

SLOVENSKA VOJSKA 15 LET PO VSTOPU REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE V NATO

THE SLOVENIAN ARMED FORCES 15 YEARS AFTER THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA JOINED NATO

Povzetek Republika Slovenija je 15 let članica Nata. Članstvo v zavezništvu je veliko prispevalo h kakovostnemu razvoju Slovenske vojske. S sodelovanjem v mednarodnih operacijah in na misijah prispeva k mednarodni varnosti. Pred vstopom v Nato in po njem se Slovenska vojska prilagaja in preoblikuje glede na novonastale razmere ter varnostne izzive, tako da se lahko učinkovito odzove. Sodeluje na mednarodnih vojaških vajah in jih organizira ter deluje v Natovih predstavništvih, poveljstvih in enotah. Natova odvrtačna drža krepi zavezništvo in zahteva učinkovito odzivanje na nove vire ogrožanja. Varnostno okolje se hitro spreminja, pri tem pa hibridne in kibernetične grožnje postajajo vse nevarnejše. Proces dolgotrajne prilagoditve Nata zahteva od članic pripravljenost za odzivanje na vse morebitne vire ogrožanja v krogu 360 stopinj. Republika Slovenija aktivno sodeluje tudi v projektih pametne obrambe, konceptu povezanih sil in konceptu vodilne države. Obrambni proračun se je po letih padanja spet začel zviševati, kar bo v naslednjih letih lahko pozitivno vplivalo na razvoj vojaških zmogljivosti za nacionalne potrebe in potrebe zavezništva. Članstvo v Natu je za Republiko Slovenijo še vedno najučinkovitejša in najracionalnejša rešitev zagotavljanja nacionalne varnosti, vendar mora država nositi tudi solidaren del bremena.

Ključne besede *Nato, Slovenska vojska, vojaške zmogljivosti, odvrtačna drža, prilagajanje.*

Abstract The Republic of Slovenia has been a NATO member for 15 years. Its NATO membership has significantly contributed to the quality development of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF), which has made a contribution to international security by taking part in international operations and missions. Before and after joining NATO, the SAF has adapted and transformed in view of the newly created settings and security challenges in a way to respond to them effectively. It has participated in and

organized multinational military exercises, and has been operating within NATO representations, commands and units. NATO's deterrence posture strengthens the Alliance and requires an effective response to new sources of threat. The security environment is changing rapidly with hybrid and cyber threats becoming increasingly dangerous. NATO's long-term adaptation process requires members to respond to all potential sources of threat with a 360-degree approach. The Republic of Slovenia is also actively involved in the Smart Defence project, the Connected Forces Initiative and the Framework Nations Concept. The years-long decline in the defence budget has been reversed, which can, in the upcoming years, have a positive impact on the development of military capabilities for national needs and for the needs of the Alliance. For the Republic of Slovenia, NATO membership is still the most effective and rational solution to ensure its national security; however, the nation should lend solidarity by taking its share of the burden.

Key words *NATO, Slovenian Armed Forces, military capabilities, deterrence posture, adaptation.*

Introduction The international security environment is changing and there are an increasing number of new threats and crisis hotspots that affect both individual nations and NATO as a whole. For this reason, NATO is constantly facing new challenges. Adjustments in the Alliance's posture enable an effective countering of the potential sources of threat and allow it to operate in a changed security environment. An open-door policy and enhanced cooperation with partners allow the Alliance to expand, and to facilitate security stability in both immediate and broader regions. Collaboration between member states is based on trust, solidarity, unity and cohesion. The decisions taken in consensus must be affordable, sustainable and credible. In order to ensure collective security, members are expected to lend solidarity by taking their share of the burden, and to provide for the development of their own defence systems; Article 3 of the Washington Treaty declares that: »In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.«

