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# Challenges of Education and Training of the Slovak Armed Forces Personnel

## Introduction

We used to live for decades in bipolarly divided world. At that time two dominating superpowers formulated and reinforced their own life interests. One of the key factors on both sides of bipolar system was strong and huge military preparing to fight. Both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Warsaw Pact coalitions forced their smaller allies to create as much as high military potential. Former Czechoslovakia after abandoning of velvet revolution under leading position of communist party demonstrated abilities creating strong armed forces. Part of the military were prestigious military schools like Military Academy Brno, Military Political Academy in Bratislava (before Normalisation located in Prague), Jan Evangelista Purkyně Military Medical and Training Institute Hradec Králové. These military academies – universities – educated and trained most of the future military leaders – higher officers. In addition to this there were 5 Military Colleges (Vyškov, Žilina, Martin, Liptovský Mikuláš and Košice) who educated and trained young officers for whole military specialization across the Armed Forces. Two Military gymnasiums (military high schools) in Opava and Bratislava (this one was moved to Banská Bystrica in 1969) educated young people for study at the prestigious military academies or 2 years officer courses at military vocational schools. Military middle branch high schools educated most of

the sergeants for whole spectrum of specialisations from infantry men to musicians for military bands. Focus on their education was in mastering in technological preparation, operational use of the small combat, reconnaissance, even logistics units.

Time, when Czechoslovak People Army counted 185,000 soldiers is over. Downsizing of military personnel and at the same time reduction and transition process of military were key points for building up forces needed for new tasks and orientation democratic model of the army. Slovak Republic dates its new history since January 1, 1993. Changing of National defence policy and strategy as well as doctrines of the Armed Forces put new requirements on soldiers' education and training. This process continues and Slovak Armed Forces deals with new missions and tasks also thanks to educational and training establishments who also challenge Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA) environment. In the early 1990s, VUCA was the US Army War College's response to the collapse of the USSR. With the demise of the "Eastern Bloc" as "the one enemy," the challenge was to find and implement new ways of seeing and responding under conditions of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity<sup>1</sup>.

The military responded to this new VUCA world by investing in technology but also building new organizational structures. Drones, robots, and modern infrastructures, but also a move away from hierarchical "command and order" structures.

## Czechoslovakia experience with the Soviets military occupation in bipolar World

Since the end of World War II Soviets systematically stationed Red Army Units not only in Berlin and East Germany (The German Democratic Republic). Under strong propaganda using a gloriole of even knows significant successes in construction of nuclear bombs, ballistic rockets even in the control of the cosmos USSR created also declared unity of efforts in building of socialism. This unity was reached also by continuous military raids to Central and Eastern European countries that practically meant occupation of these countries

Up to August 21, 1968, Soviet Red Army military units weren't stationed in Czechoslovakia like it was in most of Warsaw Pact countries. In the history of Czechoslovakia, the year 1968 stands for an attempt to create socialism with a human face. It means efforts to make the Communist totalitarian regime "more human". That policy was unacceptable for the Soviet Union. On the night of August 20–21, 1968, the invasion troops of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia. The democratization process was stopped. By both the occupation armies' invasion and signing of the Moscow Protocol on August 26, 1968, the period of so-called Normalization was launched<sup>2</sup>. Soviet units remained to stay in Czechoslovakia even the rest of the foreign armies left from the country. Protests of citizens culminated in mass demonstrations in Au-

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<sup>1</sup> Ch. Fussell, Ch. Goodyear, *One Mission: How Leaders Build a Team of Teams*, 14<sup>th</sup> edition, Australia: Pan Macmillan UK, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> National Memory Institute, 1970s and 1980s. *The Year 1968 In Czechoslovakia – Socialism with a Human Face*, <https://www.upn.gov.sk/data/files/SKL-1968-EN-web.pdf> [accessed: 8.07.2021].

gust 1969, but those were brutally repressed. This was the ultimate and sad end of the Prague Spring, as the violence broke the citizens' resistance, brought resignation, and forced conformation with the new regime. The last Soviet soldier left Czechoslovakia 30 years ago after 23 years of occupation. Allied Occupational Forces arrived on August 21, 1968 and remained for 23 years.

