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## CZECH CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY BETWEEN 1993 AND 2020: AN OVERVIEW FROM THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

**Wkład Czech w międzynarodowe bezpieczeństwo w latach 1993–2020:  
przegląd z perspektywy wojskowej**

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### Abstract

The article provides an overview of Czech military involvement in other countries, with a special focus on Asia (Afghanistan, Iraq), and Balkan region (Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina). It introduces key activities of the Czech Republic under NATO and the EU (involvement in EU missions and EU Battle Groups), and partially deals with the Czech participation in the UN observation missions. The main aim of the article is to reveal the scope and nature of Czech military involvement, and its development over time. The article helps to understand the position of the Czech Republic within international security structures, and also reveals capacities of the Czech Army in foreign operations.

**Keywords:** Czech Republic, Czech Army, Military, NATO, EU.

### Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono przegląd zaangażowania wojskowego Czech w innych krajach, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Azji (Afganistan, Irak) oraz regionu Bałkanów (Kosowo oraz Bośnia i Hercegowina). Przedstawia kluczowe działania Republiki Czeskiej w ramach NATO i UE (zaangażowanie w misje UE i Grupy Bojowe UE) oraz częściowo zajmuje się również udziałem Czech w misjach obserwacyjnych ONZ. Głównym celem artykułu jest ukazanie zakresu i charakteru czeskiego zaangażowania wojskowego oraz jego zmieniającego się rozwoju z biegiem czasu. Artykuł pomaga w zrozumieniu pozycji Republiki Czeskiej w międzynarodowych strukturach bezpieczeństwa, a także ujawnia możliwości armii czeskiej w operacjach zagranicznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Czechy, Armia Czeska, Wojsko, NATO, EU.

## Introduction

In recent years the Czech Republic was criticized, together with other Central European countries, for a lack of solidarity regarding the migration crisis. In this sense the Czech Republic gained the image of a rather passive and critical country towards the EU migration policy. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic is active in the international affairs, and directly involved in the security operations with the aim to improve the environment in the countries of the migrant's origin, and thus also limit the push factors for migration. The main aim of this article is to provide an overview of Czech activities abroad with a special focus on its military involvement under the umbrella of the NATO, the EU, or the UN.

The article serves as “atheoretical case study” with exploratory character. One principal research question linked with the exploratory character of the study: “in what foreign operations was Czech army involved, and what was the character of the involvement?”. This principal question will help to provide answer on many other related questions, such as: 1) “what Czech units are deployed?”; 2) “in what type of operations is the Czech Republic building its military profile”; and more general 3) “what is Czech contribution to the international security from the military perspective?”.

The study was partially inspired by theoretical framework analysing the interaction between the domestic and international level, by the use of the three streams approach focusing on securitization, politics, and policy outcomes. The process of securitization influences politics – politics leads to policy. This “three stream analysis” is based on the previous framework suggested by John W. Kingdon, which was partly changed by Raphael Bossong (2013), who used an adjusted concept for analysing changes within EU counter terrorism policy. However, this approach might be universally used in other fields of security policy analysis. Nevertheless, due to limited space, the article focuses mainly on the third stream dealing with policy outcomes, understood in the context of practical military involvement. This is because policy has its material essence which takes the form of the Czech Army's presence and activities in other countries. For this reason, providing an overview and analysis of these activities is important in exploring Czech national interests with military aspect in the foreign policy of the country. Because these interests changed over time, also together with geographic preferences, the article focuses on both. It deals with Czech involvement in selected countries, and provides chronologic development of the involvement in order to provide complex picture.

### **Czech involvement: first steps**

In the 1990's the Czech Army started its transformation which reached an important milestone in 1999, when the country become a NATO member. The army had to depart from the Communist past, undertake rapid modernization, and deal with the

Czechoslovak split in 1993. For this reason, in the early 1990's, Czech military involvement in international affairs was rather rare. Transformation is summarized in the following table 1.

Table 1. Transformation of Czech/Czechoslovak Army (1989-2019)

Year	Professionals	Conscripts	Civil	TOTAL	Tanks	IFVs	Artillery (100+ mm)	Aircrafts	Helicopters
1989	61,405	148,595	60,000	270,000	4,500	4,900	3,400	687	???
2012	21,751	0	8,241	29,992	164	528	194	38	24
2019	25,105	0	6,796	33,086	116	437	179	36	17
S-KOS Limit					957	1367	767	230	50

*Note:* Next to the units limited by S-KOS Czech Republic (as of 1. 1. 2019) owns 5 training planes L-39, 16 transport and surveillance planes L-410, Jak-0, CL-601 Challenger, A-319 CJ and CASA C-295M, 34 multipurpose helicopters MI-8, Mi-17, Mi171Š and W-3A Sokol, 149 special infantry and special armoured vehicles, 171 IFVs (not covered by S-KOS and VD limits) BRDM-2, Dingo 2 and IVECO, 39 armoured medical vehicles (under Geneva Conventions), and 6 bridging tanks MT-55A.

