is not to make any mistake. As a matter of fact, the building contains not only hostile targets, but also those of hostages. And the shooter must make up his mind in a fraction of a second.

The observation post is the fifteenth, i.e. penultimate, event. However, it is this workstation that can tip the outcome of the competition. Tanks and armoured vehicles appear far on the horizon. Their numbers, as well as those of personnel, distance, bearing or direction of



The largest NATO training exercise in Poland - Anaconda 14 - saw the participation of the Czech 7th Brigade Task Force

In the spirit of Article 5

Anaconda is a snake of the boidae family, which grows up to eleven metres in length and weigh up to three hundred kilograms. It was definitely not by coincidence that the organisers selected the animal for the NATO exercise Anaconda 14 that took place in September and at the beginning of October in all Polish military training areas, but also at sea and in the air. The exercise set a new record with its size. Twelve and a half thousand military professionals, one hundred and twenty six tanks and combat vehicles, twenty five fixed-wing assets, seventeen helicopters and seventeen naval vessels.

Besides Polish service personnel, members of the armed forces of Estonia, Canada, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, U.S. and the United Kingdom joined that major training event. The Czech Armed Forces participated with almost one hundred and ninety soldiers of the 7th Brigade Task Force. Apart from the Command and Staff of the 7th Brigade, that involved operations centres of the 71st and 72nd Mechanised Battalion, the 73rd Tank Battalion, 74th Light Motorised Battalion, 132nd Artillery Battalion, 153rd Engineer Battalion, 252nd Air Defence Missile Battalion and additional specialists. The Czech task force was embedded in the Polish 212th Division with commander General Marek Mecherzyński.

National preparations for the training exercise started already in the Czech Republic many months before its actual start. The Czech reps then made a trip to the HQ in Szczecin, where they reported to the division commander the Czech intention and concept of warfare.

Everything then came to a head in the Orzysz training area in Poland. The hardware travelled

to Poland on rail and most of the soldiers on road. Before the very start of the exercise, it was nevertheless necessary to provide logistic support to forces in training, including but not limited to fuel, messing and lodging, vehicle operation, maintenance and last but not least morale & welfare.

Scenario way too current

The exercise scenario did not hide inspiration by some events on the international scene in recent months. The state of Baria is facing a rapid drop of its oil and gas revenues. The reason is diversification of those resources by other countries, especially by Wislandia, plus new shale gas deposits. The lost monopoly in oil and supply caused the state of Baria to lose importance and a rapid decline of its economic situation. The subsequent media campaign by Baria effectively worsened relations and increased tensions between Baria and Monda on one side and Wislandia on the other side. Monda intensified training of its military forces,

and started to ready its reserves. In addition, its armed forces were reinforced with the 51st Army of Baria at the beginning of 2014. Working closely with its allies, Wislandia responded by an intensified diplomatic effort. The outcome was a joint declaration of NATO defence ministers on their readiness to act in accordance with Article 5 Washington Treaty.

Mondan and Barian task forces crossed national border of Wislandia in September 2014 and attacked along the line of Baranowicze – Toruń. A secondary attack led along the Kaliningrad – Działdowo axis. The objective was to

take control of the northeast part of Wislandia, inhabited by a Monda minority, and deposits of shale gas. Wislandia requested the invocation of Article 5 for the Allies to come to help and started to actively defend its territory. The Czech Republic deployed the 7th task force to defend the country.

"The primary goal is to synchronise operational command and control in common defence with subordinate staffs and forces. We focus on rehearsing reinforcement or relieving national units with NATO forces. Participating in this field exercise, we build on our longterm international cooperation with Polish, Austrian, French and Slovak forces," said the commander 7th Mechanised Brigade Colonel Josef Kopecký. "It is the peak of our training efforts this year. The exercise play is based on a standard military operation; it is not peacekeeping or some sort of a stabilisation operation. We are up to manoeuvre combat here plus we are embedded into the division force structure. We do not have

a division level headquarters in our country. The Joint Force command was abolished last year. At the same time, the 7th brigade is earmarked to perform missions as a part of division in larger operations. When the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade underwent certification in June earlier this year, a fictive division headquarters was created from the Land Forces Command, which was augmented with additional staff officers. That is naturally not the real thing. Here we have opportunities to try and perform missions as a part of a regular division. The division commander has a full-fledged staff at his disposal here. So, we have a superior echelon tasking us assignments we have to perform in field conditions. It is a new experience and an opportunity for us to move forward."

Main command post

Besides the Polish brigades, the multinational division also comprised a U.S. National Guard

brigade from Chicago and a Lithuanian brigade. Its core staff was formed by military professionals, but the remainder were reservists. Contrarily to the Czech brigade, those two brigades did not bring along any equipment or materiel. They operated in buildings of brick in the Orzysz training area. Likewise, not all of the remaining eleven Polish brigades comprising the 212th mechanised division had their command posts set up in full. We were exceptional in that respect. Prior to the exercise start, the Czech soldiers set up a main command post including logistic support with housing and dining facility. They also established connectivity to the communication system of the Polish division.

"The exercise showed that the Czech military, at least both of the mechanised brigades, are a step ahead than the Polish armed forces for example. The Poles still tackle some matters we have already been through. When we set up the main command post, it met with a huge interest. The Poles even came to shoot an



instruction video how a brigade commander's command post should look like and work," Colonel Kopecký says.

Fifteen hour duty shift

The 7th brigade task force drowned in darkness in the meantime. Only displays and large maps illuminated the inside of tent shelters. Staff officers take turns serving twelve-hour duty shifts on 24/7 basis. "It is pretty strenuous. While one duty shift formally lasts twelve hours, you have to add some overlap for briefings,

was erased from the map in two hours' time only because the simulator had such setting. We had similar problems. We wanted to deploy some units and we observed strictly tactical standards, but the simulator ignored that. I believe one of the reasons is that we could not bring along our own operators. As a matter of fact, we are novices in sim training, we have training sessions at our simulation centre in Brno on regular basis. We also travel to the U.S. JMRC base in Hohenfels, Germany. Some Polish operators had been trained only before the exercise but it did not get under their skin yet."

order by the brigade commander was based on the tasking by the division commander. Individual subordinate elements also developed their OPORDs. We prepared maps for field conditions," Major Kerdík noted. "We got started after arrival to Warsaw. We established connectivity with the brigade command post and got missions assigned progressively as the situation developed. We were to realise them then with the use of simulators. From the area of deployment, the division HQ ordered us to move to the north, where we assumed our defence lines. We were to stop the opponent's advance. Then we were moved into a direction where the opponent was threatening to break the positions of first-line forces. We took a new defensive position at line Black 1."

The Czech forces managed to stop the red brigades there. Moreover, they established cooperation with the Polish 225th Airborne Brigade that was tasked to take control of strategic bridges in the area. "We were informed



morning and evening handover meeting, all of which takes our shift to almost fifteen hours," the chief of planning center, Major Václav Hřebec, explained.

The situation in the battlefield evolves fast. The 7th brigade task force was ordered in the evening to move over 70 kilometres and assume a new line of defence. On the line, they were to stop the opponent who had been advancing in southwest direction. "On the move into that area, we ran into opposing forces and started defensive fight. We did everything we could to accomplish the division commander's tasking," emphasised the chief of the 7th brigade task force command post operations centre, Major Vladan Doubrava.

The Czech task force resembled of a well-oiled machine. Individual systems were fed with necessary information and decisions. "We perform the missions here exactly the way we should. We have enough room for own decision-making. We do not wait for the division commander to give us orders, but we rather come up with our own proposals to resolve the situation instead. The superior echelon has approved everything for us so far. Mutual cooperation is on very high standards here. Cooperation with other brigades is very good and the multinational environment naturally enriches us," Colonel Kopecký adds. "The only problems we had were with the simulation centre in Warsaw. Several months beforehand, we tried and send our specialists to set the values for units and support elements the brigade truly has available. But the system is rather strategic. It does not have the capability to simulate subunits and specific equipment. And that was what made life more difficult, including for us. Somewhat curious situations ensued. For instance, the U.S. brigade



Simulator way too strategic

Approximately two thousand NATO soldiers were stationed at the simulation centre in Warsaw for the exercise. Their mission was to simulate some of the subordinate units and perform missions tasked by individual command posts. Major Jan Kerdík, who was in charge of all subordinate elements of the Czech Brigade's subordinate elements, confirmed the mentioned difficulties. "The local simulation system is truly built to meet the requirements of the top echelon of command. But otherwise it worked pretty well. Planning for the whole operation took place already in the Czech Republic. Operation

that elements of the Brigade would be dropped in our area. We responded by assigning a unit ready to support the brigade forces in case needed," Major Kerdík added.

Full Operational Capability in sight

It was however not just defensive fighting that kept the staff of the Czech 7th Task Force busy. Individual specialists performed a whole range of additional but not less important tasks. For instance, CIMICKers had to deal with a demonstration locals mounted in the Dragon community. "The reason was lack of food. Roughly



two hundred locals complained about robbing. People from surrounding communities stole the crops directly from their fields. Those matters are a part of key life support, which also comprises water, electricity and other products necessary for life. Such situations need to be tackled as fast as possible. Disgruntled inhabitants could directly impact on combat activities," Captain Miroslav Tomiczek, a CIMIC specialist, elaborates.

For the 7th Task Force, Exercise Anakonda 14 represented another step on its path towards attaining a full operational capability. That final objective is scheduled for attainment in 2018. "I am personally confident we have already achieved that goal in the domain of force and staff training. What we have left is the administrative part of the task. According to NATO standards, we have to have certain amount of days of supply, and our communication means should also be fully interoperable. There are a lot additional matters we have to finalise. So it is not just about what we should be able to manage and perform, but also about what we should have available. We do have some components the Poles are jealous about. On the other hand, we still lack some materiel. The number of the authorised establishment posts also plays a role. Achieving the full operational capability requires at least ninety percent manning levels. After years of defence cuts, the 7th Brigade manning levels are however only at seventy percent. But that should progressively change for the good. For the next three years, we have requested

recruitment of additional eight hundred soldiers. If we manage that process successfully, we will achieve ninety-one percent manning levels. Our task will then be to take the novices to the full training standards. As a matter of fact, it takes at least two years to train soldiers to truly professional standards," Colonel Kopecký emphasises. "I believe the challenge is now in the domain of support elements. In theory, the Czech Armed Forces has enough of them to build two brigade task forces. But the reality is slightly different though. There are certain elements we have to share with the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade. There are individuals, including at this exercise, who contribute – either with their equipment or in person – both to the 4th and the 7th brigade task force. According to tables of establishment, artillery, engineer, air defence missile regiments have those capabilities, but the problem is the peacetime establishment tables have to be filled to the required levels."