By becoming a member of NATO, the Republic of Slovenia assured its safety as part of a collective defence system. By participating in NATO activities, it contributes to peace and stability in the regional and global environment. Over 15 years, the Republic of Slovenia has become a recognizable and active member of NATO, contributing to the provision of collective defence by making visible contributions on the part of the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF). In this way, it has strengthened its international position as a safe and stable country, which has also had a positive impact on its economic development. Despite the positive contribution and the assumption of its share of the burden, the Republic of Slovenia will have to increase defence spending in relation to its GDP. Considering today's and the future's regional and global security challenges, military and asymmetric threats, such as regional

conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorist and cyber attacks, and more, the public increasingly and justifiably believes that the Republic of Slovenia's membership of NATO is necessary. From the point of view of the benefits and invested financial resources, this is currently the most rational and effective way for Slovenia to provide for its security. Slovenia has striven to join NATO and the EU for the common values and its own national and strategic security interests, as well as for the desire to contribute to security and stability in the European continent and beyond. This orientation was supported by the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia in a referendum of 2003¹.

Since Slovenia's accession to NATO in 2004, its defence system, with the SAF constituting the major part of it, has been successfully carrying out its mission and tasks, and has achieved high-quality progress in this regard. In 15 years, the SAF has become a respected and recognizable partner in the Alliance and internationally. It also enjoys a good reputation at home and actively participates in many international operations and missions (IOMs), thus making its contribution to stability and security. It actively supports the system of protection against natural and other disasters and the internal security system by providing assistance to the police in the protection of the state border. This cooperation serves as an important guide and developmental drive for the SAF, both in equipping and in military education and training.

The purpose of this article is to present the progress made by the SAF in the period of Slovenia's membership of NATO. In this context, we highlight the key problems of providing sufficient financial and human resources. We will try to determine whether the contribution of the Republic of Slovenia has been recognized by the Alliance, and what has been achieved by the SAF in terms of quality. In the conclusion, part of the findings also incorporates recommendations for the future. In preparing the paper, we used the methods of comparison, statistics and description, as well as inductive and deductive methods and the participant observation method, which influenced the selection of the key data which enable the establishment of the quality progress of the SAF.

1 THE SAF AFTER JOINING NATO

In 1995, the Territorial Defence was renamed the SAF. The essential milestones that influenced its development were the transition from a system of defence of its own territory to a system of collective defence; a transition from conscription to a

¹ In the referendum held on 23 March 2003, Slovenians conclusively opted both for EU and NATO membership. This confirmed the two main objectives of Slovenian foreign policy. With a 66% turnout, almost 89.61% of voters voted for EU membership and 66.05% for NATO membership. The result of the referendum was binding and unrepeatable for the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. Three days after the referendum, on 26 March 2003, a protocol on the accession of the Republic of Slovenia to NATO was signed. The National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia ratified the North Atlantic Treaty on 24 February 2004, and the Republic of Slovenia solemnly deposited its instrument of accession in Washington on 29 March 2004, together with other acceding countries. In doing so, it became a fully-fledged member of NATO.

professional armed forces, and the Republic of Slovenia's membership of NATO². Throughout this time, the SAF had been facing various transformational changes, which also contributed to its progress in the enhancement of military capabilities. The SAF acquired new weapons and equipment, and increased the competences of its active and contract reserve members.

The accession of the Republic of Slovenia to NATO was followed by the adoption of key steering documents by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, such as the Resolution on the General Long-Term Development and Equipping Programme of the SAF (ReSDPRO SV), the latest version of which is valid until 2025. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia also adopted several medium-term developmental documents, the most recent one being the Medium-Term Defence Programme 2018-2023, which on page 6/31 stipulates: »The development of defence capabilities will take place within the defence resources available by 2023, and will be primarily targeted at achieving the level of defence ambitions as set out in the ReSDPRO SV 2025, taking into account NATO's 2017 capability targets for the Republic of Slovenia and the decision of the Republic of Slovenia to join PESCO.« In determining the ambitions, effort was made to take into consideration the financial capabilities of the Republic of Slovenia in individual medium-term periods. Nevertheless, there was a certain gap between the ambitions and the available resources.

During these 15 years, the intensity of individual and collective military training has increased. There have been several transformations at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Cooperation within the programme Partnership for Peace (PfP) has intensified. Compared to the period prior to Slovenia's membership of NATO, participation in IOMs and multinational military exercises abroad has also increased significantly.