*Source:* *Army of the Czech Republic (2019a).*

A small, but significant, exception in the foreign involvement in 1990's is Czechoslovakia's participation in the Gulf War. From December 1990 in total 200 volunteering soldiers were serving in Saudi Arabia (Army of the Czech Republic, 2018a). It was the first time in history when Czechoslovak anti-chemical unit went to war in which Saddam Hussein openly declared that he is not afraid to use chemical weapons. On the eve of the war it was expected that Iraq has between 6–7 thousand tons of chemical weapons and some of them were really used during the war: there were in total 55 incidents detected, mainly involving nerve agents (Tucker, 1997, pp 291–300).

Another exception was the Czech AFOR mission of the 6<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital to Albania and Turkey, or more significant operations IFOR, SFOR, and SFOR II in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the Czech Army was present since 1996. The Czech Army stayed in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 12 years and approx. 6750 soldiers passed through the operation. Later Czechs participated in the EUFOR ALTHEA mission, under the leadership of the EU. They were responsible mainly for the protection of bases and headquarters in Tuzla (Czech soldiers were serving together with Estonians, Austrians, and Slovaks), or EUFOR Headquarters in Sarajevo. However, in 2005, there was also Czech HELI unit with two Mi-17s to conduct surveillance and for the

transport of international forces. During the deployment they made 920 flight hours during which 4500 people, and 70 tons of material, were transported (iDNES 2008). Since June 2007 approx. 70 Czech soldiers were replaced by just four people at the EUFOR headquarters in Sarajevo (Army of the Czech Republic, 2008). The mission was finally terminated on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The experience from Bosnia and Herzegovina was very important for the Czech army, and served as model example where Czechs learned the different forms of cooperation. Moreover, up to the date the Czech Republic is keeping symbolic presence of two officers on the Butmir base.

However, the Balkans have always been close to Czech foreign interests, due to its close geographic location and historic ties. For this reason also, from 1999, the Czech Army was present in Kosovo. In the first ten years of involvement approx. 7500 soldiers served in Kosovo: mainly from 140 men strong reconnaissance company, a joint Czech-Slovak Battalion, Mechanized company etc. It is important to note, that missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo were related. Because the situation improved in Bosnia it was possible in 2001 to enhance the Czech contingent in Kosovo from 140 to 220 soldiers and later to 400 (Army of the Czech Republic, 2009b). In between 2002 and 2005 the Czech army participated within a joint Czech-Slovak Battalion which was part of a multinational Central brigade (together with two British, Finish, Norwegian, and Swedish battalions). The aim was to protect the administrative borders with Serbia and the surrounding territory (Army of the Czech Republic, 2009b). For the operation Joint Enterprise the Czech Government sent 660 people, including mechanized units, to protect and observe borders between Kosovo and Serbia, ensuring security, protecting minorities, and cultural heritage. Moreover, units contributed to trust building and support for UNMIK mission, cooperated with Kosovo Protection Corps, and helped with its transformation and training. As mentioned earlier, between April and December 2007 a contingent was supported with a helicopter unit with two Mi-17 helicopters (Army of the Czech Republic, 2008), and in the following years the Czech Army had representation at the KFOR Headquarters in Pristina and at the Camp Ville in Lipjan (Army of the Czech Republic, 2009). The above mentioned presence lasted until October 2010 when the Czech Republic started to change its support in favour of an Operational Reserve Force.

The Czech Republic contributed to the operation with 489 people, who were mainly from a heavy mechanized platoon, and two light mechanized platoons which were ready for deployment, but based in the Czech Republic. The core of the operation present at the Šajkovac base was composed of 77 people who were also serving for KFOR (8 soldiers), Liaison Monitoring Team (4 people) and for Liaison Monitoring Team Centre or Joint Regional Detachment with three people (Army of the Czech Republic, 2011). In 2011 Czech soldiers (99 people) contributed to the KFOR task force to dismantle the former military base in Šajkovac and for this reason KFOR was from November 2011 supported by just 7 officers (Army of the Czech Republic,

2012). In 2012 Czech representatives served at the KFOR Headquarters on the Film City base and this presence continues also in 2018.

During the Czech involvement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo the international environment changed significantly. All important changes started to occur around the millennium. In 1999 there was a significant NATO enlargement, and 1999 is remarkable also for the Common Security and Defence Policy negotiations at the European Council summit in Cologne, which outlined the framework for policy implementation, which took place in 2000. Following the 2001 Helsinki Summit EU member states started to develop EU military and non-military crisis management and defence (Larivé, 2014, p. 82). It took, however, another two years until the first EU missions started. A much more important impact on the international environment were the 9/11 Al-Qaeda attacks. Terrorist attacks on US soil were a global event which was broadcasted live around the world. Nationals from 62 countries lost their lives during the attack, and despite this, the Czech Republic had no fatalities, the impact on general discourse in the country was immediate. There was a general consensus on the fight against terrorism.