Exercise Anaconda 14 proceeded into its final phase. NATO forces managed to stage enough forces in the territory of Wislandia to mount a counterattack. A fast and concentrated attack expelled the aggressor from the territory of the allied country. It was truly a textbook example of how Article 5 of the Washington Treaty would be realised.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by Vladimír Marek and the Polish Armed Forces

factsheet

Anaconda is the largest regular field training exercise in Poland. It has been organised on biennial basis, for the fourth time in a row. But its nature has changed progressively: initially conceived as a purely military exercise, it began to include cooperative rehearsals with non-military organisations and governmental agencies. Most recently, the exercise has primarily focused on NATO cooperation.

Three-day selection procedure for individuals interested in serving with the 43rd Airborne Battalion separates the wheat from the chaff

Only the Best

Home-based in the town of Chrudim, the airborne battalion is perhaps – except for the Special Operation Forces – the only Czech Armed Forces unit to run a selection procedure. The selection of individuals interested in serving with the 43rd Airborne Battalion normally takes place in Vyškov twice a year and lasts three days.

This year's selection procedure was thwarted by adverse weather. Non-standard climatic conditions, when ice and frost took control of the Březina Military Training Area in Vyškov, stopped the test for candidates who had applied from all units of the Czech Armed Forces and desired to become servicemembers of an Airborne Battalion, the only of its kind in the Czech Armed Forces.

The first three-day selection of novices for service in Chrudim took place in Vyškov back in 2012. Fifty-one candidates not only from the Czech Armed Forces, but also those who recently finished three-month basic training for recruits, underwent demanding tests of both physical and mental abilities then. Forty of them made it to the finale. Subsequently, only twenty-seven applicants withstood tough conditions of the comprehensive trials including necessary psychological tests. Those individuals shortly became the members of the then 43rd Airborne Mechanised Battalion in Chrudim...

The question however came up recently how to integrate the newcomers soon into the sub-units in Chrudim. After all, instructors may not care for novices so intensively in the companies and the others have been trained to higher standards: what they do, they do almost routinely ...

"That was the reason why we started the additional intensive training (DIV). The DIV encompasses six weeks of intensive training necessary for every airborne soldier serving in Chrudim regardless of which subunit they are assigned to. This type of training is truly important for every one of us," admitted Master Sergeant Martin Šromovský, the Airborne Battalion's head instructor.

Do not enter the same river twice ...

Led by most experienced instructors, the additional intensive training is divided into three stages. The trainees change their training area every two weeks.

"The intention is obvious – for the soldiers not to train in the same familiar environment all

the time. There was no selection procedure held this year, but our DIV course trains people who have been just shortly assigned to their companies and need that type of training. We started at Chrudim, went on to Doupov MTA for fourteen days and the current closing phase is held here at Březina MTA," the commanding officer for the whole intensive training First Lieutenant Jiří Jun explained.

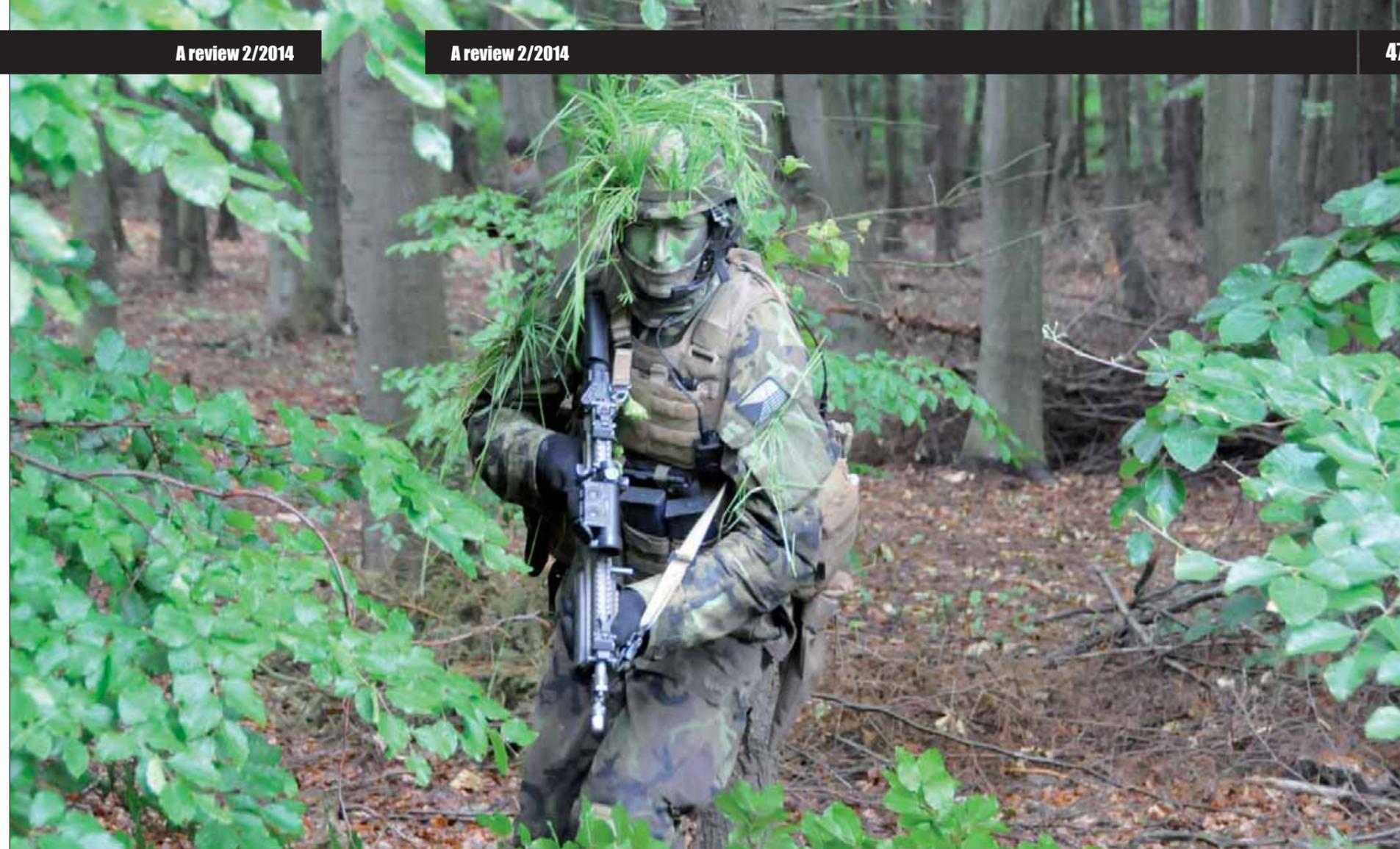
The final phase of the additional intensive training was held at the turn of May and June in the Březina Military Training Area. Why? Because the trainees did not have familiarity with the local terrain, climatic and geographic conditions.

"In the first week, we prepared combat patrolling for the new members of the battalion.



That involves movement in forested areas plus searching and elimination of the opponent. Today, novices are up to one of the main tactical activities – ambush. We have three teams led by instructors with rich experience," MSG Šromovský puts us into picture.

One of the instructors uttered a command on a radio. Just a couple of seconds passed and two men in camouflage appeared in front of us on an inconspicuous cobble stone road veiled in drizzle (by the way typical weather condition



for forests at Vyškov). They were the instructors who prepared the ambush with their team. Two other men joined the commanders. At the first sight, they were apparently replicators. Their clothes showed they were really not dandified and delicate milksops. Moreover, they carried arms and a small backpack on one of them was sort of a harbinger of what was to come. But let us not skip the plot. Last commands and the action may start, naturally according to specific rules.

Relentless time

All starts with engagement of one of the replicators, and before the other one manages to react, he falls down too after an accurate burst from assault rifle. Then other rifles also shortly bark and then the assault team is commanded in extended order to clear the area. "It is necessary to make sure only these two neutralised individuals had been moving on the road and nobody covered them," MSG Šromovský explains. But the phalanx is already returning as another important phase begins – searching the bodies. Security is important and the cover to be provided by another gunner for the one doing the search ... Once soldiers make sure the opponent poses no threat anymore, one of them rolls the body over to see that there is no grenade or IED under the dead body. Well, lessons learned downrange must be put into practice. Any finding has to be immediately reported to the commander. The commanding officer permanently watches for time and indicates the remaining minutes aloud until everybody has to clear the scene. "Maps! Documents!" the searcher shouts towards the commanding officer upon opening the backpack. They got what they were after. But time is relentless and those who had set up the ambush leave the lifeless bodies on the road and make a quick getaway for the shrubbery.

"In this part of training, instructors may and indeed must correct serious mistakes of their trainees immediately. They have to be able to explain why and how the mission is performed, have to be able to describe the right procedures step by step at any given phase of mission performance," one of the instructors points out. He alludes to the fact that everything the novices learned with the assistance of instructors stage by stage will be melted in the next week into a two-day comprehensive training event. And two-day means including the night in the concept of the airborne soldiers from Chrudim. There, the instructors will not be mentors anymore, but evaluators. They will watch out carefully and evaluate the performance of their trainees. Of course, there is a debriefing and analysis of every training action in teams at the end from the very first days. The instructors point out mistakes the novices did not avoid, and advise how to prevent them... Those are often trivial things – such as how to hold the weapon at given moment, how to cover your comrade or hold the knife and also how to lace up your shoes. All those seeming details may however decide the outcome of the whole action.

A similar ambush is repeated on the very same road a couple dozen metres on and the replicators again fall down after accurate shots. The second team also performs very well and gets hold of the documents in the time limit.

Just the instructors' sharp eyes notice mistakes made by the trainees and it will be reflected in the evening assessment.

The third ambush is prepared best, albeit according to the generic scenario. A well concealed gunner engages the pair and his men from the assault team perform their job clearing the area with bursts... Instructor for this team, Sergeant Martin Špitáňík, may be pretty happy. His trainees proceeded prudently, for instance by rolling the "dead" using a rope from a safe distance and also because they managed to remove the neutralised opponents into a ditch.

The 43rd Airborne Battalion is specific and its members are therefore faced with much more demanding requirements. Airborne soldiers have to be trained to best standards for most challenging missions.

The additional intensive course is definitely instrumental in that. As the experience gathered so far shows, the course significantly shortens the time needed to master habits displayed by those who have served in the battalion for some time already. There is one more benefit this type of training offers – it is also a very good drill for team leaders ahead of the Komando course that is meant to be the next step on their path towards a high specialist preparedness.

