

# POSITIVE TRENDS IN DEFENSE RESOURCES FOR THE ARMED FORCES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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*The article deals with some security aspects and their influence on the defense resources of the Slovak Republic. The contribution it brings lies in the comparison between the defenses resources of the last years and their increase over the years. It shows a positive trend in terms of the modernization of equipment, weapons, technology and weapons systems of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.*

**Key words:** *strategy, safety, defense resources, weapons, technology, equipment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century began and continued with fights in Africa, the Near and Middle East, and Europe. Moreover, the relations between the US and Russia are again on the freezing point, Europe is suffering from terrorist attacks and hundreds of thousands of refugees are fleeing towards a better future while on the Schengen borders a new iron curtain is being built and the EU countries are arguing for quotas for the admission of migrants from all over the world, Britain is preparing for withdrawal from the EU, and Greece needs more and more to remain in the European Union [1].

In addition to these conflicts climate changes are causing increasingly more problems: the Far East, Indochina and the US suffer

from tornadoes, while rains have fallen in Africa where for years there had been scarcity of water. On the other hand, where water has always been enough, droughts have appeared. The Subtropical climate in Europe pushes North and the Arctic Circle millennial glaciers are melting.

Against such crises and problems, the most difficult situation seems to be unfolding for years in Iraq, Afghanistan and more recently in Syria and Europe. While in Afghanistan and Iraq fights have been there for more than 40 years, in Syria the war is in full swing. With the expansion of the Islamic State, there have not only been fights among former allies but also with Arab countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as well as a conflict with Russia, which supports Assad. In Europe, after the terrorist attacks

in France, new political, economic and especially security are being implemented. As a result, countries, Slovakia included, are increasingly aware of the role of the armed forces. In this situation, the politicians, who cannot be identified as supporters of the military are aware that the armed forces have been significantly under resourced for the past decades. That was reflected in the state of weapons and armament and capabilities. Therefore, in the Slovak Republic, for example, there have been major efforts towards bridging the inherent gap created by such a situation.

## **2. STATUS OF ARMED FORCES AND DEFENSE RESOURCES IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC (SR) IN THE LAST DECADE**

The status of the Slovak armed forces is most accurately characterized by the Strategic Defense Review [2].

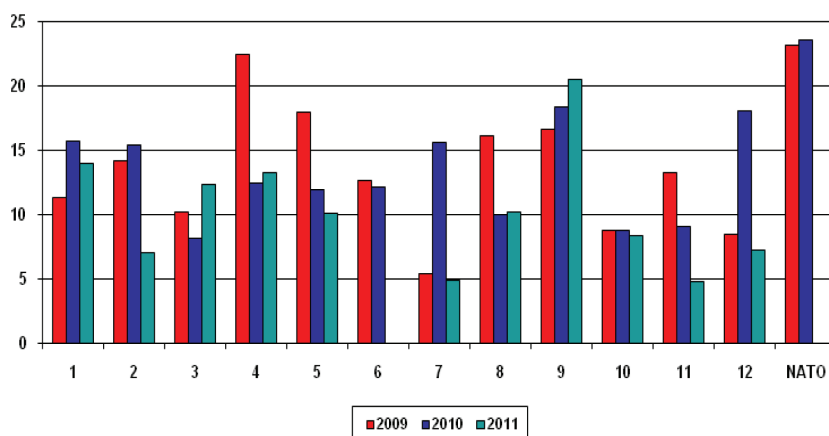
The Army of SR was established on 01/01/1993. It had inherited 53,000 soldiers, a large amount of equipment and materials, extensive military education and infrastructure. However, its transformation to modern armed forces comparable with the armies of NATO member states and able to fulfil the tasks of national defense and international commitments in the new political and security conditions was deemed necessary. From 1993 to 2001, the Defense Department made several reform initiatives which failed and did not produce the expected results for lack of clear political demands on national defense and armed forces

development in the context of the integration objectives of the state and as a consequence of resource scarcity to implement reform plans. Following the Slovak Republic willingness to become part of Euro-Atlantic structures at the end of 1998 and as a result of the country's path towards NATO accession in 2001, comprehensive policy framework for the transformation of the armed forces (i.e. Model 2010) was adopted by the Slovak government. That guaranteed necessary resources for the Ministry of Defense budget chapter as 2% of GDP. Nonetheless, between 2009 and 2012 there was a sudden reduction in defense spending in the SR. Thus, the approved expenditures of SR's MoD decreased from 1.65% to 1.08% GDP. In absolute terms, the reduction in approved budgets amounted to around 27.3%. That occurred while SK was part of NATO, and similar trends actually occurred in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic (the latter, despite suffering from decline in its GDP allocation for the defense area it has however, implemented so far military modernization projects). The Slovak Republic belongs to the countries with the highest GDP growth, and yet with the largest decline in defense spending. For the time period under scrutiny, other ministries from the Slovak Republic did not record a significant decline. On the contrary, in absolute terms, in their case it occurred an increase in resources. That confirms that the greatest burden in reducing the financial government deficit in Slovakia is happening at the expense of the SR's MoD.