## Soviet's way of Military education and training in Warsaw Pact countries

Military education and training in above mentioned countries was in 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s of XX century directed and harmonized by Soviet military interests, strategies, and doctrines. Military school educated and trained non-commissioned officers and officers according to Soviet military doctrines and in use of soviet military equipment, terminology, weapons systems etc. Preconditions for possible coalition military operations were build up also through unity of effort, coalition military exercises and by education of officers from occupied countries in Soviet military schools and training establishments. In USSR existed an evolved system of military education that covered a wide range of ages. Briefly we may say that the key regimental commanders, staff officers at the divisional and higher level of headquarters in countries in Warsaw pact countries were graduates from various Soviet military academies. In 1936 higher command courses had been established at the M.V. Frunze Military Academy, itself founded in 1918. The "best and the brightest" officers of all the Soviet Armed Forces and Warsaw pact armies were selected to attend this senior and most prestigious of all the Soviet academies. Students were, and probably still are, admitted to the Academy in the ranks of lieutenant colonel, colonel, and General-Major (one star). Most were colonels or newly promoted generals. Graduates who were not already generals or admirals usually were promoted to this rank a short time after completing the course. Length of the academy was only two years, in contrast to the three years for the branch and service academies<sup>3</sup>. In contrary of Poland in Former Czechoslovakia course for highest ranking officers at top command and staff positions weren't organised, all the generals during period of Warsaw Pact were solely graduates of Voroshilov Academy in Moscow or Lenin Military-Political Academy. It is necessary to add, that Commandants of higher military schools in Czechoslovakia were supported by Soviet higher officers in advisory position at the same military rank as national commandants. The same pattern was implemented at military headquarters at division and above levels. In case the Soviets decided to sell military weapon systems to armies of occupied countries there were strong selections of personnel who was primarily trained for such systems in Soviet Union in specialised institutions and training facilities.

This system granted to Soviets overlook over the education of officers and control on whole military education and military headquarters.

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<sup>3</sup> W.E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1998.

## Military education, training, and compulsory service before and after Czechoslovakia splitting

### Analysis of military education and training

Different demand for both the size of the Armed Forces and new challenges even tasks demand an adequate step in changing mind and skills technics and methods of education and training. New kinds of armed forces at the time of the transition process of Slovak Armed Forces and its educational and training concept started by splitting of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in 1993. Even though the so called "Velvet revolution" in 1989 brought on the table actual needs of orientation, goals, tasks, and internationalization at any field of social life already in 1989. In our contribution we analyse selected areas importantly influencing the Armed Forces transformation. Currently the world is dealing with widely spreading SARS-Cov-2 virus causing pandemic with over 5 million human casualties and hard economic loses. Measures taken by government to fight with this invisible enemy included use of thousands military personnel working in hospitals, at virus testing points, in crisis staffs, in patrolling at check points at counties or even country borders to decrease movement of people reducing the spreading of virus. The lessons learned from such difficult situation motivate us to formulate new goals, educational and training activities mirroring present and future challenges.

Most of military school in time of splitting were seated in Slovak Republic territory. Quite good relations between these countries allowed that also military students could continue their educations in particular study grade up to the end of August 1993. It is clear, that significant transformation of the Slovak Armed Forces took place after issuing of The Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, which was prepared by the designated working group<sup>4</sup>. As a basis to prepare this doctrine, the authors used the approved fundamental strategic documents, such as the Long-term Plan of Structure and Development of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic – Model 2010, NATO doctrines, allied publications, and the doctrines of individual NATO member states. From 2006 the army transformed into a fully professional organization and compulsory military service was abolished. Slovak armed forces numbered 18,531 uniformed personnel and 4,208 civilians in 2021<sup>5</sup>. It is increasing in last 2 years.

The need to increase the number of personnel of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic by 200 soldiers and 99 employees is justified by the Ministry of Defence by fulfilling the objectives of 2017 capabilities, such as reorganization of the artillery unit or continuing the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of construction of the force headquarters for special operations. Personnel is also needed due to the reorganization of the force training base for special operations, as well as the national military transport centre and other changes in the structure. Another 52 professional soldiers are needed by the ministry

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<sup>4</sup> The General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, *Doctrine of the Armed forces of the Slovak Republic*, Bratislava 2003, <https://www.mod.gov.sk/data/files/797.pdf> [accessed: 1.07.2021].

<sup>5</sup> *Plus jeden deň*, "The government has introduced a new plan: This will be done with the Armed Forces!", daily newspaper, 07.07.2020 [in Slovak].

to ensure the tasks of the Central Military Hospital SNP Ružomberok – University Hospital and the Military Social Security Office, for the training of professional soldiers, but also in connection with the procurement of goods, services and construction rights through NATO and European Union organizations and agencies.

## Two aspects of training of professional soldiers

The training of soldiers at all levels and military expertise combines 2 crucial processes. It consists of both the education and training. The professionalization of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic had to deal with the acquisition of graduates of civil schools, especially for the rank corps team and the rank corps of non-commissioned officers