The Seč water dam was the venue for parachute jumps with the new OVP-12SL parachute system into water

Water in reward

Most of the vacationists spending their holidays on the second Tuesday of July at the Seč dam had their heads up for several hours as a military helicopter and paratroopers jumping out of it attracted their attention. But it was not an animation for the people enjoying their holiday at all. Military professionals of the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade and other units of the Czech Armed Forces practised parachute jumps onto water!

It is just a couple minutes to go till ten o'clock as rotor blades on a Mi-17 transport helicopter from the inventory of the 24th Airbase (Transport) in Prague-Kbely start spinning at the Seč dam. A couple minutes later, a fifteen-member column of airborne soldiers start for the aircraft. It is obvious at the first sight they have been equipped identically with a life vest and the OVP-12SL parachute system. Once they get onboard, the helicopter captain is cleared for take-off. Two high-performance engines lift number "zero eight three four" chopper off the ground.

Several minutes on, the Hip is already four hundred metres above the ground and heading for the drop point.

The finale comes for the first five airborne soldiers. The jumpmaster commands clearly – shoulder pat and command "Go!".

At intervals lasting just one or two seconds, other four paratroopers jump out. The helicopter leaves the Seč dam area and takes a mild turn to get back to the required heading. The second and third stick follow suit. The machine lands then to take another group of paratroopers



onboard. "There are one hundred and seventy airborne soldiers ready for today's exercise and we plan for each of them to complete one jump into water," says Lieutenant-Colonel Petr Štěpán, Deputy Head of the Rescue and para service and physical training section of the MoD Capability Development and Planning Division, and adds that airborne units of the Czech Armed Forces perform such type of training on other dams, such as Plumlov, Břehy at Přelouč or Hracholusky – and a demanding organisational support has to go ahead of every training event like that.

It begs the question on specificity of jumping into water, which does not seem to rank among the most challenging ones. Skydiving professionals take water like reward and evaluate it as a nice jump. It is fair to note though that paratroopers do not enter water directly with the parachute. A second before touching the water surface, they disengage from the harness and fall into water holding the parachute in hands. "Roughly one hundred metres before hitting the water surface, they push the reserve parachute to their side. Then they unfasten the leg straps and unlock the breast strap. Within a metre's distance from the water surface, they take out the harness and plunge into water. The life vest keeps them afloat and they wait for the arrival of a rescue boat. The rescuers take the soldier onboard and carry him to the bank. If the soldier would jump into water strapped in the harness, he would be running the risk of drowning," an experienced instructor of the 43rd Airborne Battalion Warrant Officer Antonín Koudelka describes.

by Pavel Lang, photos by Jan Kouba

The Czech Armed Forces' General Staff recently honoured its ninety-five years anniversary

The Brain of the Military

Following the country's separation from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Czechoslovak military lacked the central command authority, a general staff. For the time being, only the central administrative body was established – the Ministry of National Defence (MoND). Specific atmosphere after World War I led to unfortunate underestimation of military requirements. The 3rd (Military) Branch was the only purely military component of the whole MoND out of seventeen branches. Such state of affairs could not last long. The Czechoslovak Government therefore decided to task the Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš to negotiate assistance with France, a major Ally. The discussions led to the sending of the French Military Mission (FMM) into Czechoslovakia. The FMM terms of reference were based on two fundamental government-to-government acts. The first was the Contract on Sending FMM into Czechoslovakia dated 20 January 1919. The second document dated 26 January 1919 was titled Agreement between the French and Czechoslovak Government on FMM purview. The FMM was vested with nationwide authority over the whole Czechoslovak military.

The French Military Mission was active in Czechoslovakia from 13 February 1919 (initial strength was 45 commissioned officers, maximum 145 officers in October later that year). Officially, the FMM was tasked to organise the Czechoslovak forces, military administration and military schools. Setting up the General Staff was nevertheless one of its most important assignments. The Agreement even presumed the FMM Chief would become the Chief of the General Staff. Division General Maurice Pellé, a highly erudite and experienced staff officer and seasoned defence diplomat with a refined sense for various working environments he had

experienced during his career, was accordingly appointed the Chief of General Staff.

In the spring of 1919, the French Military Mission also largely contributed to the stabilisation of Czechoslovak Army during the war with the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In the course of the conflict, the General Staff was created by merging the personnel of the FMM and the 3rd (Military) Department of the MoND and its organisation was based on the structure of the French Military Mission. It comprised the Chief, 1st and 2nd Subchief, 1st (Organisational), 2nd (Intelligence), 3rd (Operations) and 4th (Transport) Section. Command posts were filled on par model with French chiefs having Czechoslovak subchiefs, or deputy chiefs.

Termination of hostilities in Slovakia at 15 October 1919 made it possible to launch a comprehensive reorganisation of the Ministry of National Defence, which officially comprised the

General Staff for the first time ever. It was renamed the Main Staff of the Czechoslovak Military Might a year later.

by Karel Straka, photos by the Military History Institute Prague



General Staff compound in Prague Dejvice in 1920s



General Staff of the Czechoslovak Military Might in 1920, headed by Gen. Maurice Pellé (centre)



For the Brdy mountains to be safer

In November 2013, the package of defence bills submitted by the Ministry of Defence to the Government of the Czech Republic included a bill on abolishment of the Brdy Military Training Area. It was obvious already during the very development of necessary documentation that the military areas will need to be cleared and reclaimed following military activities.

The Brdy Military Training Area has been used for various training purposes already since 1926. Soldiers from several armed forces have exercised there to date. According to insiders, there are lots of forgotten munitions or ammo that flew off the barrel but did not explode.

The Czech Armed Forces responded promptly to the requirement for UXO clearance and the Chief of General Staff issued a directive which presumed the service personnel would be employed for the job from that until then had supported the operation of shooting ranges and other training facilities and was to be abolished. So, the Command of the Engineer Regiment homebased at Bechyně took the lead of the clearing effort in the MTA.

An in-depth preparation was performed prior to the very clearance, or indeed the moment before the engineers arrived the Brdy area. On his visit of the local former infantry shooting range Kolvín, Deputy Commander of the 13th

Engineer Regiment Colonel Jiří Tršo confirmed the importance of the initial planning meeting: "The invited experts first had to meet over a map of the present military training area, use historical maps and identify locations for unexploded ordnance (UXO) reconnaissance, after excluding locations where clearance had already been performed in the past."

EOD/UXO specialists primarily focused their effort on the location of so-called impact zones – the Kolvín range and the Bahna training site.

"The total MTA area is 12,703 hectares. After counting out the previously cleared zones, we concluded it was necessary to perform UXO reconnaissance, with metal detectors, to check roughly 43 hectares to the depth of 1 ft. Other areas will need to be walked on foot in extended order and cleared by collecting. It is naturally a demanding task. The terrain is often impassable and obviously we will not go into

places nobody has ever gone and will not go through," Colonel Tršo said discussing the task engineers from Bechyně perform in Brdy MTA in conjunction with additional Czech Armed Forces service personnel.



The large surface area and difficult terrain were the main reasons for increasing the number of personnel involved in the effort. "We have raised the number of fifty-one personnel to ninety-three at present," the representative of the 15th Engineer Regiment from Bechyně specified and added: "You also have to count in the components not immediately involved in the clearing effort, but essential for EOD operations. That involves medical personnel, military police and loggys. They are accommodated in the Jince barracks from where they set out for their assigned areas every day."

The UXO clearing effort in Jince also brought together a number of other experts willing to provide valuable advice and practical assistance based on their experience. Those individuals include ex-military Mr. Josef Tupý. "We divided the area for UXO clearance into forty squares. EOD specialists and their authorised assistants walk through those areas and mark the munitions or collect them straightaway," Mr. Tupý explained. He admitted EOD specialists received significant help by local eye-witnesses who often identified areas to be subsequently included in the UXO clearance plans. As an EOD/UXO expert, Mr. Tupý commented: "They brought to our attention the types of ammunition we might encounter there. For instance, tanks fired their guns at the Kolvín range in the past; only later it was converted into an infantry range for firing small arms and light weapons."

Very valuable are also practical lessons shared by Sergeant First Class Vlastimil Kalivoda, who served tours on multiple foreign deployments and amassed extensive knowledge about the mine danger and unexploded ammunition.

"The most frequent findings here are munitions used then by soldiers of the Czechoslovak People's Army. We call it the Warsaw Treaty ammunition. But older munitions can be found too," SFC Kalivoda pointed out and went on to say: "It also happens that we find munitions someone else has discovered before us, carried it

along for a while and then abandoned it, fortunately for him. We also have cases that we find munitions lay on a well visible place for us to collect it. Maybe the local forester help us that way."

Answering the objection that it is very dangerous, SFC Kalivoda says with a serious expression on his face: "People are indispliable in this respect; until anything happens to them, they are cool whatever you tell them ..." According to SFC Kalivoda, EOD specialist disposed more than 6,300 pieces of most diverse types of ammunition from the beginning of the clearance effort. Majority of munitions were those fired by recoilless guns, which was in the inventory of both airborne units as well as the People's Militia for example. An EOD guy with metal detector and his assistant bend down to a detected item roughly two thousand times a day. But they are successful only in thirty cases out of that when the detected metallic item is indeed a munition or its fragment.

SFC Kalivoda sighs: "Ironically, our work is most hindered by those for whom we are doing the clearance for – the tourists, particularly those who do not observe the MTA system of admission at all. Those who do not respect the fact that Brdy MTA is still not accessible outside some open days."

Captain Aleš Zika may also comment on this ill. He serves as the commanding officer of the EOD detachment comprising all those involved in clearing the areas from unexploded munitions or fragments.

"It happened to us in the extended order that lads encountered wildlife; we have respect for boars, which are quite abundant here. But we also have to go through shrubbery in difficult terrain according to rules with defined separation distances maintained. Each phalanx comprising duly qualified persons includes a seasoned EOD specialist who marks findings with spray colour. The other EOD guy with assistant either collects the munition or leaves it on spot, but

only when handling the ammunition could be dangerous."

The discovered munitions are blasted every day with assistance of EOD specialists and Military Police experts. It is gathered at the blasting site and disposed in an explosion. During such activities, EOD specialists also encounter undisciplined visitors of local forests, who respect neither the prohibition of entry nor the marking of the clearance area. "In case someone pops up at the blasting pit or area where it is necessary to explode munitions that could not be collected, we have to stop everything and wait until they depart into a safe distance. Those undisciplined tourists behave extremely risky and perhaps do not realise the danger threatening them at all. Our task is to close the forest safely when blasting munitions. But that cannot be done without cooperation with visitors of Brdy MTA," one of the EOD specialists complained.

