

Discussion Group A: Multinational Training and Force Integration

Introductory Presentation: Slovenian Armed Forces in Peace Support Operations – Historical Overview and Challenges in the Future

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Participation in peace support operations (PSO) abroad has been, is and is going to be one of the basic missions of the Slovenia Armed Forces (SAF). Let's make a short historical overview of the most important SAF missions abroad.

The SAF provided service members to PSO for the first time in 1997, when Slovenia was still one of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) member states. The ALBA SAF contingent in Albania operated within the framework of the "Sun Rise" mission under the auspices of the Italian forces from 14 May to 26 July 1997, with a medical unit of 21 volunteers, service member on active duty in SAF, and a military medical unit. One Slovenian officer was assigned to the Operations HQ in Rome.

The first peacekeeping operation under the auspices of the UN in which SAF service members took part was UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus). From 30 Sep 1997 to 19 June 2001, one infantry platoon from the former 10th Battalion for International Cooperation (10th Motorized Battalion nowadays)

participated in the mission as a member of the trilateral UNAHSB Battalion (United Nations Austrian-Hungarian-Slovenian Battalion), which was under the command of Austrian contingent.

The second mission where SAF service members participated and are still participating is the UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization), an UN-led mission in the Middle East.

From 5 Nov 1997, when the 15th Air Force Brigade was assigned to SFOR (Stabilization Force) in Bosnia and Herzegovina with 3 helicopters and an L-410 plane, Slovenia has been participating in NATO-led operations. Along with the plane an MP platoon (23 members) and 3 officers for the unit HQ have been assigned to MSU (Multinational Specialized Unit) since 9 Feb 1999.

Slovenia enhanced its international cooperation after the decision to join NATO. We were aware that full membership in the Alliance would not only increase the security of Slovenia but also pose new challenges in the provision of peace abroad. So, we increased our presence in SFOR with ROLE-1 medical unit of 12 service members on 1 Feb 2000, with additional MP platoon in MSU, a motorized company with 86 service members in MNBG (Multinational Battle group – Poland, Portugal, Slovenia) in Doboj, additional staff posts in SFOR HQ, NSE - National Support Element and NIC-National Intelligence Cell, all together the largest SAF contingent in one PSO so far.

SAF service members are today present in Bosnia and Herzegovina in EU – led PSO Althea. Slovenian

contingent consists of EUPIC (EUFOR Plans and Information Cell) teams (56) in all three sectors, one light air detachment (based in Slovenia), EUFOR HQ posts (5), NSE (14), NIC (6). Including two staff posts in NATO HQ in Sarajevo, we have 86 SAF service members in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the moment.

Our participation in KFOR (Kosovo Force) began on 5 Jan 2000, when 6 officers took over duties in the area of civil - military and public relations. At the end of 2003, SAF increased presence in KFOR with additional 11 service members on staff positions in MNB Southwest, and later in 2005, with 1 MP platoon, 1 motorized platoon, staff posts, NSE and NIC in 2006, up to the present strength of 85 SAF service members.

In 2004 we deployed one reconnaissance platoon from the 1st Brigade special detachment, two SAF service members and a NSE to the ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces) in Afghanistan. Later we sent also a group of Slovenian firefighters to KAIA Airport in Kabul, as well as a team of 2 veterinaries. In 2005, step-by-step, structure of the SAF contingent has been changed to the present structure and strength of 49 SAF service members: 1 motorized platoon (39), NSE (6) and 2 staff posts in PRT HQ in Herat, and 2 posts in ISAF HQ in Kabul.

For more details about the current strength of SAF service members in PSO, see enclosed picture. The picture shows that Slovenian presence in PSO nowadays is significantly in favor of NATO and EU – led operations.

At the moment we have altogether 228 SAF service members in PSO abroad. Including 42 different other posts abroad and one MP platoon in NRF-NATO Reaction Forces, SAF participation abroad is 304 service members or 4,11 % of total SAF active strength.

But our plans go even further. In a few days we will send 2 officers in Democratic Republic of the Congo and, in October this year, 2 officers in Darfur. In 2006, we also plan to increase our presence in Afghanistan with one additional OMLT (Operational Mentor and Liaison Team) team (5 men). In KFOR we plan to increase our presence up to 270 SAF service members in 2006, and up to 640 in 2007. We do not plan any changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2006, but in Jan 2007 we plan to withdraw EUPIC teams (19) from one sector.

In the previous years, every fifth SAF service member has participated in missions abroad. We gained new lessons learned and knowledge, that we have successfully included in training and preparation for the following missions abroad. Not only professional knowledge, also new friendships with the service members of armed forces of various nationalities, cultures and customs were gained. We were regarded everywhere abroad as being consistent, persevering, self-sacrificing, and high-trained soldiers.

Our plans are ambitious. Every PSO is unique, and the present and the future environment where SAF service members are deployed or are planned to be deployed, is constantly changing and often unpredictable.

Our ambitious plans meet all new challenges. And we in SAF are determined to fulfill all plans and to face with all challenges!