During the 2001 attacks the Czech Republic had a minority government composed of the Social Democrats under the Prime Minister Miloš Zeman.<sup>1</sup> On 2 October 2011 Zeman informed citizens, that “retaliation of US forces is a matter of hours or days”, and the Czech government offered at the US disposal a military hospital, anti-chemical unit, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Special Forces. As Zeman mentioned “in its own interest, own capacities and own possibilities” (iDNES 2001). Since then Afghanistan has become a cornerstone in Czech military activities and later the Czech Republic also supported the US invasion of Iraq. Czech position become more pro-active. Politically, there was (and still is) a consensus of all parties with exception of *Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia* and later also *Freedom and Direct Democracy* party (right-wing national populists) that participation in foreign missions is vital Czech foreign policy interest. As one said by then minister of defence Vlasta Parkanová: *Foreign missions are a shop window of our army, showing to our allies that we are trustworthy, reliable and fully-fledged member of NATO... Missions are suppressing the danger far from our borders but that danger is also our issue* (Army of the Czech Republic, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> It was a minority government, however the two biggest parties agreed in the “Opposition treaty”, that opposition will never, under any circumstances, initiate a vote of no confidence in exchange for lucrative positions in state companies. In other words, opposition resigned from the role of opposition.

## **Afghanistan and Iraq**

The Czech Republic joined ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) early in 2002 with its 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital, and Field Surgeon Team. The involvement of the country was gradually strengthened. As in 2007 the Czech Republic was involved with four contingents. The first contingent in Kabul made pyrotechnic works, and contributed to the meteorological management at Kabul airport. It was also composed of the Operational Mentor Liaison Team providing training to Afghani pilots. This contingent however, finished its tasks, and in April 2007 was replaced by the field hospital,<sup>2</sup> and anti-chemical unit which consisted of 99 people. The field hospital not only contributed by providing specialized help for military personnel injured in combat, but also to the local population. The anti-chemical unit provided chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defence capabilities. Also, activities under the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar (Base Shank near Pol-e Lam) continued. The team also monitored, reported, evaluated, and provided advisory activities regarding security, politics, social issues, and cooperated with UNAMA (UN Assistance Mission), and Security Sector Reform in order to improve the civil administration, and cooperation with civil agencies. Another contingent was placed to the Deh Rawod base. There, in total 63 Czech soldiers, were responsible for protecting the Dutch base. Next to the mentioned contingents there was the fourth contingent composed of the military police Special Operations Group, who provided help and training to the Afghan army, and Afghan police forces through the methodical employment, and joint patrols (Army of the Czech Republic, 2008).

The Czech Republic participated also in the operation Enduring Freedom, where 100 people from the 601<sup>st</sup> group of Special Forces were relocated to the base in Kandahar. Their task was to collect important information about targets, search, and the pinpointing of targets, and managing small-scale operations. The unit stayed until November 2009 when it was relocated back to the Czech Republic (Army of the Czech Republic 2010).

As for 2009 the Czech Republic continued to be present in Afghanistan under the ISAF mission with four contingents: The first contingent continued to serve at the Kabul international airport, accompanied with 70 people from the light anti-chemical unit. The aim of the unit was to continue in the CBRN protection of the ISAF forces, and to continue the training of Afghan Air Forces on Mi-24s, and later also on Mi-17s and Mi-35s. Part of the contingent was also a National Support Element ensuring logistics for all other contingents (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010). Since 2012 the Air Advisory Team (in total 20 people) took part in the training of Afghan Air Force on Mi-35s and Mi-17s, and in August 2012 this unit was strengthened by the NATO

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<sup>2</sup> Excellence was demonstrated by the Czech Field Surgeon Team, who also continued to operate in the French Field hospital.

Training Mission (30 people from the Czech Republic) which provided repair, and service activities of Mi-24s and Mi-17s for the Afghan Air Force (Army of the Czech Republic, 2013). Air Advisory Team continued its presence also in 2018.

A second contingent was continuing its work for the Provincial Reconstruction Team at SHANK base near Pol-e-Alam in Logar Province. In Logar, there were 275 soldiers and 14 civilian experts under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Activities of the Logar contingent were more society oriented, and included activities for confidence building, promotion of political dialogue, advisory services in the political, social and security areas, and cooperation with the UN in the area of Security Sector Reform, bilateral programmes, assistance to the Provincial Coordination Centre, administrative tasks, and general support of humanitarian and reconstruction activities. The contingent also ensured patrols during presidential elections, and trained local police and army units to ensure security during the elections. Approx. 100 Czech soldiers secured the Arza district during elections (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010)

Also a third contingent after 2009 continued in its activities in Uruzgan, at the Deh Rawod base. The contingent protected the Dutch base until the end of March, then it was relocated back to the Czech Republic. However, the Czech presence was again strengthened by the relocation of a helicopter unit to Sharana base in the Paktika province. The new contingent was deployed in 2009 and was planned to have 110 soldiers, and it was expected to be fully operational in January 2010 in order to manage transportation tasks (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010). The HELI UNIT ISAF finished its task on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011, and was relocated back to the Czech Republic. In total 700 soldiers served in the unit between 2009 and 2011 (Army of the Czech Republic, 2012).