The detachment is scheduled to complete its job at the end of 2017, two years after the MTA will have been handed over to civilian authorities for administration. According to the plan, EOD specialists and other staff involved in the clearance effort works eight months a year. With the ground covered by snow in winter, they cannot do their job anyway. Moreover, Captain Zika argues, soldiers also have to fulfil their military duties, complete shooting practise and take some holiday. The plan envisages them to clear 400 hectares a month. By now, they have managed to clear some 550 hectares which is 17 percent of the annual plan.

Deputy Commander of the 15th Engineer Regiment Colonel Tršo is confident the EOD specialists will accomplish their mission, but he adds with prudence: "Anything may happen. Engineers do not live just to clear the Brdy MTA. Natural disasters may come and we will be ordered to another place to provide assistance."

by Miroslav Šindelář



ISAF mission in Afghanistan terminates after more than thirteen years

Replaced by Resolute Support



It is just days to go till the end of this year. At the same speed, the chronometer counts down to the last moment for what has been one of the most important Allied operations in history – the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – scheduled to end with the stroke of midnight one the New Year's Eve 2014 after more than thirteen years.

Czech Armed Forces deployments in ISAF

6th Field Hospital (May – October 2002)

Chief of Field Hospital COL Jindřich Sitta
personnel: 140

11th Field Hospital (October 2002 – February 2003)

Chief of Field Hospital LTC Marek Obrtel
personnel: 140

Field Surgical Team (February – April 2003)

Chief COL Peter Gál
personnel: 12

1st EOD Detachment KAIA (March – September 2004)

Commanding officer MAJ Radek Augustýn
personnel: 16

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

Commanding officer CAPT Zbyněk Koza
personnel: 16

3rd EOD Detachment KAIA (March – September 2005)

Commanding officer 1LT Milan Pavlík
personnel: 15

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

Commanding officer MAJ Bořek Valíček
personnel: 17

5th EOD Detachment KAIA (March – September 2006)

Commanding officer MAJ Zdeněk Hejpetr
personnel: 18

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

Commanding officer MAJ Martin Kolář
personnel: 19

1st PRT Feyzabad (March – October 2005)

Commanding officer MAJ Miroslav Vybíhal
personnel: 40

2nd PRT Feyzabad (October 2005 – March 2006)

Commanding officer LTC Radek Černý
personnel: 44

3rd PRT Feyzabad (March – October 2006)

Commanding officer LTC Tibor Budík
personnel: 83

4th PRT Feyzabad (October 2006 – March 2007)

Commanding officer MAJ Peter Salák
personnel: 82

5th PRT Feyzabad (March – August 2007)

Commanding officer COL Aleš Opatá
personnel: 86

6th PRT Feyzabad (August – December 2007)

Commanding officer LTC Petr Procházka
personnel: 86

1st contingent Lead Nation KAIA (November 2006 – April 2007)

Commanding officer COL Bohuslav Dvořák
personnel: 47

Field Hospital and CBRN defence unit (April – August 2007)

Commanding officer COL Zoltán Bubenik
personnel: 98

2nd Field Hospital and CBRN defence unit (August – December 2007)

Commanding officer COL Igor Krivosudský
personnel: 99

3rd Field Hospital and CBRN defence unit (December 2007 – April 2008)

Commanding officer COL Marek Kocvrlich
personnel: 104

4th Field Hospital and CBRN defence unit (April – August 2008)

Commanding officer COL Mojmir Mrva
personnel: 104

Allied activities began in the territory of Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 by bombing Taliban positions. At that time, it was still Operation Enduring Freedom, which overarched a whole number of activities in many countries in the context of the U.S. campaign against terrorism. ISAF forces were established based on an Agreement on the Interim Arrangement of Afghanistan dated 5 December 2001, entered into between the UN and the Government of Afghanistan. The mission was approved on 20 December 2001 by the UN Security Council with original six-month mandate, which was later progressively extended.

Under NATO command

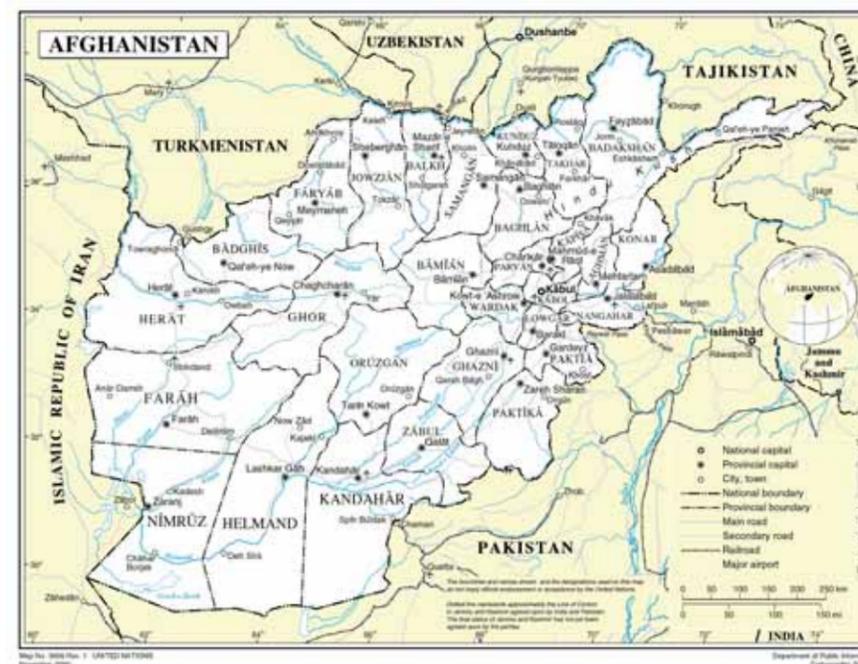
From the perspective of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the day of August 11, 2003, is rather more interesting as NATO then took over the mission. The role of ISAF was to provide assistance to the Government of Afghanistan and the international community on maintaining security in the NATO forces' area of deployment. NATO bases supported Afghan authorities in their endeavour to expand



governance over the whole territory and helped provide a secure environment for holding free elections, rule of law and reconstruction of the country. Out of the original size of six and half thousand troops, ISAF gradually grew up to one hundred and thirty thousand forces at the end of 2010. It saw the participation of practically all NATO nations, as well as Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, FYROM (Macedonia), Georgia, Ireland, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, Tonga, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.

Starting with a hospital

The Czech Armed Forces started its contributions into the operation in May 2002 with two rotations of the field hospital and a field surgical team. Another important phase in our participation began in March 2005. Besides EOD specialists and meteo team stationed at the Kabul International Airport, roughly forty-strong contingent formed primarily of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion operated in the Badakhshan province in the north of the country. Along with



German and Danish soldiers, they were responsible for providing force protection in support of a German Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). In total, roughly two hundred and fifty military professionals served their tours in six rotations altogether. The camp was located on boulders and soil from Kokcha river a couple of kilometres from the capital city of the Feyzabad province. In May 2007, the mountains and difficult climatic conditions took the highest toll on the Czech contingent. A Czech convoy was caught by a sudden thunderstorm in performance of an operational mission. Subsequent landslide swept away a vehicle carrying two soldiers. While one of them survived his injuries, the other – Kolja Martinov – paid the highest price. As the last one, the sixth Czech PRT contingent was deployed in the Badakhshan province from August through December 2007.

Focused on specialists

The number of Czech forces in Afghanistan increased considerably at that time. In November 2006, almost a fifty-strong contingent took over the management of the Kabul International Airport and preparations for its handover to civilian authorities. In April 2007, the Czech field hospital, CBRN defence unit, meteo team and Air Mentoring Team for training Afghan Air Force on Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters were also deployed at KAIA.

In parallel with that, the Military Police Special Operations Group (SOG) deployed in one of the southern provinces with highest threat – Helmand. Over one hundred soldiers manned three consecutive deployments there. The blackest day for that deployment was Monday 17 March 2008. On a standard patrolling in support



5th Field Hospital and CBRN defence unit (August – December 2008)

Commanding officer MAJ Martin Benda
personnel: 105

1st contingent SOG (April – October 2007)

Commanding officer MAJ Petr Krčmář
personnel: 35

2nd contingent SOG (October 2007 – April 2008)

Commanding officer MAJ Pavel Růžička
personnel: 35

3rd contingent SOG (April – October 2008)

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

1st PRT Logar (March – August 2008)

Commanding officer COL Ivo Střecha
personnel: 198

2nd PRT Logar (August 2008 – February 2009)

Commanding officer LTC Pavel Lipka
personnel: 200

3rd PRT Logar (February – August 2009)

Commanding officer LTC Petr Procházka
personnel: 275

4th PRT Logar (August 2009 – February 2010)

Commanding officer LTC Milan Schulc
personnel: 275

5th PRT Logar (February – August 2010)

Commanding officer COL Rudolf Honzák
personnel: 275

6th PRT Logar (August 2010 – February 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Ctibor Gazda
personnel: 283

7th PRT Logar (February – August 2011)

Commanding officer COL Miroslav Hlaváč
personnel: 293

8th PRT Logar (August 2011 – February 2012)

Commanding officer LTC Pavel Andráško
personnel: 292

9th PRT Logar (February – August 2012)

Commanding officer COL Antonín Genser
personnel: 293

10th PRT Logar (August 2012 – February 2013)

Commanding officer COL Josef Kopecký
personnel: 293

11th PRT Logar (January – June 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Vladimír Jelínek
personnel: 100

1st Contingent Uruzgan (July 2008 – January 2009)

Commanding officer MAJ Miroslav Brázda
personnel: 63

2nd Contingent Uruzgan (January – April 2009)

Commanding officer CPT Jiří Libal
personnel: 63

1st Contingent KAIA and CBRN defence unit (December 2008 – June 2009)

Commanding officer LTC Pavel Jelínek
personnel: 70

2nd Contingent KAIA and CBRN defence unit (June – December 2009)

Commanding officer LTC Jiří Pluhař
personnel: 64

3rd Contingent KAIA and CBRN defence unit (December 2009 – June 2010)

Commanding officer LTC Josef Šimunek
personnel: 61

1st Heli Unit (December 2009 – March 2010)

Commanding officer COL Petr Schwarz
personnel: 100

2nd Heli Unit (March – June 2010)

Commanding officer LTC Milan Koutný
personnel: 99

3rd Heli Unit (June – October 2010)

Commanding officer MAJ Robert Papš
personnel: 99

4th Heli Unit (October 2010 – January 2011)

Commanding officer COL Jaromír Šebesta
personnel: 99

5th Heli Unit (January – May 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Karel Krejčířik
personnel: 98

6th Heli Unit (May – August 2011)

Commanding officer COL Václav Valeš
personnel: 99

7th Heli Unit (August – December 2011)