During the accession negotiations and after Slovakia's accession to NATO, SR's constitutional bodies repeatedly upheld their commitment to allocate resources to defense, respectively 2% of the gross domestic production (GDP) for the Ministry of Defense (MoD) as a prerequisite for the realization of long-term transformation plans (Government Resolution no. 604/2002, the resolution of the National Council (NR) No. 2403/2002, Government Resolution no. 133/2003, Government Decree no. 607/2004). This commitment to defense was not yet met in any of the years to follow. What is more, that happened within the framework of a decrease in the SR's annual budget. For example, in 2015, the reduced financial framework, according to 2015 Budget Model, amounted to 1.85% - 1.86% of GDP.

The insufficient finances allocated to meet SR's armed forces' transformation needs affected mostly their modernization. Thus, since 1993, there have not been proper conditions to ensure any extensive modernization project for the main types of ground and aviation equipment of the armed forces. Modernization was fragmented and implemented on a limited scale, with a focus on the needs of troops posted to operations (personal weapons and equipment), partially modernized artillery, aviation technology and information systems. The most sensitive area is the lack of modernization of armored fighting vehicles and wheeled armored vehicles, transport and special equipment, combat

and transport aircraft (helicopters, transport aircrafts), as well as mobile communications and information systems. These commodities are crucial to guarantee that SR's defense is part of collective defense, and hence fulfilling international commitments of SR, ensuring SR AF's interoperability with NATO member countries' armed forces, as a precondition for joint action in international military units. The security requirements are not met by the budget allocated to the Ministry of Defense. That is unrealistic because it needs to support expensive resource projects which must be implemented on the basis of government contracts and long-term rescheduling far beyond the one election period of one government, as it is the case now. What is more, increasing operational readiness increases the resource demands incurred by the participation of the Slovak Armed Forces in operations. Between 2004 and 2010 that has increased three times, and the increase was parried by the budget of the Ministry of defense (only between 2008 and 2010 there was a 45% increase, in this respect). This disproportionate burden on the budget of SR's MoD reduces the resources for maintenance and development of the armed forces. A further reduction in the budget of the Ministry of defense would make the participation in current operations unsustainable. The aforementioned reduction in the defense budget means a critical situation for the armed forces and, by comparison with other countries, the SR is ranks the last in this respect (**Figure 1**).



1 – Albania; 2 – Bulgaria; 3 - Croatia; 4 – The Czech Republic; 5 – Estonia; 6 – Hungary (data from 2011 are not available); 7 – Latvia; 8 – Lithuania; 9 – Poland; 10 – Romania; 11 – Slovakia; 12 – Slovenia; 13 – NATO (data from 2011 are not available)

**Fig. no. 1.** The proportion of defense expenditures intended for modernization in the new NATO member states in 2009 – 2010 – 2011 (%)

The emergence of armed conflicts in Syria, Ukraine, terrorist attacks in France and the migration crisis in Europe reflect a changing situation in terms of defense security requirements. As a result, countries, including Slovakia, have begun to increase their budgets for defense and security.

### 3. FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR DEFENSE RESOURCES ALLOCATIONS

SR's Ministry of defense budget has, according to the government proposal for the 2016, recorded one of the highest increases compared to the other ministries. The additional funds are intended especially for modernization projects. Thus, through resource efficiency and increased spending on modernizing management department the obligations to which Slovakia has committed can be fulfilled.

While during past administration, there was only 8% allocated to modernization in 2011, the amount increased to 16% in 2013, while today the expenditure for modernization reaches almost 19%. That supports the launch of the largest modernization project in the history of the Slovak Armed Forces, including the purchase of Black Hawk utility helicopters or Spartan aircrafts. This fact was also acknowledged by NATO Secretary, General Jens Stoltenberg, during a visit to the Slovak Republic in 2015. He said that an increase in budget expenditures is to respond better to the security situation, which is now more complicated than ever.

Among the other positive trends recorded by the SR's armed forces is also the effective functioning of the military intelligence whose contribution is highly valued among the partners abroad. Moreover, the Slovak President Andrej Kiska promised at the Welsh summit that in

the coming years the defense budget is to increase so that in 2020 is to amount to at least 1.6% of GDP.

Consequently, the key priorities for defense to build on are:

- Participation of the Slovak Armed Forces in MKM operations;
- Contribution to collective defense;
- The protection and defense of the airspace of the Slovak Republic as part of the integrated NATO Air Defence (NATINADS) system;
- Contributing to NATO Response Force and the European Union Battalion Group;
- The role of national crisis management (helping citizens in Slovakia).

Additionally, the available technology, weapons and equipment must inevitably be considered. After a thorough analysis it resulted that the existing technology and weapons systems are far beyond the end of their lifecycle or close to its end. Therefore, modernization is the number one priority if Slovakia wants to keep up with its allies and be a valid member of NATO. The Development Plan of the Armed Forces targeting 2024 sets an ambitious role in this respect [3].

A necessary condition for the implementation of this option is to provide financial resources external to the SR MoD budget in the period 2014 - 2024. Modernization of defense technology and major weapons systems should be specifically monitored through government projects. Chronology of the implementation of the projects will be aimed at producing comprehensive capabilities (units), mainly commodities as well as armored vehicles, supersonic fighter aircraft, radar-technology air

force, air defense means of ground forces. Implementation cost of these modernization projects will not exceed 0.5% of GDP each year.