- a) Corps of enlisted military soldiers – professional soldiers in the military rank soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree, a soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree, lance-corporal, and a corporal
  - Corps of non-commissioned – professional soldiers in the military rank (lower non-commissioned officers – professional soldiers in the military rank of sergeant, company sergeant and staff sergeant,
  - Senior non-commissioned officers – professional soldiers in the military rank of sergeant major and staff sergeant major.Higher rank corps (officers, generals) take their education mainly at the Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Štefánik, in some cases at foreign military universities, and at selected home public or state universities (for selected military specializations).
- b) Corps of commissioned officers – professional soldiers, to be divided into
  - Junior officers – professional soldiers in the military rank of lieutenant,
  - Senior lieutenant, and captain, and senior officers – professional soldiers in the military rank of major, lieutenant colonel and colonel,
- c) Corps of generals – professional soldiers in the military rank of brigadier general, major general, lieutenant general and general,
- d) Corps of attendants and cadets – professional soldiers in preparatory civil service who are preparing to perform state service in basic military training or in vocational training of an individual, an officer's course for university graduates, studies at a university or in another educational or training establishment, while military ranks will be adapted to the needs of the corps, especially in relation to the level of preparation and time of service<sup>6</sup>.

Qualification prerequisite for the performance of state service of a professional soldier:

The qualification prerequisite for the performance of the civil service of a professional soldier will not relate to military rank but will be related to the most demanding activity that a professional soldier will perform in a position classified in the relevant grade. The qualification precondition will be considered:

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of management of military personnel of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic (Konceptia manažmentu vojenského personálu Ozbroyených síl Slovenskej republiky), Bratislava 2019, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=n%C3%A1vrh+opatren%C3%AD++oblas%C5%A5+dopl%C5%88ovania+os+sr+vojensk%C3%BDm+person%C3%A1lom&form=ANNT1&ref=0494458ac95d4d5e85ca8540ecee4e3a> [in Slovak] [accessed: 12.07.2021].

- education,
- a special qualification requirement according to a special regulation,
- field of study, if so, provided in a special regulation.

Depending on the characteristics of the activity associated with their complexity, qualification requirements will be set. Education for the performance of a function, if required in relation to the nature of its activities, shall be determined by a special regulation by the field of study or the field of study of secondary education or the field of study of higher education<sup>7</sup>. A special qualification prerequisite, which is the passing of special examinations or specialized forms of education established by a special regulation, will be required due to the need to acquire professional competence to perform certain professional activities in the civil service of a professional soldier.

At least the following shall be considered as education for the performance of the state service of a professional soldier:

- secondary vocational education – for the performance of functions with the planned military rank of a soldier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree to a corporal,
- complete secondary vocational education or complete secondary general education – for the performance of functions with the planned military rank of sergeant to staff sergeant major,
- higher vocational education or university education of the first degree – for the performance of selected functions with the planned military rank of mayor and staff mayor
- higher education at the first level or higher education at the second level – for the performance of functions with the planned military rank of lieutenant to captain,
- university degree of the second degree or university degree of the third degree – for the performance of designated functions with the planned military rank of major to general.

Other way out for career advancement and wage in the performance of the state service of a professional soldier

A professional soldier will be able to be appointed to the position within his rank corps with a planned military rank two to three degrees higher than he has achieved if he meets the qualification requirements and a special qualification requirement for the performance of the function. The remuneration system will be primarily based on the functional salary and not on a remuneration system based on the rank salary.

The framework of proposals also consists in reassessing the entry age for obtaining a citizen for the civil service of a professional soldier regarding the possibilities of replenishing the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, as well as reassessing the age limit for terminating the civil service of a professional soldier and reassessing provisions. It is also about creating legislative conditions enabling a professional soldier in preparatory civil service who has not successfully completed university

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<sup>7</sup> Proposal of measures – the area of civil service of professional soldiers. Annex 1–5 (Návrh opatrení – oblasť štátnej služby profesionálnych vojakov. Príloha 1–5.) Bratislava 2019, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=kvalifika%C4%8Dn%C3%A9+predpoklady+pre+vstup+do+ozbrojen%C3%BDch+s%C3%ADl&q=s=n&form=QBRE&sp=-1&pq=kvalifika%C4%8Dn%C3%A9+predpoklady+pr&sc=0-27&sk=&cvid=C71C7853C600422A83D072F4E985BA67> [accessed: 8.07.2021].

studies to continue in the civil service in the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and increase care for a professional soldier dismissed from employment during the transition to the labour market. The area of qualification requirements for the service of professional soldiers discussed has, in principle, two horizons for which measures should be proposed:

In the short term, these are mainly:

- Development of an effective and functional system of retraining programs (activities) in departmental and non-departmental education and training facilities and a system of counselling in finding employment in the civilian sector, based on an overview and offer of adequate vacancies in the region where a professional soldier wants to employment and work.
- The aim should be to enable and assist a professional soldier in a smooth transition to a civilian environment with an education with which he has the necessary prerequisites to enter the labour market.

In the medium term, these are:

- a) Elaboration of a new law on the civil service of professional soldiers regulating the civil service of professional soldiers and legal relations related to the establishment, course, and termination of service, including implementing regulations.
  - The aim is to ensure a dynamic and flexible course of state service of professional soldiers reflecting the requirements of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in relation to the need to ensure the building of their capacities and capabilities.