Commanding officer COL Jaromír Šebesta
personnel: 99

1st Air Mentoring Team (April – November 2010)

Commanding officer CPT Vladimír Vladík
personnel: 11

2nd Air Mentoring Team (November 2010 – March 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Petr Kratochvíl
personnel: 19

3rd Air Mentoring Team (April – August 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Rudolf Straka
personnel: 19

4th Air Mentoring Team (August – November 2011)

Commanding officer MAJ Miroslav Borufka
personnel: 19

5th Air Mentoring Team (November 2011 – March 2012)

Commanding officer LTC Petr Kratochvíl
personnel: 19

6th Air Advisory Team (March – July 2012)

Commanding officer MAJ Jaroslav Falta
personnel: 19

7th Air Advisory Team (July – November 2012)

Commanding officer MAJ Josef Kořínek
personnel: 49

8th Air Advisory Team (November 2012 – March 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Jaroslav Procházka
personnel: 27

9th Air Advisory Team (March – July 2013)

Commanding officer CPT Miroslav Šajban
personnel: 30

10th Air Advisory Team (July – November 2013)

Commanding officer LTC Jaroslav Falta
personnel: 30

11th Air Advisory Team (November 2013 – March 2014)

Commanding officer MAJ Dalibor Krének
personnel: 30

12th Air Advisory Team (March – July 2014)

Commanding officer CPT Petr Šafařík
personnel: 30

13th Air Advisory Team (July – November 2014)

Commanding officer MAJ Jan Vanický
personnel: 30

14th Air Advisory Team (November 2014 – March 2015)

Commanding officer MAJ Petr Sliva
personnel: 30

Task Force a. NSE (June 2010 – January 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Pavel Šiška
personnel: 55

Task Force a. 4th NSE (January – June 2011)

Commanding officer COL Jaroslav Jírů
personnel: 55

Task Force a. 5th NSE (June – December 2011)

Commanding officer COL Jaroslav Štrupl
personnel: 61

Task Force a. 7th NSE (December 2011 – June 2012)

Commanding officer COL Ján Koziak
personnel: 61

Task Force a. 8th NSE (June – December 2012)

Commanding officer COL Martin Štochl
personnel: 61

Task Force a. 9th NSE (December 2012 – June 2013)

Commanding officer COL Jaroslav Trakal
personnel: 61

Task Force a. 10th NSE (June – December 2013)

Commanding officer COL Pavel Veselý
personnel: 61

Task Force a. 11th NSE (December 2013 – June 2014)

Commanding officer COL Stanislav Hudeček
personnel: 61

Task Force a. 12th NSE (June – December 2014)

Commanding officer COL Radek Hasala
personnel: 46

Task Force a. 13th NSE (November 2014 – June 2015)

Commanding officer COL Vratislav Beran
personnel: 46

9th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (June 2010 – January 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Karel Dvořák
personnel: 11

10th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (January – June 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Miroslav Brázda
personnel: 14

11th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (June – December 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Jaroslav Bartoš
personnel: 14

12th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (December 2011 – June 2012)

Commanding officer MAJ Petr Zdráhala
personnel: 14

13th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (June – December 2012)

Commanding officer CPT Věra Bielská
personnel: 14

14th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (December 2012 – June 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Jaroslav Dohnánek
personnel: 14

15th Chemical and Biologic Defence unit (June – December 2013)

Commanding officer CPT Hanuš Ort
personnel: 14

1st OMLT Wardak (September 2010 – March 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Ladislav Švejda
personnel: 54

2nd OMLT (April – September 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Michal Kucharski
personnel: 54



of a Danish CIMIC team, a suicidal attacker blew himself off in the town of Girshk. Warrant Officer Milan Štěrba of the Czech Armed Forces, two Danes, an interpreter and several locals were killed. Other members of the contingent suffered heavy injuries. Jiří Schams was in the worst condition.

Own PRT

The year 2008 truly marked a breaking point in terms of Czech deployments in Afghanistan. For quite some time, the Czech diplomacy had strived for setting up own Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team to bear the responsibility for some of the Afghan provinces. The initial thoughts were that we would take over from Hungarians, but Budapest eventually reconsidered withdrawal of their PRT. The Czech attention therefore focused on the province of Logar, where the Czech Republic eventually formed own PRT in March 2008.

The first military component of the Provincial Reconstruction Team primarily comprised service personnel of the 102nd Reconnaissance Battalion homebased in Prostějov. By June 2013, eleven contingents served six-month tours in Logar. What was originally a little less than two hundred servicemembers progressively grew to almost three hundred. The PRT was stationed at Camp Shank (named after U.S. Army Sergeant Shank who died in Afghanistan), located just a couple of kilometres from the capital of the province. During the tours of Czech deployments, the small forward operating base grew huge in size and even had own runway.

Czech engagement in that small province was however marked with a tragic event right at the outset. One of our up-armoured humvees hit an improvised explosive device in performance of an operational mission on Wednesday 30 April 2008. The vehicle was demolished, but



what was worse: the explosion killed the driver, twenty-nine-year-old Sergeant First Class Radim Vaculík and injured four other soldiers, one heavily.

Ill-starred second contingent

The major engagement in Logar somewhat overshadowed two Czech contingents that provided security to Dutch Forward Operating Base Deh Rawood in the province of Uruzgan from July 2008 through April 2009. The total of seven contingents of the Czech helicopter unit served three-month tours in the Paktika province from

December 2009 through December 2011. The Heli Unit provided air mobility to personnel and materiel, supported quick reaction forces and flew MEDEVAC missions carrying NATO service personnel and Afghan National Security Forces.

The Wardak province is only within a stone's throw distance from Kabul, but the more complex security situation persisted in that region. And that was where Czech Armed Forces mentoring units deployed from September 2010 through October 2013. The effort involved five OMLT teams and one MAT team. Their assignment was to train, mentor and assist on the process of planning, command and control of a battalion-size Afghan National Army infantry unit. The Czech soldiers were also assigned to combat outposts and much more often got into contact than in other parts of Afghanistan. The first contingent served their tour without any major harm done to them, but the higher portion of bad luck awaited the second deployment. On the last day of May 2011, a Czech armoured vehicle hit an IED planted in a culvert nearby the Salar village and Sergeant First Class Robert Vyrubal sustained fatal injuries. An Afghan interpreter died of heavy injuries suffered in the incident shortly afterwards. Commanding officer of the 2nd OMLT Lieutenant-Colonel Michal Kucharský was lightly injured and driver Sergeant First Class Ivan Vorel suffered heavy injuries. Just a little over four months passed and the insurgency attacked Combat Outpost Salar in the very same area. In the ensuing fight on 9 October 2011, Sergeant First Class Adrian Werner was heavily injured and died three months later already in the Czech Republic. "We dedicated a great attention to the deployment of mentoring units in Afghanistan, which started in September 2010, in terms of force training and unit preparation, and equipping it with necessary materiel. The preparatory stage took the whole year. We knew it would not be easy and that it would be a combat operation with all that it entails. Except for the 2nd deployment, all others had a good luck. But it was definitely not a piece of cake," the former Deputy Chief of General Staff – Director MoD Joint Operations Centre Major-General Aleš Opata said in that respect.

Farewell with Logar

In June 2010, a major organisational change was implemented with effect on Czech soldiers deployed in Afghanistan. The Czech Armed Forces Task Force ISAF was formed at the Kabul International Airport. Its mission was to provide support and continuous command and control to all subordinate Czech deployments in the territory of Afghanistan.

The number of Czech forces deployed for ISAF in Afghanistan was significantly reduced in autumn 2013. After the departure of the Czech military from Logar, the BAF (Bagram Air Field) Guard Company became the most numerous Czech force in Afghanistan from October 2013 on. Its mission was to provide security and defence to one of the largest NATO bases in the country, the Bagram airfield. The Guard

Company members operated outside the base with the objective to eliminate activities by opposing forces against that big target. In performance of the operational assignment, the highest mass loss in the modern history of the Czech Armed Forces so far occurred on Tuesday 8 July 2014. Early in the morning, soldiers of the 2nd BAF Guard Company were on a patrol in the eastern Afghan province of Parwan. They checked for locations from where rockets could be fired onto the base. Approximately at quarter to eight local time, they engaged in a dialogue with local inhabitants. A suicide attacker wearing Afghan National Police uniform blended in and blew off the explosive hidden in his tactical vest. The explosion killed four Czech soldiers (the fifth one, Jaroslav Lieskovan, succumbed to his injuries a week later, on 14 July 2014) and a dozen locals, including children.

Besides the BAF company, ISAF saw the participation of the Czech Air Advisor Team (AAT) till the very end. It was stationed at the Kabul International Airport and focused on training and mentoring Afghan pilots and ground personnel. The Czech National Support Element, Task Force HQ and the Field Surgical Team were all stationed at KAIA till the end of ISAF.

From 1 January 2015, ISAF will be replaced with Operation Resolute Support. That non-combat mission will however be much smaller in size. The concept is that it should assist on training Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police for several years to come.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by Vladimír Marek
and A review

**3rd OMLT (October 2011 – March 2012)**

Commanding officer LTC Zdeněk Mikula
personnel: 54

4th OMLT (April – October 2012)

Commanding officer LTC Martin Botík
personnel: 54

5th OMLT (November 2012 – April 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Igor Jašek
personnel: 54

1st MAT advisory team Wardak (March – October 2013)

Commanding officer LTC Jan Zezula
personnel: 59

1st MAT advisory team Logar (March – October 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Přemysl Tuček
personnel: 64

1st Field Surgical Team (February – May 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Martin Oberreiter
personnel: 10

2nd Field Surgical Team (May – September 2011)

Commanding officer LTC Josef Roubal
personnel: 10

3rd Field Surgical Team (September 2011 – January 2012)

Commanding officer LTC Michal Plodr
personnel: 11

4th Field Surgical Team (January – June 2012)

Commanding officer MAJ Tomáš Dušek
personnel: 11

5th Field Surgical Team (June – September 2012)

Commanding officer MAJ Radek Pohnán
personnel: 11

6th Field Surgical Team (September 2012 – January 2013)

Commanding officer LTC Ivo Zvák
personnel: 11

7th Field Surgical Team (January – May 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Ivan Stribrský
personnel: 11

8th Field Surgical Team (June – September 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Ivo Kašpárek
personnel: 12

9th Field Surgical Team (September 2013 – January 2014)

Commanding officer MAJ Pavel Kupka
personnel: 12

10th Field Surgical Team (January – May 2014)

Commanding officer LTC Josef Roubal
personnel: 13

11th Field Surgical Team (June – September 2014)

Commanding officer LTC Martin Oberreiter
personnel: 13

12th Field Surgical Team (September 2014 – February 2015)