Moreover, in July 2011 a Special Task Force (100 people) started to operate in the Nangarhar Province, however in May 2012 they were relocated back to the Czech Republic. From the documentary evidence it is clear, that in the Nangarhar Province the 601<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group (601 SFG) from Prostějov was operating. It is one of the best groups in the Czech army with an excellent international reputation, named after a famous Czechoslovak General František Moravec. In total 200 soldiers passed through Nangarhar (Army of the Czech Republic, 2013). Forces from the 601 SFG were used also later in 2016 when approx. 20 people worked in Kabul, where they protected the Czech Embassy, and the Residency of the Czech Ambassador (Army of the Czech Republic, 2018b).

In 2010 Operational Mentor and Liaison Team started its task in the Wardak province. The team located at the Carwile base, Soltan Kheyl base, and several forward bases, where they helped with the training, education, and preparation of the Afghan National Army to conduct operational tasks. Part of the activities was also intensive team-building with the Afghan army at the BLACK HORSE base near Kabul (Army of the Czech Republic, 2011). In 2011 it started its activities Training Unit

of the Military Police (12 people) which conducted its activities under French leadership. However, in April 2013 the mission of the Military Police was finished.

Year 2013 was a decisive for Afghanistan. Along with the Military Police also Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team within Provincial Reconstruction Team finished. Since its beginning more than 2,500 personal participated in the team, and approx. one third were serving for several terms. Moreover, in 2013 there were two Military Advisory Teams at Wardak and Logar which returned to the country the same year (Army of the Czech Republic, 2014). On the other side, in October 2013, the Czech Republic started to secure Bagram Airfield in the Parwan Province, where a BAF unit protected the Bagram base, and in November 2013 started to fulfil its operational tasks (Army of the Czech Republic, 2014). To sum up, after 2013 there were only two Czech contingents in Afghanistan: one under the Regional Command Capital in Kabul, and the second in Parwan. In Kabul, the Air Advisory Team continued the training of the Afghan Air Forces on Mi-35s and Mi-17s (30 people), there was a National Support Element (61 people), and a Field Surgeon Team (13 people) within the French, and later US hospital. Czechs were also represented in headquarters. In Parwan there was a special protection unit concerning Bagram base (150 people).<sup>3</sup> The Czech presence in Afghanistan still continues more, or less with the setting established in 2013. However, in 2018 another 100 soldiers were sent to Logar (Camp Dahlke) and Herat (Camp Conde) to provide training, and mentoring of the Afghan Police Special Unit, and special strike unit – Cobra Strike Kandak.

Next to Afghanistan, the Czech contingent was also sent to Iraq (100 people) which filled tasks within the Multinational Division Southeast, and was relocated to the Contingency Operating Base at the Basra Airport, where Czech soldiers protected the entry gates Delta and Ritz. Another group was working on the training missions in Baghdad, where they trained Iraqi officers, helped in building a Military academy, and the Centre for Training, Education and Doctrines, or contributed to the build-up of other security structures (Army of the Czech Republic, 2008). In the June of 2008 the Basra contingent was replaced by 18 soldiers, mainly instructors, who provided training for armoured vehicles BVP-1 and tanks T-72. Instructors provided training for Iraqi army and Iraqi police at Taji base. After finishing the task, the contingent returned home (Army of the Czech Republic 2009). In 2009 the Czech Republic finished its participation in the NATO Training Mission, and on 28<sup>th</sup> February 4 officers from the Training Education and Doctrine Center were relocated (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010). The Czech presence in Iraq is in the Czech Republic associated mainly with the 7<sup>th</sup> field hospital, military police, and military instructors providing training to the Iraqi army. The Czech Republic continues its presence in Iraq within Inherent Resolve mission, especially at the Balad air base (training of Iraqis

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<sup>3</sup> In 2014 the Czech Army lost there 5 soldiers, due to a suicide bomber.

on Czech's L-159 fighters), Camp Dublin in Baghdad (as part of Italian Task Force Carabinieri), and Al Taji base where Czech instructors organizes training.

### **NATO, EU and UN obligations**

From the very beginning the Czech Republic showed a pro-Atlanticist attitude supporting the US policy, and NATO priorities instead of the “European wing” of Defence policy. There are especially historical reasons for such an attitude. In the early years after the new millennium, EU defence cooperation was in its early stages. There was a lack of experience, and overall this platform of cooperation was new. From this perspective it is logical, and natural that the Czech Republic after 1999 participated in the existing NATO structures. Moreover, when the Common Security and Defence Policy was negotiated the Czech Republic, like other post-communist countries, was not yet part of the EU, which is another important factor explaining the NATO preference over EU structures.