## Training of future officers for the rank corps of officers

### Higher education

It follows from the above that within the Armed Forces, future professional soldiers – officers, destined to perform the state service of a professional soldier of specific military specializations and specializations, are currently acquiring a qualification prerequisite (university education) at the Academy of the Armed Forces.



Picture 1. The entrance to the Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš

For some specializations, it is not in the power of the Ministry of Defence to provide higher education in the conditions of the Academy of the Armed Forces. The reason is the lower number of table posts for officers in the armed forces. Their study at foreign military universities, but also at selected public or state universities (for selected military specialties) is therefore economical. These are aviation bachelor's and engineering study fields, for the study of which cadets are sent to the Faculty of Aviation of the Technical University in Košice. Slovak cadets' study in the Czech Republic, at the University of National Defence in Brno and its Faculty of Military Health in Hradec Králové, Department of Military General Medicine, and at the Faculty of Military Leadership in Vyškov, the branch of Chemical Units.

The condition for university studies of future professional soldiers is a successful admission procedure, which consists of:

1. Selection procedure for admission to the preparatory state service of a professional soldier, which is performed by the Personnel Office of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic through recruitment groups located in each regional city as an organizational unit. As part of the Selection Procedure for Admission to the Preparatory State Service of a Professional Soldier, the applicant completes:
  - a) Assessment of mental ability – in the premises of the Academy of the Armed Forces gen. M.R. Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš,
  - b) Assessment of physical fitness – in the premises of the Academy of the Armed Forces gen. M.R. Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš,
  - c) Assessment of medical fitness – in the Central Military Hospital in Ružomberok.

There are some other legislation requirements. Applicants for study must be in the age between 18 and 25, meet the conditions of integrity, meet the conditions of admission to the state service according to § 16 of Act 281/2015 Coll. on the Civil Service of Professional Soldiers and on Amendments to Certain Acts.

2. Entrance examination, which is carried out in the form of written tests for all study programs in mathematics and English. The entrance examination will be attended by all applicants for study – regardless of the study results achieved in high school.

The condition for admission to study at the Academy of the Armed Forces is the successful completion of a selection procedure for admission to the preparatory state service of a professional soldier and an entrance examination<sup>8</sup>.

To obtain the qualification prerequisites such as first, second and third degree of higher education, university students at the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš are prepared in accredited study programs:

1<sup>st</sup> degree of university study

- State security and defence,
- Electronic weapon systems,
- Military communication and information systems and
- Weapon systems, weapons, and their parts.

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<sup>8</sup> Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, 2021, Information for applicants for study at Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Štefánik. (Informácie pre uchádzačov o štúdium na ARMED FORCES ACADEMY), [http://Armed\\_Forces\\_Academy.sk/?stranky=studenti/bakalarske\\_stud.php](http://Armed_Forces_Academy.sk/?stranky=studenti/bakalarske_stud.php) [in Slovak] [accessed: 12.07.2021].



2<sup>nd</sup> degree of university study

- State security and defence,
- Electronic weapon systems,
- Military communication and information systems and
- Weapon systems, weapons, and their parts.

3<sup>rd</sup> degree of university study

- State security and defence,
- Electronic weapon systems,
- Military communication and information systems and
- Weapon systems weapons and their parts.

First-degree study programs are for full-time students only. Programs at the second and third level are carried out in both full-time and part-time study. From the overview of these programs, university training has a significant emphasis on operational and technical orientation.

### Training – military program of cadets

Students (cadets) continuously acquire knowledge, competencies and skills necessary to acquire a qualification requirement – competencies to hold the performance of officer functions in a relatively wide range of specific numbers of military specialties, which are given by tables of numbers. The knowledge, competencies and skills acquired during the study are the starting point for mastering the requirements of the military program of cadets. A military program is a set of military educational and training activities carried out outside an accredited study program with a set content and set of rules. Its successful completion is a condition for successful completion of studies at a military university. The program is an independent, systematic, and purposefully organized process of preparing a future officer for a military career. In terms of importance, it is an important factor in shaping a military professional, acquiring the necessary military knowledge, habits, skills, and competencies. It shapes military discipline, leadership, moral and will traits in the individual.



Picture 2. The cadets of the Academy of the Armed Forces of General M.R. Štefánik provide field training in the premises of the Lešť Training Center

The program is a tool for conducting general military training. Mastering it allows you to fulfil the basic duties of a professional soldier in the deployment and deepening of his further professional growth in other types of training. It is a set of subjects with an overview of topics and individual exercises, which are essential to acquire the minimum theoretical knowledge and practical skills of a professional soldier at the level of "Basic combat skills of a soldier and a small tactical unit." and practical skills, will acquire the ability to work in a team and process documentation necessary for planning and managing the training of a military unit. An integral part of the military program is also the performance of supervisory service, military performance, appearance, command, control, and planning skills of the cadet. The military program is performed by the cadet during his studies in the bachelor's study program, but also in the engineering / master's study program.