Commanding officer MAJ Radek Pohnán
personnel: 13

1st Guard Company Bagram (October 2013 – April 2014)

Commanding officer CPT Libor Tesař
personnel: 150

2nd Guard Company Bagram (April – November 2014)

Commanding officer CPT Jiří Pazděra
personnel: 150

3rd Guard Company Bagram (November 2014 – April 2015)

Commanding officer CPT Petr Liška
personnel: 150

1st MP mentoring unit (March – September 2011)

Commanding officer CPT Martin Čajan
personnel: 12

2nd MP Mentoring Unit (September 2011 – March 2012)

Commanding officer LTC Zdeněk Koreczki
personnel: 12

3rd MP Mentoring unit (March – September 2012)

Commanding officer MAJ Radek Ocelka
personnel: 12

4th MP mentoring unit (September 2012 – March 2013)

Commanding officer MAJ Libor Daněk
personnel: 12

Special Forces Task Force (June 2011 – January 2012)

Commanding officer COL Karel Řehka
personnel: 100

2nd Special Forces Task Force (January – June 2012)

Commanding officer COL Pavel Kolář
personnel: 100

1st SOF unit (January – July 2014)

Commanding officer LTC Ladislav Rebilas
personnel: 19

2nd SOF unit (July – December 2014)

Commanding officer MAJ Michal Hic
personnel: 23

The siege of a water fortress

The most important task assigned to the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group in WW2 was the siege of the German 10,000+ garrison in the port of Dunkirk in northern France. Our soldiers arrived to their assembly area some 30 km west of Dunkirk on October 6, 1944, shortly after noon. On the next day, they started relieving the British 154th Infantry Brigade in positions forming a perimeter around the town. At the same time, the 60-hour ultimatum given to the Germans expired, but they refused to surrender.

The Brigade's CO General Alois Liška was appointed the Commander of the Operational Zone. All allied forces in the area were subordinated to him. However, our soldiers were not given much time to get their bearings in the area of operations. The first exchange of artillery salvos took place as early as on October

8 in the afternoon. Shortly after midnight, German infantry mounted a vicious attack to test the defences of a forward position of two Czechoslovak platoons of the Brigade's reconnaissance company. They were repelled by heavy fire. During the day, the assault was repeated with much more numerous forces. The

defenders were forced to retreat under the German pressure. However, on the next day, October 10, five Czechoslovak platoons carried out a counterattack and pushed the Germans back to their initial positions. The first baptism by fire was rather bloody. There were four dead and a number of wounded soldiers on our side.

However, major battles along the Dunkirk perimeter were only to begin.

The Germans were ready

"General Liška was aware that the Germans in Dunkirk were well-informed about the takeover of the perimeter by our Brigade. We were numerically weaker than the allied forces that we had relieved. The CO assumed the Germans would make use of it and attempt yet another assault, and therefore decided for a pre-emptive action. The 2nd tank battalion section was selected as the best place for the attack, which took place on October 28, 1944. It was our neighbours' section, behind a canal. To make a diversion, I attacked a farm opposite our section, which the Germans had converted into a stronghold. With a platoon of twenty soldiers, I managed to destroy it and bring 14 prisoners," Antonín Petrák recalled years ago.

Our soldiers were doing well along the main axis of attack too. The tanks managed to drive through minefields and destroy defensive positions of the German "Walter" battalion, in spite of its stiff resistance. They penetrated to a depth of one kilometre. A hundred dead enemy soldiers were strewn on the battlefield. Six German officers and 350 soldiers were taken prisoner. Our casualties were relatively low – eleven dead and thirty-six injured.

The second and last major attack of the seven-month siege started on November 5, 1944. It had been preceded by an air-to-ground attack of twelve Typhoons. A moment later, companies of the 2nd tank battalion and other units of the Brigade set off along three lines of advance, supported by several battalions of British artillery. However, the soldiers encountered as yet unidentified minefields just a few meters into the attack. "The Germans were better prepared for this attack than for the first one. They had built an observation post from which they could see our preparations for the offensive," recalled Otakar Riegel. When crossing the minefields, our massed units came under heavy enemy mortar and machine-gun fire. Their advance was stopped well short of the objective. Our soldiers fared better only in the northern flank. The 1st company managed to cross the minefield, losing only two of its tanks in the process. It quickly advanced to enemy bunkers beyond the settlement of La Plaine and took them. After three hours of fighting, General Liška ordered the units to retreat to their initial positions. We lost nine tanks, 26 KIAs, 9 MIAs and 56 WIAs. During the night, the Germans reoccupied the defensive positions destroyed during the attack.



perimeter. Fortunately, a German POW had informed the Czechoslovak defenders about the impending counterattack, and the Czechoslovak soldiers had thus been able to make preparations of their own. The attack collapsed under fire of tank guns and a French FFI company.

The last major counterattack

The last major German counterattack took place between April 10 and 15, 1945, prompted, inter alia, by lack of food on the German side. It targeted our supplies; it was obvious that the Germans had nothing to eat. It started shortly before 2AM, with the main thrust poised at Strongpoint Filature and farms around it. Two German companies attacking without artillery support quickly overran our defensive positions and captured almost the entire French company defending the strongpoint. Their next attacks against the Delabaere, Enfants Dekeister and Vermersch farms south of the factory were also successful for the Germans. Through open defences, they advanced along the canal to the rear of French units. The third prong of the attack targeted the Codron Gaston farm met with stiff resistance of defenders and was repelled. The German attacks continued until mid-April.

"The commander of our company assigned one tank from each platoon as a reinforcement of the eastern perimeter. The tank of my friend Sergeant Podlesný hit a mine. It started burning. We followed them closely, and managed to put out the fire fairly quickly. Podlesný, however, got the worst of it. He suffered seventeen limb fractures. He was treated in a Canadian hospital and was later transferred to London. When he returned to Prague after the war, his leg was six centimetres shorter," Otakar Riegel related to us some years ago.

The German commander of Dunkirk, Vice Admiral Friedrich Frisius, did not want to surrender even at the time when Berlin had already fallen. He signed the unconditional surrender on May 9, shortly after 9AM. He behaved fairly arrogantly all the time. He returned to Dunkirk immediately after signing the document and left his officers to sort out details of the surrender and transport of prisoners. General Liška then ordered Czechoslovak and British flags to be hoisted on the Dunkirk cathedral.

Before going home, the Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group (CIABG) was rearmed. Its Shermans were replaced by Challengers. In the early morning hours of May 12, more than 1,200 wheeled and tracked vehicles assembled near the town of Arques, to be divided into nine marching columns. At 5AM sharp, the first of them set out in the direction of Cambrai. Sixteen days later, the Brigade, driving under its own power, arrived to Prague.

Psychological warfare

Still, the Brigade command kept thinking how to liberate Dunkirk. The operation would have required massive aerial bombardment. However, the French wanted their major port back undamaged, if possible. Combat activities around Dunkirk were thus limited to minor actions until the end of the war. This of course did not mean the Czechoslovak soldiers had an easy time. The Germans kept mounting harassing counterattacks.

To undermine their fighting spirit, our Brigade launched a psychological warfare campaign. Using loudspeakers, German-speaking Czechoslovak soldiers urged their German opponents to give up their senseless fight and surrender. German positions were also shelled with special projectiles containing leaflets which read: Save your lives for a new Germany without Hitler!

In the spring of 1945, the war across Europe was coming to its end, but that did not apply to the area around Dunkirk; the German commander, Vice Admiral Friedrich Frisius, had completed several weeks' preparations for offensive actions. During the night of April 4/5, the Germans attacked the western part of the

Fighters with silent death

The wave attack with chloride Germans waged at the town of Ypres, Belgium, in World War I in 1915 is considered the birth of chemical warfare. Four years on, in September 1919, the Czechoslovak Army established the Office for Gas Service. That was when the foundations were laid ninety-five years ago for subsequent development of the NBC service.

Beginnings of the Czechoslovak gas service
Czechoslovak soldiers also had experience with using chemical warfare agents in World War I battlefields. As the Czechoslovak Republic gained independence in October 1918, defence against chemical warfare agents became one of the important subjects pursued in the framework of building the military might. In September 1919, the Main Staff of the Czechoslovak Military Might issued a decree establishing the Office for Gas Service. That can be considered one of the foundations for the NBC service. The year 1921 saw the Institute for Gas Service (renamed in 1925 the Military Chemical Institute) established in Olomouc, which served both as the central chemical arsenal and as a field and academic training centre. The first type of Czechoslovak military protective mask was introduced in 1923. The 401st artillery battalion stationed in Olomouc became the first chemical unit in 1935. The unit's mission was to provide decontamination, contamination, deployment of smoke screens and warfare agents using gas throwers. The word "artillery" was included in the unit's name because of classification. In 1937, the construction was completed in Žilina, Slovakia, of a military factory producing, inter alia, phosgene and mustard gas.

World War II

In the years of World War II, Czechoslovak soldiers participated in fighting in all fronts and their operations included protection against possible use of chemical warfare agents. After horrendous experience from the first worldwide conflict, chemical war unfortunately did not break out. In August 1945, U.S. Air Force bombers nevertheless dropped nuclear bombs on Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Mass murdering of primarily Jews in Nazi death camps was where chemical warfare agents were used in probably the most horrifying way.

Origination of the Czechoslovak NBC troops

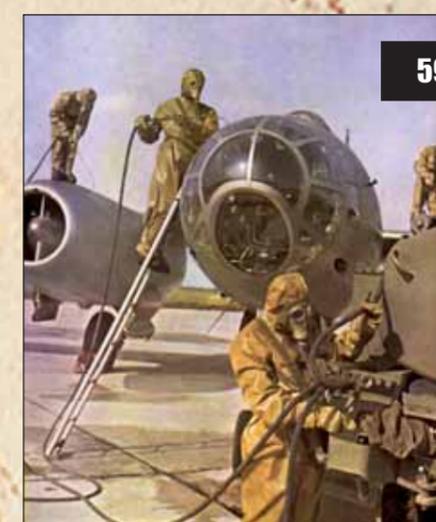
The President of the Czechoslovak Republic issued a decree establishing NBC service as an independent branch on 27 September 1949. The principal components of the NBC troops

comprised NBC battalions – 101st Bn in Jaroměř and 103rd Bn in Šafárikovo, Slovakia. On 1 November 1952, the 105th Flamethrower Battalion was formed in Liberec, whose mission included protection against weapons of mass destruction. In 1952 attention began to be paid to radiological defence too. From the second half of 1950s on, the concept of NBC service was based on the presumption that weapons of mass destruction might be used extensively. In October 1957, the

1st NBC Defence Brigade was formed in the Trutnov garrison (whose component was the 105th Chemical Defence Battalion Liberec reorganised in 1958 and the 98th Land decontamination battalion in Liberec activated in October 1960). In 1968, the 105th Chemical Defence Regiment was formed in Liberec. The 102nd NBC Defence Brigade was created in Liberec at 1 September 1977. Besides the HQ and staff, the city was also the home station for the 51st NBC Defence Battalion, 61st Land Decontamination Battalion and 103rd NBC Defence Battalion.