The SAF contributes its capabilities within NATO and the EU, thereby ensuring its military contribution to peace and stability in the regional and global security environment. The Republic of Slovenia's membership of NATO has enabled the SAF to explore new opportunities for cooperation with the armed forces of other NATO member states. The integration has also enabled its participation in joint projects, data exchange and other activities. In 2015, the Republic of Slovenia accredited the NATO Mountain Warfare Centre of Excellence, while SAF members are also present in five other NATO Centres of Excellence (COEs)³. Up to 2010, an intensive process of integration into NATO took place, leading eventually to the signing of

² *The last conscripts completed their mandatory military service in 2003. The SAF is now a fully professional armed force complemented by a contractual reserve and, if necessary, augmented by a strategic reserve.*

³ *SAF members are present at the NATO Mountain Warfare COE in Slovenia; the NATO Humint COE in Romania; the NATO Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence COE in the Czech Republic; the NATO Counter-Intelligence COE in Poland; and the NATO Civil-Military Cooperation COE in the Netherlands.*

a declaration on the completion of the integration programme⁴. Consequently, the Republic of Slovenia, as well as the SAF, fulfilled the formal requirements for integrated operation within the Alliance. The integration process had a positive effect on the command and control system and, in addition, to the establishment of the non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps and the NCO chain of command; many other developmental changes occurred.

In the period since the Republic of Slovenia joined the Alliance, the SAF has been more successful in some areas of development and less in others. The cutting of the defence budget over the years as a result of the economic recession and its impact on the Republic of Slovenia has also severely affected the SAF. A critical point was the building of two medium infantry battalion groups. There has also been a lack of investment in other equipment and weapons, modernization of shooting ranges, training areas and other ranges, and the adaptation of military barracks to the needs of a professional armed force. In the upcoming years, it will be important to overcome all of these hindrances to the development of the SAF. A few years ago, the Professor and former Minister of Defence, Ljubica Jelušič, said: »The financial and economic crisis we are now facing will have negative implications for the speed of development and modernization of the Slovenian defence system. However, we should not stop or even freeze the development process for a number of years, for this would actually represent a regression» (2009, p 14).

In the past two years the Republic of Slovenia has been allocating more funds for defence in nominal terms. Nevertheless, this is still not enough, since the loss over the previous years was extremely high and has caused a delay in the replacement of obsolete equipment and weapons, and in building new military capabilities, which also affects the SAF's combat power. The current positive financial trend is still not enough to initiate the modernization process. Additionally, due to the strengthening of the economy, the lack of personnel joining the SAF is becoming increasingly critical.

1.1 Participation in international operations and missions

The participation of the SAF in IOMs represents a direct contribution of the Republic of Slovenia to ensuring peace, stability and security in the regional and global security environment. In this respect, the SAF makes a visible and recognizable contribution and is, as such, a recognizable partner among the Allies, both in terms of its competence and its equipment and weapons. Activities within IOMs are an

⁴ Šteiner's opinion on the issue is the following: "In many areas, the beginnings of integration are closing the transition period, with the Republic of Slovenia and its armed forces credibly participating in defence and military structures and joint activities in both NATO and the EU. This particularly includes the activities of joint defence planning, participation in joint commands, integration into the Allied force structure, contribution to response forces, participation in international operations and missions, and the building of national capabilities which, through the doctrines and standards, are interoperable with others in the Alliance." (2011, p 45).

important part of the Alliance's common tasks.⁵ Ljubica Jelušič stated: »The concept of peace operations, in its broadest sense, encompasses all forms of military and non-military activities that take place in the context of political and diplomatic efforts to establish and preserve peace.» (2005, p 12).