NATO structures were gradually filled with Czech officers and officials. For example, as from 2006 in total 65 soldiers were present in NATO structures in Germany, especially in the Land Component Command in Heidelberg (24 soldiers), Air Component Command in Ramstein (18 soldiers), Combined Air Operations Centre – 4 in Messtetten (13 soldiers), or in the Allied Rapid reaction Corps in Reindahlen (4 soldiers) (Army of the Czech Republic, 2006a). In Belgium, there were 57 soldiers serving at the Military section of the Permanent delegation to NATO and the EU (18 soldiers), at the Allied Command Operations in Mons (13 soldiers), National representation at SHAPE in Mons (11 soldiers), or NATO bodies in Brussels with 7 soldiers. In the Netherlands Czech soldiers served mainly at the Joint Forces Command in Brunssum (22 soldiers in total), or at the NATO Agency for communication and information systems in Brunssum. There were also four soldiers serving in Italy (the NATO Defence College in Rome and Joint Forces Command in Napoli), two in Poland (Multinational Corps North East in Szczecin), two in Portugal (ACT body – Joint Analysis and Lessons Centre in Monsanto), and one served in a Joint Warfare Centre at Stavanger in Norway (Army of the Czech Republic, 2006a). Similarly to Europe, Czech soldiers were serving also in the USA in NATO structures: especially Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk in Virginia, in the United States Central Command in Tampa at the Florida, or Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe in Virginia (Army of the Czech Republic, 2006b). These structures did not changed much over the years.

Czech Republic continues to fulfil its obligations under NATO. Most dominant contributions of the Czech Republic for the NATO Response Force are summarized in the table 2.

Table 2. Czech contribution to NATO Response Force

Rotation no.	Date	Units	Number of people
NRF 1	15.10.03 – 15.01.04	Radiological and Chemical Platoon	80
NRF 2	01.01.04 – 30.06.04	Radiological and Chemical Platoon	80
NRF 3	01.07.04 – 13.01.05	CBRN Protection Battalion	277
NRF 4	01.01.05 – 15.07.05	CBRN Defence Company	?
NRF 5	01.07.05 – 15.01.06	Radiological and Chemical Platoon	34
NRF 6	01.01.06 – 15.07.06	Civilian and Military Cooperation Unit	20
NRF 7	01.07.06 – 15.01.07	NATO Response Force Headquarters	10
NRF 8	01.01.07 – 15.07.07	CBRN Protection Battalion	400
NRF 9	01.07.07 – 15.01.08	Joint Assessment Team, Combined Air Operation Centre, Team Movement Control	35
NRF 10	01.01.08 – 15.07.08	Transport Company	100
NRF 11	01.07.08 – 15.01.09	Civilian and Military Cooperation Unit, anti-aircraft battery + CBRN specialist	343
NRF 12	01.01.09 – 15.07.09	Passive Monitoring Systems, CBRN Protection Battalion	229
NRF 13	01.07.09 – 15.01.10	Joint Assessment Team, CBRN Protection Battalion	3
NRF 14	01.01.10 – 15.07.10	CBRN Protection Battalion, Protection Company, Enhanced Mechanized Company	220
NRF 15	01.07.10 – 15.01.11	CBRN Protection Battalion, Transport Company, Engineering Company	360
NRF 16	01.01.11 – 15.07.11	Joint Assessment Team, Team Movement Control	305
NRF 17	01.07.11 – 15.01.12	Joint Assessment Team, CBRN Protection Battalion, Team Movement Control	727
NRF 18	01.01.12 – 15.07.12	CBRN Protection Battalion, Transport Company, Special Forces, Military Police	721

Source: Author, based on annual reports 2003-2012.

For the first rotation of the NATO Response Force, the Czech Republic in 2003 made available a platoon of radiation and chemical exploration, and a decontamination platoon. Both platoons continued also in the second rotation in 2004. The third rotation in 2004 was represented by the 312<sup>th</sup> chemical and biological defence battalion, which served also for the fifth rotation in 2005 (the fourth rotation was based at the chemical and biological defence company). As for the sixth rotation there was the 103<sup>th</sup> Civilian and Military Cooperation unit available, and the NRF 7 was made of a group for air traffic management (Ministerstvo obrany České Republiky, 2009, p. 49).