NBC defence service after 1989

After November 1989, the NBC defence service continued its activities that culminated in



CBRN defence service at present

The Czech Armed Forces CBRN defence service is presently formed by the 31st Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Regiment that comprises the Czech-British CBRN Defence Brigade HQ for the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, the NBC Defence Institute of the University of Defence and the NATO Joint Chemical

Biological Radiological and Nuclear Defence Centre of Excellence (JCBRN Defence COE). NBC research and development is performed at the Military Research Institute, state enterprise.

Courtesy of the Military History Institute in Prague.

by CPT Vlastimila Cyprisová, photos by the Military History Institute and the 31st Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Regiment

1990–1991 in the deployment of a Czechoslovak NBC defence battalion into the Gulf War. The division of Czechoslovakia in 1993 marked an end to day-to-day cooperation of Czech and Slovak CBRN defence specialists. The NBC defence training and mobilisation base in Liberec became virtually the only representative of NBC defence service in the Czech Republic. After the Czech Republic joined NATO, the 9th NBC Defence Company formed in Liberec was assigned to the NATO Immediate Reaction Forces in 1999 and became the first all-volunteer unit. On 1 July 2005, the 31st Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Brigade was established in Liberec and reorganised at 1 December 2013 into the 31st Chemical, Biologic, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Regiment. It is the only specialised unit of the Czech Armed Forces with the mission to provide CBRN defence support to Czech Armed Forces and consequence management after the use of weapons of mass destruction and other toxic contaminants. The CBRN defence forces deployed for Operation Dessert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom in the territory of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as for NATO and coalition operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. Czech forces were also employed to provide CBRN defence coverage to the Olympic Games in Greece and other major international events.



Fifteen years have passed since the deployment of the 6th Field Hospital for the NATO operation Allied Harbour 1999 in Albania and subsequent aid rendered to the victims of the disastrous earthquake in Turkey.

Longest redeployment ever

During operation Allied Harbour, AFOR forces deployed in Albania in 1999. The UN mandate was endorsed for the period from April through September 1999. The operation involved sixteen NATO nations including the Czech Republic. It was the first military action for Czech forces after we joined the NATO Alliance. The operational assignment for AFOR was primarily to provide assistance to Kosovar refugees.



The Czech Field Hospital had eighty-nine personnel then, of whom there were seventeen doctors, seventeen nurses and eight petty medical personnel. The remainder of servicemembers provided protection and logistic support. The hospital unit was formed in Český Krumlov in 1998 and started predeployment prepping there. The final preparations took place at Kralupy nad Vltavou, where there was full logistic support available then with facilities large enough to house all equipment and materiel the field medical facility needed.

On train, ship and plane

The Field Hospital departed for Albania on 3 May 1999. Containers with the unit's materiel and equipment had already been on their way by then, carried on two trains and a ship. Seventeen field medical facilities were active in the mission in total. The Czech unit was assigned an area located roughly hundred and twenty kilometres southeast of Tirana, with the Kavaje municipality in the center. The station was separated from urban areas with a high wall; the facility originally served as Albanian army barracks. The area was divided for the purposes of the field hospital so

that it could provide medical care not only to refugees from Kosovo and the locals, but also to NATO forces forming AFOR. The hospital provided 24/7 standby duty and specialist medical care according to -called NATO Role 2 standards, specialised care in traumatology, ENT, dentistry, cardiology, psychiatry and X-Ray. It also had a haematological-biochemical and microbiologic lab. It comprised five full surgical teams. Based on a bilateral arrangement, the Czech medical personnel were augmented for the operation with ten members of the Lithuanian military medical service.

Mobile teams

The Field Hospital did not provide medical care only in its area of deployment, but also used mobile teams (comprising POP-2 aid station, 2 ambulance vehicles, sanitation system and essential security guards) over up to one hundred kilometres from their station. In addition, the field hospital members were active in three refugee camps and provided humanitarian aid, distributed medicaments and medical materiel, supported hygienic wash of persons, implemented hygienic and epidemiologic measures and



the like. Mobile teams were also involved in supporting transport of refugees from the north of the country into newly built camps in the south and the provision of medical care in other Albanian towns, including Mjede, Kukes and Durres, Shetit, Shtoder and Pequin.

The beginnings were not easy at all for the Czech team. It was necessary to build the needed housing capacity, lavatories, cookhouse, individual wards and accessories, heliport, motor pool, and clear and trim the terrain for the hospital corridor. Every member of the Czech contingent underwent that stress test, which eventually showed in the quality of interpersonal relations in the team. The Field Hospital Medics as well as non-medical personnel formed



a highly professional team, which was quickly accepted, after initial sounding, with full confidence by other NATO partners. The considerable repute the Czech personnel enjoyed was proven by the fact that is substituted U.S. medics for about a month in provision of out-patient care to military personnel serving at the HQ AFOR located in Durres.

Via FYROM and Bulgaria

In August 1999, the Field Hospital divided in two parts. One continued operations in Albania and completed the Allied Harbour mission at the HQ in Durres. It closed down on 27 September 1999. Over the five months of their deployment in Albania, the Field Hospital treated five thousand plus Kosovar refugees.

The other component of the Field Hospital travelled on own vehicles into the northwest

part of Turkey that was struck by a catastrophic earthquake of 7.8 degrees Richter scale on 17 August 1999. There were many dead and wounded. Almost one million of people were suddenly made homeless. The number of casualties largely exceeded the capacity of local clinics, there was a critical shortage of drinkable water, epidemic was impending...

Our mobile teams were the first ones to get into the most affected location, the city of Gölcük. Following approval by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament, the main component of the field hospital moved there as well.

The transfer from Albania into Turkey led through Macedonia (FYROM) and Bulgaria. Czechs were the first ones to arrive into the disaster area. They managed to cover the distance of nearly nineteen hundred kilometres with their military vehicles in thirty-two hours and twenty seven minutes. A completely unique

factsheet

Patients treated	13,137
Lab examinations	937
Microbiologic examinations	870
X-Ray and sonography	816
Volume of treated water	6,914 m ³
Quantity of laundry washed	34 tons
Volume of debris removed	300 tons

performance, it was the longest transfer of an organic unit since the end of World War II. By that accomplishment, Commanding Officer of the 6th Field Hospital Colonel Jindřich Sitta proved both a high mobility and operational readiness of the field medical facility in extreme conditions as well as a high professionalism of his team.

Hospital in football pitch

A football pitch nearby the city of Gölcük was selected as the site for the field hospital to set up. That was a safe area large enough for the service personnel and patients in case of subsequent earthquake, whose frequency fortunately progressively diminished. Czech medics initiated cooperation with the local hospital, the ASF (Aviation without boundaries) and ASB (German humanitarian organisation). The population received specialist medical care. The mobile teams took to their job again and provided both medical and logistic support to provisional housing camps for persons struck by the earthquake. On deployment, cooperation was established with Italian hospital and Italian military medical service, whose members arrived Turkey later. There was also an exemplary cooperation with international civil defence components that employed their forces and assets to find and recover casualties and dead bodies from under the debris and were involved in consequence management efforts.

The 6th Field Hospital terminated its operation in Turkey on 31 October 1999. The situation got stable by then and local authorities took over. During the 6th Field Hospital's deployment in the country, the staff treated 8,251 patients, which averages almost a hundred persons a day.

Activity of the Czech field medical facility in the disaster area naturally met with a huge interest and recognition by the local and international media. Locals as well as people from areas not struck by the earthquake expressed their gratitude to Czech medics. The mission left the Czech medical personnel with a feeling of pride and meaning of the job they did. They helped where the depth and intensity of human misery had been unimaginable for some of them. They wrote an indelible chapter in the modern history of the Czech military medical service.

by Radka Nováková, photo by Vladimír Marek and the 6th Field Hospital



months. Another amendment to the Defence Act was adopted a year later, extending the age limit for permitting postponement of conscription and alternate service from 22 to 25 years and from 28 to 30 years of age with university students. At the same time, the amendment shortened the length of military training exercises for reservists by four weeks.

Amendment of the 1993 Act yet again shortened the length of conscription service to 12 months. On 15 May 2003, then Defence Minister Jaroslav Tvrdík submitted to the Government the plan to abolish conscripted service at 31 December 2004. In November 2003, the Government endorsed a defence reform that also presumed termination of conscripted service at the end of 2004. The bill on abolishing the conscripted and civilian service was authorised by President Václav Klaus on 18 November 2004.

by Vladimír Marek, photos by CMA-MHA and Petr Strnad

for males aged 20 through 50 and the length of conscripted service was 14 months. The conscription was extended to 24 months in 1923, but was subsequently shortened to 18 months. The initially considered further shortening to 14 months in 1926 was however not realised. Conscripts waited for that to happen until 1932.

The 1927 amendment to the Defence Act however introduced the institute of standby reserve before that. Men drafted over the defined limit of conscripts in a year (70,000 men) were assigned to the substitute reserve component. A definition was given of relieves from conscription, especially for breadwinners, owners of farms, small and medium trades.

In 1933, Adolf Hitler rose to power in the neighbouring country of Germany, which resulted in dramatic worsening of international situation. In response, the Czechoslovak Army launched a far-reaching reform including extension of conscripted service to two years. In addition, every soldier had to undergo four exercises lasting 14 weeks in total after the conscription. Sergeants and commissioned officers were obliged to complete five exercises lasting a month each.

During World War II, our forces formed abroad observed the 1920 Defence Act and its subsequent amendments. The interesting thing is that they also enlisted females, which was in contradiction of the law.

summertime and have their service period shortened to five months. That alternate service was shortened in 1990s even to three months and lasted till the end of conscription.

An amendment to the 1990 Act shortened the service period to 18 months and enacted the possibility of civilian service. At that time, the right was also enacted to refuse conscription service and start civilian service lasting 27



Ten years passed from the abolishment of conscripted service in the Czech Republic: let us not forget

When drafts reigned

The last 878 conscripts entered service with the Czech Armed Forces on 30 March 2004. They were not up to a full year of service, but just less than nine months and spent the Christmas time already back home with their families. They went into civilian environment on December 22, 2004. Ten years have passed since that moment. Since then, the Czech Armed Forces has exclusively comprised military professionals.