Cadets of aviation specialists studying at the Faculty of Aviation of the Technical University in Košice have a military program divided into two parts – general military training and vocational training.

As part of the training, the aviation cadet is prepared to master specialized professional activities with high demands on thinking and analytical skills, obtain the necessary certificates, certifications, modules and perform the required professional examinations needed to perform the future function. Professional training is performed in departments and facilities of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and for selected specializations also in the form of suppliers by civil companies.

There are some cadets who under bilateral treaty study at the University of Defence in Brno. They undergo through military training under the leadership of members of the School Regiment of the University of Defence in Brno, Czech Republic. The school regiment cooperates with academic staff of individual faculties in joint educational work with students, maintaining and directing their motivation to study and mutual information about the fulfilment of study and service duties.

The military service of cadets begins according to Act no. 281/2015 Coll. on the civil service of professional soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic on the day of admission to the state service, which coincides with the date of commencement of studies. On the day of admission to university studies, the applicant for study is accepted by a personnel order into the service of a professional soldier in the preparatory state service and is appointed to the position of cadet in the rank of soldier of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree.

After successful completion of university studies (i.e., study and military program), the cadet is accepted into the temporary civil service, appointed to the rank of lieutenant, and appointed to basic command and staff functions within the units of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic.

### The Lifelong Education (career education) of professional soldiers

An important moment of military education in Slovakia in nineties was the building of career education of professional soldiers, which was carried out up to 1993 only at the Military Academy Brno. In Slovakia, mainly courses and trainings were organized on specific administrative, organizational problems related to the operation of parts of the armed forces and technical training to provide retraining for new

military equipment and operating conditions for its use. After the independence of the Slovak Republic and especially after its incorporation into the Partnership for Peace program, several officers were sent to the military universities of NATO countries, who brought several findings, which were gradually implemented in career education. An Academic Course was opened, in which officers were prepared for 1 year to hold commanding positions up to the planned rank of colonel. Officers began to prepare for work in the staffs in six-month special-purpose courses organized at the Military Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš and the Military Aviation Academy in Košice. In cooperation with and under the auspices of the Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Slovak Republic, the Higher Academic Course of the General Staff was prepared at the Military Academy in a relatively short time, in which the highest officials of the armed forces have been training since 1997. By elaborating the document Long-term Plan of Structure and Development of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic – Model 2010, it created a space for improving the process of career training of professional soldiers. The deepening of the competence of the Military Academy in career education was enhanced by the construction of a Training Simulation Centre with the help of the USA. This was also one of the assumptions that, based on a tripartite agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic, the Junior Staff Officers' Course "JSOC" project was presented, defended, and proved at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.

The Military Academy subsequently applied in 2003 for the status of a NATO Training Centre. Military Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš was accredited such 17<sup>th</sup> NATO training Centre, just 2 months before Slovakia became a NATO member country on 29 of March 2004. NATO accredited the Centre such the first centre out of NATO countries. The entry of the Centre into the international military educational environment with the help of the mentioned partners was successful. These steps had become a prerequisite for the gradual organizational creation and staffing of the current Professional Military Education Centre (PMEC) at the Armed Forces Academy of general M.R. Štefánik. This Centre is one of the main workplaces of the Armed Forces Academy (AFA) of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik which provides lifelong education. PMEC teach and train professional soldiers, employees of MOD and other government employees. It also practices educations according to contracts and agreements with partner universities (universities) and private sector. Lifelong learning since 2011 is aimed at preparing both the professional soldiers and personal of the Slovak Defence Department according to the Act. 568/2009 about lifelong learning through career, professional, short professional courses, intensive maintenance, and English language courses. Professional Military Education Centre actively subscribes into the process of lifelong learning and arranges education and training in 116 courses with 1519 participants. Through the International course for staff officers – ISOC (International Staff Officers' Course), which is incorporated into the structure of Education centre, the AFA fulfils the role as training and education centre for the Partnership for Peace (PTC – Partnership for Peace Training Centre) countries and provides education and career training of professional soldiers.

The Lifelong Education Centre is the basic department of the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik (AFA) in Liptovský Mikuláš. The

centre provides further education, and its activities, rights, duties, and organizational structure are adapted so that it can provide further education, training, and exercises<sup>9</sup>.



Picture 3. The Educational Departments' Buildings of the Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik (AFA) in Liptovský Mikuláš

The Armed Forces Academy also performs tasks as the Partnership for Peace Education and Training Centre. The academy provides education and training for the members of foreign armed forces at the International Staff Officers' Course, which is integrated in the Lifelong Education Centre structure. Since September 1, 2009, the Lifelong Education Centre organises following courses:

- Senior Command and Staff Officers' Course, Junior Command and Staff Officers' Course, Specialized Entry Officers' Course, University Graduates Officers' Course (UGOC), Warrant Officers' Course.