In 15 years, the Republic of Slovenia, mainly SAF members, has participated in the IOMs of NATO, the EU, the UN and in the Global Coalition against Daesh. In 2009, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Strategy of the Participation of the Republic of Slovenia in International Operations and Missions, which is, in addition to laws, another foreign-policy steering document regulating the participation of the SAF in IOMs.⁶

Since 2004, the SAF has taken part in the EU's operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina; in the military observation mission UNTSO in the Middle East and UNSMIS in Syria; in NATO's Joint Enterprise operation in Kosovo as KFOR; in North Macedonia and Serbia; in NATO's operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; in the UN peacekeeping mission UNIFIL in Lebanon; in the EUFOR operation in Chad in 2008 and 2009; in the maritime military operation EU NAVFOR Somalia in 2009; in the military operation EUTM Mali; in the humanitarian operation Mare Nostrum in Lampedusa in 2013 and 2014; in the Global Coalition against Daesh in Iraq; in the EU Operation EU NAVFOR MED/Sophia in the Mediterranean Sea; and in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia. For many years, the largest SAF contingent has been deployed in Kosovo. To date, over 13,500 SAF members have participated in IOMs since the first time the Republic of Slovenia deployed its troops in an IOM in 1997.

In the past 15 years, the average annual share of SAF members per rotation in the IOMs has been large, and also recognized within NATO. The Resolution on the General Long-Term Development and Equipping Programme of the SAF up to 2025 stipulates, *inter alia*, that the SAF should have up to 7,600 active component members, while the number currently stands at about 6,600. After 2004, the average annual deployment was between 3 and 6%. The statistical overview of the average number of SAF personnel participating in IOMs is shown in the table below, broken down by year.

⁵ Article 37, paragraph 1 of the Defence Act states: "Carry out obligations assumed by the state in international organizations and through treaties."

Article 22, paragraph 1, indent 2 of the Service in the SAF Act states: "...through participation in operations, missions and other forms of operation appropriate for conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace enforcement and collective defence."

⁶ Section 22 (Strategic Interests) of the Strategy of the Participation of the Republic of Slovenia in International Operations and Missions states: "Slovenia's strategic interests in participating in international operations and missions are determined by its geostrategic position, political, security, economic, development, humanitarian and other interests and principles, including obligations within the international organisations of which it is a member, at the global and regional levels. For all types of international operations and missions, except for rescue operations, strategic interests are defined primarily in South-East Europe, as well as in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and other regions in the world."

Table 1:
Average number
of SAF personnel
per IOM
(2004-2018)
Source:
Summarized
from the Annual
Reports of the
Ministry of
Defence of the
Republic of
Slovenia.

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of deployed personnel	247	273	324	751	456	512	459	442	424	402	419	402	332	300	350

Lessons learned in IOMs are used in the pre-deployment training of future contingents, equipping, and the development of military education and training.

1.2 The positive impact of multinational military exercises on the readiness of the SAF

Multinational military exercises play an increasingly important role in NATO. They contribute to better readiness of forces and their ability to deploy. An important contribution to this progress has been made by the new NATO Collective Training and Exercise Directive, which covers a broader spectrum, enables better connections, extended long-term planning and much more. The SAF also follows this trend by acting as a participant, organizer or co-organizer of multinational military exercises. By taking part in them, it tests its interoperability with other armed forces. The SAF is aware that multinational military exercises also contribute to security and stability, as well as building interoperability among Alliance members and other partner countries. Multinational military exercises constitute part of collective training, which facilitates the meeting of the required standards through which the operational readiness of armed forces can be maintained. According to Osterman, »the combat orientation of the peacetime training of units and commands allows for the implementation of the expected tasks in real combat situations« (2014, p 51). When the SAF organizes or participates in NATO exercises, it also meets national targets and targets set by NATO's Connected Forces Initiative. The intensity of the SAF's participation in activities abroad is shown by the fact that, in 2016, the SAF participated in 27 multinational military exercises, in 2017, in 32, and, in 2018, in 20 multinational military exercises.

With regard to these exercises, it is important to mention the US centres in Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels. The SAF makes a standing contribution of an M-84 Tank Platoon to the Joint Multinational Readiness Centre, thereby enabling more effective collective training of other member states. Additionally, the SAF has had a very successful and years-long cooperation with the United States European Command, the Colorado National Guard, and the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team of the US Armed Forces.