But it was not always the case. The history of our state has seen various forms of military forces. The first regular army in our territory was formed in 1649 when Emperor Ferdinand III let some of his regiments in continuous service. In those times, soldiers joined the army on voluntary basis but signed a lifetime contract. In case there were no wars at the moment, they were able to take holidays lasting even several years. General conscription was only introduced in 1867.

The conscription for the poorest cohorts in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which also comprised the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia, was introduced by Emperor Joseph II in 1781. That lifetime service was abolished already during the reign of Franz I in 1802. Soldiers served 10 years with the infantry, 12 years with cavalry and 14 years with the artillery. The system however changed already in 1811, when the military service was unified to last 14 years. In 1845, it was shortened to 8 years.

After the Hradec Králové Battle

The year 1793 was truly a milestone for conscription duty in Europe. The principle of conscription was enacted in France first with a decree and then even with law. According to the law, every citizen of that state was obliged to perform military duty. Men neither had the possibility to redeem themselves nor to be represented. Thanks to those truly revolutionary measures, France succeeded in building an army unmatched in size in the world then.

Austria lagged behind for years in that respect. Mandatory conscription was introduced as late as in 1858. The military service then lasted eight years plus two years of reserve. That however only applied to some social cohorts. The law contained a number of exceptions: it was possible to redeem oneself from the military or to send a substitute. The need for a truly general military law only surfaced upon

the crushing defeat of Austrian forces in the Battle of Hradec Králové. Defence law that introduced general liability to conscription in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867 was thus a part of a whole series of measures designed to reform what was then the Austro-Hungarian army. Everybody had to discharge the military duty in person; the law permitted neither the possibility of representation nor exemption from service. On the other hand, the rights acquired by those who had redeemed themselves from the liability to conscription before the law had entered force remained preserved. Those people were nevertheless not exempted from service in the territorial army. The length of service was adjusted to three years and four years with the Navy. After leaving the military, soldiers stayed in reserve for seven years and served two years in the so-called territorial army. The next decision on shortening the length of military service only occurs with the amendment to the defence law in 1912. The service was shortened to two years, but three-year service was kept with special types of arms and four-year term remained with the Navy.

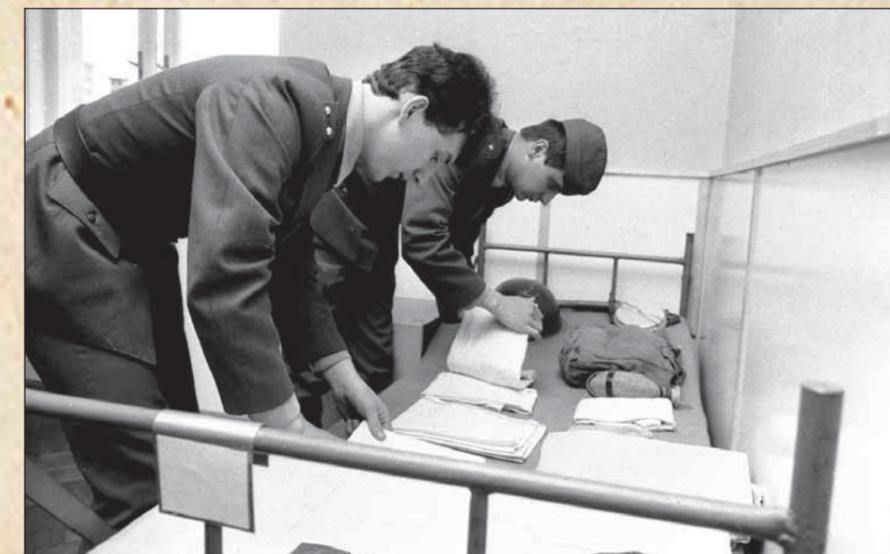
Relieves for peasants and tradesmen

In the independent country of Czechoslovakia, the military law only entered into force in March 1920. It stipulated liability to conscription

Introduction of civilian service

The prewar Defence Act was effective after 1945, but liability to conscription arose already at 17 years of age, men were drafted at 19 years, and enlisted for service at the age of twenty. Four years later, new Defence Act No. 92/1949 Coll. was promulgated eventually to be in force until 1990, which defined the length of conscription for 24 months. In the state of national military readiness, females also had the service obligation, naturally had they not taken up the duty earlier on voluntary basis.

A number of exceptions existed then too, for example for students, who were past certain age limit. University students had the possibility to serve one year of conscription during their studies at military faculties. Men who represented the only workforce at farms, or had other serious family reasons, were entitled to be released in



A hundred years ago, members of the Czech Group of Volunteers took a ceremonial oath on Sophia Square in Kiev and then left for the frontline

Bled to the last drop



"Until bled to the last drop" – these words were cast into the memorial medal the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries ordered and had made on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the oath of our first legion unit. All the volunteers took them seriously at that time.

According to the Julian calendar, the ceremonial consecration of the flag of the Czech Group of Volunteers took place on September 28, 1914, i.e. on St. Wenceslas Day, on Sophia Square in Kiev. The consecration was preceded by nailing the colours, a then traditional practice. The volunteers took their oath to the consecrated flag, did a march-past and left for the frontline.

And it was on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of the event, so important in our military history, that Daniel Košťoval, State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic unveiled a memorial plaque on Sophia

Square in Kiev and paid tribute to fallen soldiers on Sunday, September 28, 2014.

The Czech Group of Volunteers, which laid the groundwork for the formation of Czechoslovak military units in Russia, had been established on August 12, 1914, as a national volunteer formation within the Tsar's army. "The inner strength and true patriotism of those who pledged their allegiance to the future Czechoslovak Republic a hundred years ago have been a source of inspiration for us ever since," State Secretary Košťoval recalled. "Dear Ukrainian friends, a whole century has elapsed since those days, and we are still as close as then. Three weeks ago, I had the honour of taking part in a meeting between Czech Minister of Defence Martin Stropnický and Ukrainian Ambassador to Prague Borys Zaichuk. The Czech side confirmed its readiness to provide necessary medical materials to the Ukraine

factsheet

The Czech Group of Volunteers laid the groundwork for the build-up of the large Czechoslovak Legion Army in Russia. Before the outbreak of the Great War, more than 100,000 Czechs and Slovaks had been living in Russia and the Ukraine. Their ranks were swelled by Czechs and Slovaks who had been taken prisoner or crossed the frontline voluntarily. Upon the declaration of war, Czechs with the Russian citizenship were inducted into Russian units. Those who had retained the Austrian citizenship enrolled, following appeals of societies of Czech compatriots, to the Czech Group of Volunteers ("Czech Družina"). The term "družina" denoted a battalion-sized unit in Russia. At the time of its formation, the group consisted of 744 volunteers, 133 Russian soldiers and 74 officers.

The unit left for the frontline on November 3, 1914, and became a part of the 3rd Army in Galicia commanded by General Radko Dimitriev. He divided our battalion into platoons which he assigned to each regiment of his army. The Czech volunteers were earmarked for risky reconnaissance missions. And they did more than well.

and receive wounded Ukrainian soldiers for treatment."

During the next part of his working visit, Daniel Košťoval had a series of negotiations at the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. In the meantime, other members of the delegation and representatives of the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries paid a tribute to our soldiers who had fallen during the liberation of Kiev in WW2.

by Vladimír Marek



These two photographs are separated by more than a hundred years. You can see that the houses in the background of both have not changed all that much.

The "Legiotrain" project started its six-year education journey around Czech towns and cities in Prague

How Czechoslovak Legionaries Lived

The year 2014 is dedicated to the memory of Czechoslovak legions and their importance for the history of our country. The "Legion 100" project, the purpose of which is to increase the awareness on activities of Czechoslovak units abroad in the Czech Republic, also includes a replica of a train dating back to 1918 – 1920, i.e. the period of so-called "train warfare", during which similar trains were used by soldiers of the Czechoslovak legions fighting for the control of the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Preparations of the "Legion 100" commenced as early as in 2010, with the creation of a so-called "Legiotrain" being one of its main goals. Between 2011 and 2012, Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries (CAL) purchased seven decommissioned historical railway carriages. The plan envisaged a train consisting of a steam engine and seven carriages travelling around the Czech Republic since 2014. "The implementation of the project started with a purchase of one railway carriage in 2011 and another six a year later. The basic criterion in the selection of the carriages was of course their age, which needed to be dovetailed with the plan of their renovation. The age of the carriages is about a hundred years. The breakthrough decision was made early in 2013, when the renovation of first three carriages began; these were subsequently shown at the IDET Defence Exhibition. The renovation was completed in a record time of only three months, and we finally succeeded in displaying three carriages – one converted into living quarters, a mobile field post office and a medical carriage," says the webpage of the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries.

An additional four carriages were added this year, and the public presentation of the whole train took place at the Žižkov Goods Station on Saturday, October 11, 2014.

"Although the Legiotrain was to be opened for the public only since 1PM, the Žižkov Goods Station had already been packed with crowds of visitors one hour before the start of the complementary programme. At 1PM sharp, there were about 500 spectators in the main hall and on the platform along which the train was parked. An additional 6,000 came to see the train during the weekend. There were uniformed members of the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries manning each carriage, whose strength was indeed tested to the utmost on that Saturday, as they were guiding visitors around their assigned

carriages for six hours without any break. The train presentation ceremony was accompanied by programmes for children and lectures on the Czechoslovak Legions. Period film shots were also screened, and we plan to retain this part of the programme throughout the period for which the Legiotrain will be displayed," Jiří Filip, a member of the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries, commented.

The idea behind the renovation of the Legiotrain was not only to remember the legacy of the Czechoslovak Legions, but, first and foremost, to show the public how the legionaries lived, fought and what they occupied themselves with on a day-to-day basis. This was why the carriages which the legionaries had been using most frequently were chosen for the renovation project. These included a "teplushka" (heated mobile living quarters), staff carriage, command carriage, mobile field post office, flat-bed wagon, DIY armoured carriage, mobile workshop, medical carriage and storage carriage.

The Legiovlak was displayed in Žižkov until October 30. Then the last three renovated carriages will be attached to it. The project envisages that the train will be travelling around the Czech Republic until 2020. According to the plan, it should set out from Prague in the end of April 2015 and visit all regional capitals, staying for a week or two in each of them. The Legiotrain with its mobile exhibition on the Czechoslovak Legions



with period film shots will thus present itself in Mladá Boleslav, Liberec and Hradec Králové, whereupon it will travel to Starý Pízenec, České Budějovice, Jihlava, Brno and Zlín in the autumn of 2015.

by Jana Zechmeisterová

Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year 2015