International Courses Department of Armed Forces Academy is underlined also through reach spectrum of courses such:

- ISOC – International Staff Officers' Course, Decision Making process at the tactical level, Introduction to the Planning of Joint Operations and Introduction to the Decision-Making process at the tactical level<sup>10</sup>.

## The Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2021 and its consequences for Armed Forces personnel education and training

The Slovak Republic is responsible for its own defence. It maintains peace, defends its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of its borders and upholds its commitments from international treaties and agreements, by which it is bound. The highest level of the Slovak Republic's defence is achieved through the synergy of its defence capacities and the defence capacities of the other NATO and EU member states, along with the functionality and internal cohesion of these organisations.

<sup>9</sup> Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, 2021, Mission of Professional Military Education Centre, <http://www.Armed Forces Academy.sk/cv/en> [accessed: 12.07.2021]

<sup>10</sup> Proposal of measures – the area of civil service of professional soldiers. Annex 1–5 (Návrh opatrení – oblasť štátnej služby profesionálnych vojakov. Príloha 1–5.), Bratislava 2019, <https://www.bing.com/search?q=kvalifika%C4%8Dn%C3%A9+predpoklady+pre+vstup+do+ozbrojen%C3%BDch+s%C3%ADl&qs=n&form=QBRE&sp=-1&pq=kvalifika%C4%8Dn%C3%A9+predpoklady+pr&sc=0-27&sk=&cid=C71C7853C600422A83D072F4E985BA67> [accessed: 8.07.2021].

Slovak defence spending had been significantly below the 2% of GDP level. Coupled with the non-implementation of development plans it led to shortcomings in Armed Forces capacities and capabilities and in the Defence Support System, having implications for the Slovak Republic's ability to defend itself. The Slovak Republic ensures its defence and meets international commitments in a deteriorated and dynamically evolving security environment, characterised by instability and low predictability. In its defence policy, the Slovak Republic reacts to the necessity of providing for its defence, to the advantages and responsibilities stemming from NATO and EU membership to the level of its ability to defend itself and to the deteriorated security environment<sup>11</sup>.

The aims of Defence Strategy are clear. Of course, it is harmonized with Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic and Defence strategy of the Slovak Republic. Both the goals and tasks of these documents touch not only soldiers but whole society. Everyone supposes to understand Slovak Republic effort and its orientation to collective security and defence along with allies from NATO and EEU. It was shaming that Slovak Republic did not have such strategy for several years. National Council of the Slovak Republic proved this strategy in difficult period of pandemic of COVID-19. That's very positive momentum. To fill up all the goals of defence strategy is necessary to prepare human resources for such demanding tasks in large scale. Military educational and training system reacts properly to new demands and challenges.

Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Štefánik is the leading and highest educational and training establishment within Armed Forces. Academy operates in a competitive environment of Slovak and European universities schools, in the context of the military universities of the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in which it is an internationally recognized military college. Armed Forces Academy (AFA) accepts European system of comprehensive academic education through European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and seeks to obtain results quality applicants and quality university teachers.

Achieving of consistency between available resources at on the one hand, and requirements for the training of military professionals on the other is one of the key tasks and conditions for the development of Academy. Academy employs civilians who work in the public interest and professional soldiers. As part of the transformation of military higher education, the Academy has dealt with and is constantly dealing with the process of natural generational change university teachers, with an emphasis on maintaining guarantees and competences accredited study programs.

Academy's must obey and improve its mission to provide higher education for the future officers, further and continuing training of professional soldiers for the Armed Forces, to educate them in the spirit of patriotism so that they are distinguished values such as a sense of duty, responsibility, honesty, civic and social responsibility, morality, and prioritized the interests of the homeland over personal interests and were prepared for professional growth during their service career. Academy must contribute to developing of international, European, cooperation and support joint projects with universities, especially military universities abroad, mobility (also within

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<sup>11</sup> The Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2021, [https://www.mod.gov.sk/data/files/4291\\_defence-strategy-of-the-slovak-republic-2021.pdf](https://www.mod.gov.sk/data/files/4291_defence-strategy-of-the-slovak-republic-2021.pdf) [accessed: 22.07.2021].

the Erasmus+ frame) staff and students. Scientific research gain, development, and more creative activity to apply and disseminate new knowledge at home and abroad.