Multinational military exercises are not only important for the SAF, but also for the Republic of Slovenia, as by organizing them we make an important contribution to the readiness of the Alliance’s military capabilities. Additionally, as a host country, we provide all the necessary logistical support to other armed forces when located in the Republic of Slovenia. In 2018, for example, the Republic of Slovenia, through the Port of Koper, provided a logistical shift for the NATO exercise »Trident Juncture 2018«. In the coming years, the SAF is also expected to actively participate in NATO exercises and other exercises as an organizer or co-organizer⁷. In this way, it can serve as a link to the partner countries in the Balkans and beyond.

1.3 Standardization as the cornerstone of interoperability

The adoption of common standards facilitates interoperability in NATO, and therefore standardization can be termed the cornerstone of interoperability. With the implementation of NATO STANAGs, members of the Alliance can more easily achieve the necessary levels of interoperability for the effective implementation of joint activities. Interoperability is an integral part of any NATO military capability.

The SAF actively participates in the procedures for adopting NATO STANAGs, which, following the prescribed procedures, become Slovenian Military Standards (SVS) and are, according to Osterman⁸, regulations of their own. The interoperability process is also carried out with the standardization process. The SAF adopts and implements NATO standards that are needed to achieve the due interoperability of the SAF for its operations within NATO and also to support target objectives. In 15 years, the Republic of Slovenia has confirmed and adopted a large number of NATO STANAGs at the national level. A statistical overview of the number of these standards is shown in the table below, broken down by year.

Table 2:
A statistical overview of the number of standards
Source:
MoD - Standardization and Codification Section.

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Adopted SVSs	18	35	50	25	46	51	52	41	46	42	29	33	32	62	42
Nationally confirmed STANAGs	9	74	66	42	44	120	165	59	57	59	49	61	301	147	97

⁷ Since 2012, the SAF has organized the military exercise “Adriatic Strike”, which is occasionally included in the list of NATO exercises. In addition, it has collaborated with the USA and Croatia in the organization of the multinational military exercise “Immediate Response”.

⁸ Osterman states, “A NATO STANAG is a unique regulation establishing the mandatory practices or technical requirements in the SAF, as there would be no international connectivity within the Alliance without it. It is therefore necessary to adopt NATO STANAGs into the Slovenian military standards.” (2010, p 253).

The Alliance seeks to further enhance interoperability between its members, so standardization in NATO is becoming an increasingly important domain⁹. In this respect, the SAF also makes a contribution by delegating an average of 90 representatives to take part in the work of various standardization working bodies. Since the SAF is primarily a land force, the most important ones for the SAF are the Joint Standardization Board and the Land Standardization Board.

1.4 The presence of SAF members in NATO Command Structure and Force Structure, representations and other structures

Soon after its creation, NATO established its command structure and structure of military forces. By joining the Alliance, the SAF also took on a proportionate share of international military duties. These enable SAF representatives to play an active part in NATO commands and units. In 2019, the SAF is manning 25 such duties. Part of these duties is within various COEs, offices and headquarters, while the rest of the 25 duties are in the representation offices in Brussels, Mons and Norfolk. SAF personnel must have all the necessary competencies arising from job descriptions in order to take on these international duties. Lessons learned from duties abroad are important for the SAF's operation at different levels of command and control. On completing their international military duties, SAF members are, if possible, posted to positions where their acquired experience can be used. Given the positive feedback so far, and the number of military representatives abroad, we can conclude that the SAF has made a visible contribution to NATO. Given the total number of SAF members, the proportion of members on duties abroad amounts to between 1% and 1.5%. The statistical overview of the number of SAF personnel abroad is shown in the table below, broken down by year.

Table 3:
The statistical overview of the number of SAF personnel abroad
Source:
SAF General Staff/
Joint Personnel Division.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of SAF members abroad	15	60	80	91	83	78	74	67	60	71	65	64	69	70	73

SAF members work in the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to NATO and the EU in Brussels, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, the Allied Joint Force Command Naples and elsewhere.

⁹ The Republic of Slovenia is also a member of the EU, and EU military capabilities are also built and operational on the basis of NATO STANAGs, which further increases their importance.