The content of the above mentioned development plan is described in the following paragraphs.

#### **Phase I (Years 2013-2015):**

- Multipurpose tactical vehicles;
- Modernization of infantry fighting vehicles BMP-2;
- Project control of artillery DELOSYS;
- Upgrading/replacement of radar technology;
- Construction of mobile connecting and recognition Centre CRC;
- Making the system of command and control MOKYS;
- Replacement of automotive technology.

#### **Phase II (Years 2016 to 2024):**

- Multipurpose tactical vehicle - complete diversification;
- Upgrading/replacement of RL techniques for air traffic management;
- Acquisition of 3D RL PVO;
- Development of communication and information network;
- Modernization of weapons, assault rifles and pistols;
- Intelligence, surveillance, target identification acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) equipment;
- Role 2 field hospital equipment;
- Decontamination vehicles;
- Unmanned aerial vehicles UAVs;
- Modernization of artillery system ZUZANA;
- 3D radar - short range;
- 3D radar - close range;
- - Airport surveillance radar;

- - Implementation mode of identification of aircraft “foreign-owned” (5 IFF, with a HQII);
- Vehicle with ballistic protection TATRAPAN 6x6 (medical, command, ASTRA AD);
- Team equipment preventive medicine;
- The means of land electronic intelligence and recognition (SIGINT);
- Competences for civil-military cooperation (CIMIC).

The modernization projects, weapons systems, armaments and other means represent in financial terms more than 3.5 billion euros. In the case of homonymous distribution of those costs for the years

2013 - 2024, this represents an annual expenditure of nearly 300 million euros. These are substantial funds considering the current level of the Ministry of Defence budget.



**Fig.no. 2.** System MOKYS and transport plane SPARTAN

If this precondition is met, the fulfillment of tasks mentioned in the first phase could be fully satisfied. In order to meet the target objectives set for 2024, the financial rate allocation must remain stable.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The document issued by Central Policy Institute (CEPI) called “75 solutions for the Slovak defense” [4]

The first phase of modernization (2013-2015) being practically ended, we must assess the completed and remaining modernization tasks. Scheduled tasks such as: the purchase of multipurpose tactical vehicles (Land Rover acquired), upgrading / replacement of radar technology, building mobile connecting and recognition Centre CRC, the acquisition of medium sized transport aircrafts procured aircraft Spartan, the command and control system MOKYS (Figure 2), ongoing replacement of automotive technology (Aktis 4x4 and Tatra 815 vehicles) were executed.

The modernization of infantry fighting vehicles BMP-2 (where the financial resources were allocated) is pending and only the control of artillery fire DELOSYS was not achieved.

includes the solutions needed to achieve the end state. CEPI is a member of the Central European Strategic Council. Its mission is to assist in the creation of common regional responses to current challenges and to enhance the quality of discussions with EU and NATO. It does so through the involvement of leading experts and institutions from Central Europe, promoting innovative solutions and close

cooperation with governments to make recommendations turned into concrete actions (5). Among other things, the document recommends the following:

1. Sign a political agreement between the ruling party and the opposition on a mechanism for financing defense and constitutional law to prescribe the gradual raising of funds for defense in order to meet obligations under the collective defense (2% of GDP on defense, of which 20% for modernization), thereby enabling adequate modernization.

2. Each year procurement plan should be submitted to binding contracts with a view to the next three years, including its financial envelope. The financial plan for prospective expenses should be made for six years in order to allow long-term planning procedures.

3. Operational deployment of AF SR contributions to the NATO Response Force and the EU should be financed from sources outside the budget of the Ministry of Defence. Modernization of the main types of military technologies should be made from sources outside the budget of the Ministry of Defence in the form of monitored government contracts.

4. Introduce a regular meeting of the members of the Finance and Budget Committee of the Parliament, the Defence and Security Council of the SR with officials of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces in order to be mutual informed with the priorities and plans of the Ministry of Defence.

5. Modernization of systems, equipment and armaments should

become in the next period of time an absolute priority for the state management and defense sector. This process must be based on a thorough systemic analysis of defense capabilities deficiencies and on finding alternate solutions for their retirement (considering the life cycles of individual weapons systems, training opportunities and their functioning in an international environment).

Capability development projects must result from the necessary sequence of steps from vision through strategies, concepts and long-term plans, armaments research, and development and procurement contracts. It is necessary to focus on overkill different types of armaments, equipment and materials so as to avoid inefficient, partial and often temporary refining, which is logistically challenging and in terms of operations unnecessarily expensive.

It is necessary to eliminate the “most urgent” provision of operational requirements, which are often carried out on the expense of planned and systematic procurement. In the armament field is therefore proposed to modernize equipment and technology by applying NATO standardized procedures and methods. The widely implementation of scientific, comprehensive and collective assessment principles could eliminate the individual and external influences. As a final recommendation, the Council for Military-Technological Development should be reinstated as an advisory body to the Minister of Defence.

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