For the needs of the 8<sup>th</sup> rotation of the NRF, 355 soldiers were made available for CBRN defence, and for the 9<sup>th</sup> rotation another 35 soldiers for air traffic management (Army of the Czech Republic, 2008). The following rotations were better staffed. For the needs of the 10<sup>th</sup> rotation, the Czech army prepared 100 soldiers from the Transport Company, and for the 11<sup>th</sup> rotation in total 343 soldiers: 120 people for protection, a Civilian and Military Cooperation unit of up to 20 people, an anti-aircraft guided strikes MANPAD (Man Portable Air Defense) battery of up to 200 people, and a specialist for CBRN defence. Moreover, for the 12<sup>th</sup> rotation the Czech army promised to contribute 229 people (Army of the Czech Republic, 2009). This composed of a Passive Surveillance Systems unit with 86 people, a decontamination platoon with company headquarters (70 people), a chemical lab and a bio-detection team (20 people) together with a National Support Element (NSE) of up to 53 people (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010). For the 13<sup>th</sup> rotation 3 members of the Czech army were designated, all of them were specialist for evaluation and advising in the area of anti-biological and anti-chemical defence.

The 14<sup>th</sup> rotation was composed of 220 soldiers (a protection company, an enhanced mechanized company of up to 120 people, 4 CBRN experts, and a NSE of up to 53 people). The 15<sup>th</sup> rotation was composed of a transport company of up to 120 people, an Engineering company of up to 170 people, 3 CBRN specialists, and a NSE. The 16<sup>th</sup> rotation was composed of 305 people composed of a joint analytical team, a team for the coordination of preparations, an anti-aircraft battery with 237 people, and a NSE. The 17<sup>th</sup> rotation was composed of 727 people made basically from the units involved in the 16<sup>th</sup> rotation, but supported by CBRN defence battalion with another 295 people), and an enhanced NSE of 159 people. For another rotation the Czech Republic reserved 721 people including a 120 strong transport company, a 295 strong CBRN protection battalion, Military police (34 people), Special forces group (75 people), a biological laboratory, a joint analytical team, and NSE. Until January 2013 the Czech Army reserved 284 people including a Transport Company, Special Forces, military police, and 53 people for the NSE (Army of the Czech Republic, 2013).

In 2013 the Czech Army contributed with 766 people, including the Passive Surveillance System Věra, an anti-decontamination platoon with company headquarters, a joint analytical team, a CBRN laboratory, a CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) group, a pontoon platoon, a field hospital, an anti-aircraft battery, and the NSE. All reserved units were activated and joined the drill operation Boletice in 2013. As for 2014 there were reserved 302 soldiers including a transport and anti-chemical company, a biological detection team, an engineering platoon of up to 45 people, a HUMINT (Human Intelligence) team, and the NSE. A year later the reserve grows to 1500 people. It involved a brigade command, and support elements of up to 344 people, an airborne mechanized battalion of up to 656 people, a Military police platoon of 34

person, the NSE of up to 217 people, an engineering platoon, special forces (75 people), and anti-aircraft battery of up to 106 people (Army of the Czech Republic, 2016).

The Czech Republic has made a considerable reserve also for the NATO enhanced Response Force for 2016, which counted 816 people. It consisted mainly of an Airborne company (220 people), an Engineering Company (130 people), Special Forces (100 people), an Airborne Department Special Operations Support (of up to 100 people), a CBRN Company, an HUMINT team, and logistic support (Army of the Czech Republic, 2017). Similar units were designed for needs of NATO also in the following years with small changes. For example in 2018 NATO Response force might have used Czech Communication Module, or Ground Based Air Defence. Above development clearly shows (also presented in table 1) that Czech Republic is increasing fulfilling its NATO obligation, and gradually allocates higher number of personal. Moreover, it might be well observed, that core of the Czech contribution is CBRN defence.

It shall be mentioned, that the Czech Republic contributes also in other ways. For example in 2009 the Czech Air Force extended its activities to the Baltic states under the Operation Baltic Air Policing – Latvia. In between May and July 2008 in total 75 people with 4 jets JAS 39 C Gripen were located at the Šiauliai base in Latvia, and protected airspace in all three Baltic states (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010). The Air policing mission was repeated on the same basis, and to the same extent between September 2012, and January 2013. In this period the Czech Army participated in 15 A-Scramble take offs (33:53 flight hours). However, in total 298 flights were made counting for 326 flight hours (Army of the Czech Republic, 2014). Air policing was also the case of Island under Operation ASICIPPN (Airborne Surveillance and Interception to meet Capabilities Iceland's Peacetime Preparedness) between October and December 2014 on a similar basis, and to a similar extend as in the Baltic states policing. In total four Jas 39 Gripen were placed at the Keflavik airbase, and in the selected period made 145 flight hours in 82 flights (Army of the Czech Republic, 2014). The operation also continued between July and September 2015. Czech Republic continues in activities within enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia and Lithuania up to date, especially at the bases in Adazi and Gaiziunai (Army of the Czech Republic, 2019).

Another example is the 2014 participation in the Operation Active Fence in Turkey. In total 7 persons from the Deployable Communication Module (DCM), which is part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> NATO Signal Battalion located in Bydgoszcz – Poland, was providing connection to a Dutch PATRIOT unit at the Incirlik base in Turkey (Army of the Czech Republic, 2015). The Operation also continued between May and August 2015.