2 NATO'S ADAPTATION TO NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES

In this decade, the Alliance has organized several NATO summits, namely in Chicago (2012), Wales (2014), Warsaw (2016) and Brussels (2018). In addition to significant changes in the security environment, this period has also been marked by the economic downturn, which in most NATO member states resulted in reduced defence spending. However, after the adoption of a joint commitment to allocate 2% of GDP to defence, the situation improved. After the NATO Summit in Wales, NATO members began to adapt. Prior to that, however, NATO had concentrated primarily on crisis response activities, and focused its attention on the operation in Afghanistan. The new era requires NATO to be ready for all potential sources of threat. This need was also dictated by the Ukrainian crisis in the East and the deterioration of relations with Russia¹⁰. The long-term adaptation of the Alliance's posture is required by the changed security environment, which calls for political, military and institutional adaptation¹¹. A new cycle of defence planning began as early as in 2014¹². In this regard, the steps that the Alliance has taken to strengthen mutual trust between the Allies (Reassurance Measures), so that they provide the necessary military contribution to counter threats and work with partner countries, are very important for the strengthening of the Alliance.

NATO is thus confronted by changed security challenges in the East and various threats from the South. In the light of the various security challenges, NATO has also begun to apply adjustments on its southern flank in such a way that it can adequately react in the event of a threat. The new reinforced deterrence posture is based on the action plan of readiness and the commitment to increase investment in the development of defence capabilities. The deterrence and defence activities must be adapted to each case of threat individually, so that it can use different leverages and power levels. NATO must be able to respond to threats with a 360-degree approach, since threats can be posed both by state and non-state actors. Strategic communications also plays an important role in responding to threats. The long-standing operation

¹⁰ NATO, 2018; *Deterrence and defence*: "Russia has become more assertive with the illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, as well as its military build-up close to NATO's borders. In parallel, to the south, the security situation in the Middle East and Africa has deteriorated due to a combination of factors that are causing loss of life, fuelling large-scale migration flows and inspiring terrorist attacks in Allied countries and elsewhere."

¹¹ *Military adaptation refers to the strengthening of NATO's deterrence and defence posture, which includes the implementation of commitments adopted at the NATO Summit in Wales. Political adaptation, however, refers to ensuring and strengthening interoperability and an enhanced dialogue with partners, cooperation with international organizations, continuation of the open-door policy, etc. Institutional adjustment refers to the implementation of various reforms.*

¹² NATO, 2018; *NATO Defence Planning Process*: "The aim of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) is to provide a framework within which national and Alliance defence planning activities can be harmonised to enable Allies to provide the required forces and capabilities in the most effective way. It should facilitate the timely identification, development and delivery of the necessary range of forces that are interoperable and adequately prepared, equipped, trained and supported, as well as the associated military and non-military capabilities, to undertake the Alliance's full spectrum of missions."

in Afghanistan still remains one of the Alliance's priorities; however, the coalition forces are gradually transforming and decreasing its scope¹³.

Looking through the prism of adaptation, NATO needs additional military capabilities, which are also linked to the new multi-annual cycle of the NATO Defence Planning Process. In planning, the primary focus should be put on the accurate Strategic Foresight Analysis and the realistic planning of the Level of Ambitions. Increased cooperation between member states and partner countries is becoming increasingly important, which also adds to their interoperability.

NATO is aware of the current and potential future threats in this changed security environment, which will not see a successful response unless a Comprehensive Approach is used. This can be achieved only through broader cooperation between NATO and other international organizations that are aiming for the same goal. In this respect, the focus is on cooperation with the European Union, which has formally been in place since 2001. Several common documents have already been adopted as a result of this cooperation¹⁴.

