

NCOS IN THE HISTORY OF SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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NCOs In The History Of The Slovak Republic

“The Slovak Armed Forces’ primary responsibilities are the Defense of the country against all military threats, to potentially contributing to the full range of alliance missions, and for providing support to other national agencies against all non-military threats to the state.”

--Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic--

The last 12 years in the history of The Slovak Republic were characterized by political conflict and changes from a central oriented economy to an open market economy. These changes had a direct impact on the Slovak society and on the Slovak Armed Forces (SAF).

Following its establishment in January 1993, the Slovak Republic declared its interests to join the Euro-Atlantic Community and the Slovak government stated full membership in NATO as priority in their policy. When the NATO came up with the suggestion to create a new Partnership for Peace, Slovakia was among the first countries to join this initiative. Later that year, Slovakia joined the NATO Planning and Review Process (PARP). PARP activities aimed at achieving the interoperability of Slovak troops assigned to operations under NATO command. (mosr.sk)

At the July 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid, the heads of the Alliance Member States decides to invite the three post-socialistic countries Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary to join the Alliance. Slovakia was not invited, primarily because NATO member states did not accept the policy of the Slovak government as headed by Vladimir Meciar. From 1994 to 1998, for its partners Slovakia had the reputation of being “a problem country with anti-democratic tendencies”. (mosr.sk)

After the parliamentary election in 1998, when a new government with Mikulas Dzurinda came to power, the Euro-Atlantic integration took on a new dimension. The NATO Summit in Washington, through the Membership Action Plan (MAP) offered an opportunity for candidate countries to take part in the activities of the Alliance and make their entry process easier.

Slovakia accepted this offer and through active participation of SAF peacekeeping mission started to build prestige as a faithful partner. (mosr.sk)

In 1993 the Slovak Armed Forces had about 120,000 active soldiers. However, high number of conscripts, ineffective and inflexible training, and relocation some units from the Czech Republic to Slovak territory caused problem with budget. To solve this situation, the Slovak government decided to cut compulsory service from two to one year and close majority of military high schools that prepared NCOs (in that time known as junior WOs). These two steps started series of reforms in the Slovak Armed Forces, but without any long-term perspective and stabilization effect. The situation in the SAF showed the need to build a new kind of Armed Forces based on volunteers.

In 1996, the Rapid (later Immediate) Reaction Battalion was formed as the first full professional mechanized infantry battalion together with professional combat support units (engineer company, NBC defense company, air defense company, mortar battery, and anti tank battery).

Decreasing the number of officers and a reduction in compulsory service offered big chance to professionalize and development of NCO corps. For the first time after 45 years, NCO rank system was changed to be comparable with NATO armies. NCOs as professionals took key positions in units and at staffs.

In 2000, the Slovak Parliament approved basic political-security and military-strategy documents (Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic and Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic). In connection with these documents, top management of SAF introduced a “long-term plan of Slovak Armed Forces Development – MODEL 2010” which strikes a well-reasoned balance between requirements and resources and envisions a professional, combat-capable force (mosr.sk).

According to this plan, Slovakia should have a small (about 20,000 soldiers), professional, well prepared, and well equipped Armed Forces by 2010 year. MODEL 2010 is solving problems with the future structure of the Slovak Armed Forces and interaction between all levels of command during time of peace, crisis, and war (mosr.sk).

Professional soldiers become one of the essential priorities of the reform of Slovak Armed Forces. To fulfill their mission, function and goal, the Slovak Armed Forces will have adequate defense potential created by systematic and well-planned development of human, material and financial resources. Effectiveness of the Slovak Armed Forces depends on the size and quality of these resources, and on how effectively these resources are joined and utilized. (mosr.sk)

One of the basic requirements for successful creation of a professional force was development of effective training and education system for enlisted personnel. To accomplish this task, the Slovak Armed Forces cooperated with military advisory teams from USA (CUBIC), and with British Military Advisory Training Team for Central and Eastern Europe (BMATT CEE). In the January 2002, the third School Battalion of Training Centre in Martin, Slovakia was reorganized to The SAF NCO Academy and in the same year, the Training Command was established as the organization responsible for training and education in the

future. From this point, professional teams with NCOs in leadership are becoming the most numerous part of Slovak Armed Forces.

The year 2004 brought new concept of training and education providing:

- Initial Basic Training for men and women who want to joint the Slovak Armed Forces
- Advanced Basic Training for attendants of Initial Basic Training based on choice of specialization (MOS)
- Special certificated courses for equipment used in Slovak Armed Forces
- Training and education of NCOs

For realization of this model, Training Command as supervising level created Basic Training School, Advanced Training School for Land Forces, Advanced Training School for Air Forces, Advanced Training School for Air Defense and Signals, and NCO Academy.

Volunteers who want to join SAF after meeting entrance criteria are sent to the Basic Military School. Training in this school takes nine weeks and give them basic knowledge and skills on discipline, behavior, use of personal weapon and tactics of small teams. Instructors evaluate individual progress during exercises and those who final exam proceed to one of the Advanced Training School.

According to their specialty, they continue their training at the Advanced Training Schools. The length of training depends on the MOS and it can be from nine to fourteen weeks long. The essential task of advanced training is preparation crewmember for each MOS and gives them information they can use in further career. Soldiers who finish this training are assigned to organic units.

Special certified courses are other forms of education in SAF. In comparison with training in Basic or Advanced Training Schools, these courses are conducted for all members of

SAF who need certificate in accordance with Slovak Technical Norms (STN) or International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

The last part of training and education system is focused on NCOs. US and British Army model were used to develop an effective system of education in the environment of the Slovak Armed Forces. The Basic NCO Course (E-5) began in 2003 and from this time, gradually other courses opened. In 2004, Advanced NCO Course (E-6) and in 2005 Higher NCO Course (E-7). In 2006, we expect opening The Highest NCO Course (E-8) and Commanding NCO Course (E-9). In the same year, we are opening second part of education for NCOs in rank E-6 and E-7. The center of attention in this training is the development of tactical and operational skills for specialist of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense (CBRN), engineers and, artillery. Through these courses, we want to educate new generation of NCOs who are proud to be leader, who teach and take care of subordinates, and are able to assist to commanders at each level.

The changes in 1993 were an influential turning point for Slovak Armed Forces. The SAF remains in a current transition process in order to reach its "MODEL 2010" vision. On 2 April 2004, the Slovak Republic became a Member State of NATO and from January 2006, it is full professional Armed Force. This ends 85 years old way when we forced people to do what they did not want to do and is the starting point for new generation of volunteers - men and women, members of one team.

By the reforms we have started, the Slovak Armed Forces have a unique opportunity, and duty to be comparable with the best of best.

Work Cited

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