Academy must act with the ambition to be a university-type military college of international importance, which provides quality, internationally comparable security, and defence education. Academy's long-term plan must represent a modern, realistic, conceptual development framework potential of military higher education with emphasis on education, upbringing, and training of professional soldiers throughout their service career, scientific research activities aimed at developing the capabilities of the Slovak Armed Forces and international cooperation in the field of mobility. Here must be a clear project of this framework structure of long-term plan, which should be divided into six areas. At four areas relating to higher education, lifelong learning, research and development and cooperation reflects the core mission of Armed Forces Academy. The other two areas focus on human resources and the working environment, governance, and internal services. Each of these areas is characterized by four basic pillars, which are intentions – setting the long-term perspective of Armed Forces Academy development, goals – determining fulfilment intent, tools – setting out the activities needed to achieve the intent and objectives, measurable indicators – characterized by indicators of the level and quality of performance of tasks, related to the fulfilment of the main) mission of Armed Forces Academy<sup>12</sup>.

## Conclusions

The Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Štefánik must provide attractive education and military training that will provide students with the knowledge and skills to address the security issues they will encounter during the civil service of a professional soldier. Introduce the latest knowledge of military science and the study of documents that form the strategic and conceptual framework of security and defence of the Slovak Republic, so that they can effectively lead their units, staffs, and workplaces in a complex operational environment.

It is important to spread ideas that lead and motivate patriotism and moral values, the personal qualities of officers and to promote study programs and study conditions in synergy with the use of military education and training in the service career of professional soldiers. An important task is to provide quality education, especially career and professional courses according to the requirements of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic. To further develop the leadership skills of participants in lifelong learning and training and to link lifelong learning and training in Armed Forces Academy with practical knowledge.

Armed Forces Academy must contribute to the development of future capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, ensure the outputs of research and development, achieve evaluations, and awards necessary for the accreditation of all three levels of higher education, habitation of associate professors and

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<sup>12</sup> Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik, 2014, Long-term plan for the period 2015–2025. (Dlhodobý zámér na obdobie 2015–2025), [http://ArmedForcesAcademy.sk/dokum/Dlhodoby\\_zamer\\_ARMEDFORCESACADEMY\\_2015-2025.pdf](http://ArmedForcesAcademy.sk/dokum/Dlhodoby_zamer_ARMEDFORCESACADEMY_2015-2025.pdf)] (in Slovak) [accessed: 21.07.2021].

appointment of professors. Important from the point of view of the continuity of scientific activity is the involvement of students in the solution of scientific research projects and the achievement of national and international acceptance of research and development results.

In the area of human resources management, ensure personnel competence for the accreditation of university study programs and for the implementation of education and training, for the implementation of research and development. To this end, it is necessary to provide qualified support staff and improve working conditions and the working environment, increase job satisfaction of staff.

Cooperation with universities in the Slovak Republic must continue to develop and cooperation in the field of education, training, research, and development must be deepened, especially with the countries of NATO and the European Union. Achieve national and international recognition of the quality of education and training.

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## *Challenges of Education and Training of the Slovak Armed Forces Personnel*

### *Abstract*

The transition process of the Slovak Armed Forces and particularly its educational and training concept started by splitting of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic in 1993, even though that so called "Velvet revolution" in 1989 brought on the table actual needs of orientation, goals, tasks, and internationalization of the country at any field of social life already in 1989. Also Armed Forces had to change significantly. In our contribution we analyse selected areas importantly influencing the Armed Forces transformation. There are new missions in which use of the military personnel is needed. For example world widely spreading SARS-Cov-2 virus that up to now caused pandemic with over 5 million human casualties and hard economic losses calls for employment of thousands of soldiers in many tasks related with hospital care of patients, COVID-19 testing etc. Measures taken by government to fight with this invisible enemy also included placement of soldiers in regional offices of public health, in crisis staffs in patrolling at check points at counties or even country borders to reduce the spreading of virus by minimizing citizens' movements. The lessons learned from such difficult situation motivate us to formulate new goals, educational and training activities mirroring present and future challenges. We offer in our short description of the milestones and starting point for measures necessary to transform whole military education and training.

**Key words:** armed forces, military academy, education, officers, training, NATO

## *Wyzwania kształcenia i szkolenia personelu sił zbrojnych*

### *Słowacki*

### *Streszczenie*

Proces transformacji Słowackich Sił Zbrojnych, a zwłaszcza ich koncepcja edukacyjna i szkoleniowa, rozpoczęły się od podziału Czeskiej i Słowackiej Republiki Federacyjnej w 1993 r., mimo że tak zwana „aksamitna rewolucja” w 1989 r. przyniosła rzeczywiste potrzeby orientacji, celów, zadań i umiędzynarodowienia kraju w każdej dziedzinie życia społecznego już w 1989 r. Istotnym zmianom musiały ulec także Siły Zbrojne. W naszym opracowaniu analizujemy wybrane obszary mające istotny wpływ na transformację Sił Zbrojnych. Pojawiają się nowe misje, w których potrzebny jest personel wojskowy. Na przykład szeroko rozprzestrzeniający się na całym świecie wirus SARS-Cov-2, który powoduje pandemię z jak dotąd ponad 5 milionami ofiar śmiertelnych i ciężkie straty ekonomiczne, wymaga zatrudnienia tysięcy żołnierzy w wielu zadaniach związanych z opieką szpitalną nad pacjentami, testowaniem COVID-19 itp. Działania podjęte przez rząd w celu