The Czech Republic was involved in several EU missions. Next to the involvement in the EU ALTHEA, referred earlier in this text, the Czech Republic participated also in the EU NAVFOR ATALANTA. As of 2010 the Czech Republic sent three officers to headquarters in Nothwood (Army of the Czech Republic, 2011). Among

the most significant EU missions, is the Czech Army's participation in the EU Training Mission (EUTM). In total 38 people were present in Bamako in 2013, four instructors were training Mali armed forces within the French Infantry Training Company in the Koulikoro and Sikasso training centre, and 33 people were protecting EUTM Mali headquarters, and assisted in convoys (Army of the Czech Republic, 2014). For some period of time, two Czech representatives were part of the EUFOR TCHAD/RCA. Both served at the headquarters, one in Mont Valérien in France, the second in Abeche in Chad (Army of the Czech Republic, 2008). The Czech Republic finished its participation at EUFOR TCHAD on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2009, however presence in Mali continues up to the date.

European Union Naval Forces – Mediterranean – EUNAVFOR MED Sophia is another operation that the Czech Army actively participates in. Czech participation has been promised at the extraordinary meeting of the European Council in April 2015, and in June that year the first two soldiers joined the mission to combat illegal migration. One was present at the Headquarters in Rome, the second at the Operational Headquarters placed on an Italian Carrier. As for now (October 2018), the Czech presence is made up of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Group under the leadership of under-colonel Monika Šatková, and the total number of participants is five (Army of the Czech Republic, 2018c).

Despite the fact that participation in the EU mission is rather symbolic, the Czech Republic fulfils also its obligation in the EU defence structures. Since 2009 the Czech Army begin to participate in the EU Battle Groups (BG), however participation had already been approved by the Czech Government in October 2004. Since then, the Army prepared CZE/SVK EU Battle Group to be ready for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009. For the purposes of the BG Army of the Czech Republic 1800 members were designated, and played the role of a leading nation with the participation of the Slovak army (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010). Czech Representatives were also represented by 5 people in Ulm at the Operational Head Quarters of the EU Battle Groups in Ulm, in order to prepare documentation, and when needed to serve when CZE/SVK BG EU would be deployed (Army of the Czech Republic, 2010).

In 2012 Czech Soldiers were again organized into the EUBG. In total 350 people were divided into the command structures of infantry, engineers, chemical protection unit, health element, anti-aircraft unit, geographic security protection, civilian-military cooperation team, NSE, and military police. The Czech Republic was part of the multi-national BG under the leadership of Germany, with the participation of Austria, Croatia, FYROM, and Ireland (Army of the Czech Republic, 2013).

The third EU BG was formed in the first half of 2016, with a total contribution of 850 people. In the V4 EUBG the Czech Republic was responsible mainly for the areas of health and logistic support, but also available at a HELI UNIT with 4 Mi-171Š, a transport plane C-295M CASA, an EOD specialist team, and NSE. In the second

half, the Czech Republic, participated in the DEU EUBG with 250 people. The main elements were Infantry, a CIMIC/PSYOPS team, a CBRN platoon, an EOD team, a group of military police, and other specialists together with NSE (Army of the Czech Republic, 2017). Under the leadership of Poland, Czechs contributed 550 men (logistics, healthcare, air support) to V4 Battlegroup in 2019, and prepared for another Battlegroup under the leadership of Germany scheduled for second half of 2020.

The Czech Army participated at the beginning of three UN missions: the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) with 3 soldiers, the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) with 2 soldiers, and the United Nations Missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) with 3 soldiers (Army of the Czech Republic, 2006c). Later the Czech Republic joined the UN Observation Mission held in Georgia (UNOMIG), with the Czech participation consisting of 5 soldiers. The missions UNMIL, UNMEE, MONUC, and UNOMIG continued in 2007 when, together with UNMIK mission (Kosovo), the Czech Republic contributed with 28 military observers. In 2009 Czech representatives of up to 15 people continued to work for UNOMIC, MONUC, UNMIK, and UNAMA in Afghanistan. In November 2009 the Czech Republic sent 3 officers to support the Multinational Force and Observers operation in the Egypt Arab Republic. Czech representatives served at the El Gorah base. As of 2010, Czech participation continued in MONUC, UNMIK, and UNAMA, but the number of personal dropped to 5 persons (Army of the Czech Republic, 2011). In November 2013 the MFO operation was strengthened by 11 people from the Air unit with transport aircraft C-295 CASA in order to help with material transport between MFO bases, Cairo and Tel Aviv, or cooperate in SAR (search and rescue), and MEDEVAC (medical evacuations) operation (Army of the Czech Republic 2014). The plane C-295 CASA remains operational at Sharm ash Shaykh base together with 15 soldiers. In 2014 the Czech Republic representatives participated in the MINUSCA mission in the Central African Republic (Army of the Czech Republic, 2015), and since 2015 the Czech Army has also sent 3 officers to the OSN UNDOF mission in the Golan Heights. All three were serving at the Ziouani headquarters (Army of the Czech Republic, 2016). Similar to the EU Czech contribution the Czech contribution to the UN missions is mainly symbolic. Since June 2018 Czech soldiers are present also at Camp Faouar in Syria.

As of 2017 the Czech Republic had 830 soldiers abroad. The Czech Republic continues its presence in Kosovo (HQ KFOR), and Afghanistan under Resolute Support with its presence in Bagram and Kabul. As for the NATO operation, there is a mandate for 356 soldiers to serve abroad. There is also a mandate for 60 soldiers involved in the ALTHEA (Sarajevo), NAVFOR ATALANTA (Northwood), NAVFOR MEDITERRANEAN (Rome), and EUTM in Bamako, where the Czech Army has 50 soldiers. Czechs are present also at the Sharm el-Sheikh base in Egypt (mandate for 25 people), and a continuous presence in Iraq (Military Police at Camp

Dublin near Baghdad, a Field Surgeon Team at Al-Asad base, Air Advisory Team at Balad base), and the Czech Army is continuing in UN observation missions UNAMA, UNMIK, MONUSCO, MINUSCA, MINUSMA, and at the Golan Heights (Army of the Czech Republic, 2017).

## **Conclusions**

The main aim of this article was to provide an overview of the Czech contribution to international security from the military perspective. There was a principal research question: “in what foreign operations was Czech army involved and what was the character of the involvement?” There were also three related questions: 1) “what Czech units are deployed?”; 2) “in what type of operations is the Czech Republic building its military profile?”; and more general 3) “what is Czech contribution to the international security from the military perspective?”.

Czech soldiers participated in the most important conflicts, and “hot spots”. From the Gulf War through Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo to Iraq, or Afghanistan. However, it would be a mistake to reduce Czech interest only on these locations. Czech Army did a lot of work in other locations, including EU training mission in Mali, Air policing missions in Baltic states, or Iceland, and various observatory missions under the umbrella of the UN, even though NATO is the dominant structure for Czech deployment.

From the detailed overview of the Czech foreign military presence it is evident that the nature of the activities conducted by the Czech Army is mainly non-violent and non-combatant (with the small exception of some operations made by the 601<sup>st</sup> group of Special Forces). Most of the activities are focusing on training and protection, providing healthcare and assistance. In terms of specialization the Czech Army has an evident profile in the CBRN defence, including biological and chemical analysis. However, due to its own Air units, the Czech Republic is also helping with Air policing and transportation. Czech activities have a significant impact on the civilian dimension, which is most evident in Afghanistan, or Iraq, where reconstruction activities play an important role in enhancing security. Moreover, the presence of the Czech field hospitals, and field surgeons provides healthcare also to the local population, and contributes to the good image of the Czech Army.

The intensity of Czech involvement varied over time, which is evident also from the absolute numbers of the soldiers on missions. The overview showed, that, while in 2011 and 2012 there were approx. 2200 personnel serving abroad, in 2017 the number had dropped to approx. 830 soldiers. The reasons are both domestic and international as the security situation is changing. The situation in the Balkan region has improved, and after 2013 the Czech presence in Afghanistan was reduced. Currently, there is an ongoing discussion about Czech involvement in Afghanistan. Since 1990

a total of 29 Czech soldiers have died in foreign missions, 14 of them lost their lives in Afghanistan.

The Czech Republic prefers NATO structures over that of the EU, or UN. First, the Czech Republic integrated earlier into NATO than into the EU, and thus using NATO structures, is somehow more natural and operable than that of the EU. For this reason, the Czech contribution to EU, or UN missions is rather symbolic. One exception was the Althea operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or now the EUTM in Mali, where the Czech Republic has out of all EU operations a larger contingent. Nevertheless, the Czech Army also has an engagement in Mali, which can be explained in the context of Czech national interests, and the training activities in which the Czech Army specializes. In comparison with other armies, Czech army is one of the most active armies in the region<sup>4</sup> of Central Europe, and proportionally to its size and equipment contributes to enhance international security beyond horizons of the Czech Republic. Activities in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Mali are contributing to the stabilization of these regions, and serve as a prevention to migration. Moreover, foreign missions are symbol of national prestige. For this reason it might be expected, that army's participation in the current setting, and extent will continue unless elections will transform shares of parties critical towards Czech foreign involvement (Communists, SPD party).

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<sup>4</sup> For example Bundeswehr has approx. 6 times more personal (182,055 vs. 33,086), 12 times more reserves (28,250 vs. 2,357), and 18 times bigger budget (47,3 billion Euro vs. 2,6 billion Euro) than Czech Army. However, Compared to approx. 800 Czech soldiers serving in foreign missions, Bundeswehr has approx. just 3,300 soldiers (just four times more) serving abroad. Or by different measures, there is 1 Czech soldier abroad per 1,313 population of the country, but in the German case it is one German soldier abroad per 24,848 population (Bundeswehr 2020).

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