walki z tym niewidzialnym wrogiem obejmowały również umieszczanie żołnierzy w regionalnych urzędach zdrowia publicznego, w sztabach kryzysowych, w patrolach na punktach kontrolnych w powiatach, a nawet na granicach państw, aby zmniejszyć przepływ ludzi i ograniczyć rozprzestrzenianie się wirusa poprzez minimalizację ruchu obywateli. Wnioski wyciągnięte z tak trudnej sytuacji motywują nas do formułowania nowych celów, działań edukacyjnych i szkoleniowych, odzwierciedlających obecne i przyszłe wyzwania. W naszym wkładzie proponujemy opis kamieni milowych i formułujemy punkt wyjścia do działań niezbędnych do przekształcenia całego szkolnictwa i szkolenia wojskowego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** siły zbrojne, akademia wojskowa, edukacja, oficerowie, szkolenie, NATO

### *Herausforderungen der Bildung und Ausbildung des Personals der slowakischen Streitkräfte* *Zusammenfassung*

Mit der Teilung der Tschechischen und Slowakischen Föderativen Republik im Jahr 1993 begann der Transformationsprozess der slowakischen Streitkräfte und insbesondere ihres Bildungs- und Ausbildungskonzepts. Die sogenannte „Samtene Revolution“ brachte bereits im Jahr 1989 die Notwendigkeit von Orientierung, Zielen, Aufgaben und der Internationalisierung in alle Bereiche des gesellschaftlichen Lebens. Auch die Streitkräfte musste sich erheblichen Veränderungen unterziehen. In unserer Studie analysieren wir ausgewählte Bereiche, die einen wesentlichen Einfluss auf die Transformation der Armee haben. Es entstehen neue Missionen, die ohne militärisches Personal nicht erfolgreich durchgeführt werden können. Die Ausbreitung des SARS-Cov-2-Virus und die Pandemie, die bereits mehr als 5 Millionen Menschen das Leben gekostet und enorme wirtschaftliche Verluste verursacht hat, haben beispielsweise dazu geführt, dass Tausende von Soldaten für zahlreiche Aufgaben im Zusammenhang mit der Betreuung von Patienten in Krankenhäusern, der Durchführung von COVID-19-Tests usw. eingesetzt werden müssen. Zu den Maßnahmen der Regierungsbehörden zur Bekämpfung dieses unsichtbaren Feindes gehört auch die Entsendung von Soldaten zu den regionalen Gesundheitsbehörden, zu Krisenstäben und sogar zu Patrouillen an den Kontrollpunkten innerhalb des Landes und an den Grenzen, um den Personenverkehr und die damit verbundene Ausbreitung des Virus einzuschränken. Die aus dieser schwierigen Situation gezogenen Lehren sind ein Ansporn, die Ziele und Maßnahmen der allgemeinen und beruflichen Bildung neu zu formulieren, um den aktuellen und künftigen Herausforderungen Rechnung zu tragen.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Streitkräfte, Militärakademie, Bildung, Offiziere, Ausbildung, NATO

### *Проблемы образования и подготовки кадров Вооруженных сил Словацкой Республики* *Резюме*

Процесс трансформации Вооруженных сил Словацкой Республики, в частности концепции их обучения и подготовки, начался с раздела Чехословакии на Чешскую Республику и Словацкую Республику в 1993 году. Следует подчеркнуть, что так называемая «бархатная революция» 1989 года вызвала реальные потребности в определении направления, целей, задач и открытости этих государств во всех сферах общественной жизни. Вооруженные силы также должны были претерпеть фундаментальные изменения. В статье анализируются направления, оказавшие значительное влияние на трансформацию вооруженных сил. Появляются новые задачи, которые не могут быть успешно выполнены без участия военнослужащих.

Например, распространение вируса SARS Cov-2 и пандемия, которая уже стала причиной смерти более 5 миллионов человек и огромных экономических потерь, вызвали необходимость привлечения тысяч солдат к выполнению многих задач, связанных с уходом за пациентами в больницах, проведением анализов на COVID-19 и т.д. Действия, предпринятые правительством для борьбы с этим невидимым врагом, также включают направление солдат в региональные органы здравоохранения, кризисные штабы, в том числе, для патрулирования на контрольно-пропускных пунктах внутри страны и на границах, с целью ограничения передвижения людей и связанного с этим, распространения вируса. Выводы, извлеченные из этой сложной ситуации, являются мотивацией для повторного формулирования целей и действий в области образования и подготовки, которые отражают текущие и будущие вызовы.

**Ключевые слова:** вооруженные силы, военная академия, образование, офицеры, подготовка, НАТО