2.1 NATO's activities to respond to new sources of threat

NATO must be prepared in such a way as to be able to effectively respond to new potential sources of threat. In the long run, it needs to adapt by providing a rapidly responsive robust defence, which can support an effective deterrence and defence posture, while at the same time allowing responses to crisis response tasks. In this way, it can maintain its military presence in the countries where this will be required. This will require additional military contributions from NATO members, as it will be the only way to effectively implement immediate assurance measures¹⁵. In addition to other documents, the NATO Summit in Wales also saw the adoption of the Readiness Action Plan, the Connected Forces Initiative and the Framework Nations Concept, which will contribute to more effective cooperation and more rational development of military capabilities. In the implementation of these and other documents an important role is played by the NATO Response Force and its organic Very High

¹³ *The Republic of Slovenia began to participate in the operation in Afghanistan in 2004. The number of SAF personnel gradually increased so that between 2009 and 2011 the Slovenian contingent on average numbered over 90 members. Later, the number began to decrease so that the contingent now includes up to 10 SAF members.*

¹⁴ *In 2018, the Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation was adopted, which also includes maritime responses in the Mediterranean.*

¹⁵ *NATO, 2018; Projecting Stability: Adapting the NATO Readiness Action Plan: "A number of immediate assurance measures were implemented as part of the effort to reassure NATO's Central and Eastern European members that they would be protected from any potential aggression from Russia. These measures included bolstering land, maritime and air activities in the relevant areas and undertaking a series of exercises focused on collective defence. The RAP also included longer-term adaptation measures to meet the evolving threat, including significantly improving the capability of the NATO Response Force (NRF); creating a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF); establishing a number of NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) in Eastern Europe; plus a range of measures designed to enhance the capabilities of the Alliance's multinational forces. In each of these areas, much progress has been made."*

Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), which adds to the responsiveness¹⁶. The Republic of Slovenia also makes a contribution to these forces¹⁷. The situation in the broader global security environment requires rapid and effective adaptation. To this end, the majority of member states are gradually increasing their defence spending towards 2% of GDP. The success of the implementation of these commitments depends on the willingness and ability of members to provide the necessary resources. However, the implementation of these commitments can be impeded by excessive ambition or insufficient resources. In this respect, the greatest burden is borne by member states contributing the major part of the VJTF, as well as those who are or will be in the process of constructing a reception and accommodation infrastructure for NATO military forces on their territories (Host Nation Support). Increased attention is being devoted to the improvement in interoperability, which is also associated with standardization. Additionally, common multinational military exercises and provision of personnel for the available posts in NATO structures are gaining importance. Maintaining the high readiness of forces, an increased number of multinational military exercises far from the units' home locations, and the deployment of forces represent and will continue to represent a major expense for the member states. It will also be important to ensure greater strategic mobility (land, air and maritime), since the effectiveness of forces is dependent on it. The new concept of NATO's response forces also requires member states to improve their Host Nation Support system, used by NATO forces on a permanent or temporary basis or when in transit.

In addition to developing military capabilities and improving responsiveness, NATO is constantly striving to prevent and mitigate various tensions and conflicts in individual regions through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. A good example of partnership cooperation is that with the Mediterranean Dialogue countries.

2.2 A changed security environment

In recent years, the security environment has been significantly changed by globalization and polarization, and the emergence of new threats and crisis areas, which have also affected security¹⁸. Consequently, the provision of security will gain importance in the transformation of both the national and the international

¹⁶ NATO, 2018; NATO Response Force/Very High Readiness Joint Task Force: "Following the Wales Summit in 2014, Allies decided to enhance the NRF by creating a Spearhead Force within it. The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force was formed to better respond to the changing security environment to the east and south of the Alliance's borders."

¹⁷ In 2019 the SAF is contributing its transport helicopter as its main capability.

¹⁸ NATO, 2107, p 75; The Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA): "The SFA highlights and discusses several debated issues, such as the fate of globalization, the impact of polarization, the future of AI, the rise of China and the redistribution of geostrategic power. While the West might be less dominant in the future economic order, NATO Allies can still influence the future security environment by the strategic choices that they make today. Although the levels of violence linked to armed conflict have shown a decreasing trend, the security environment around the Euro-Atlantic region has become more volatile, with a growing potential for interstate conflict and increased terrorism threat, polarization and regionalization. Rapid, and in some cases disruptive, changes associated with the shifts of power and challenges to the existing world order are likely to take place in the next two decades. In this context, NATO will continue to provide the main framework for collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic region."

environment. This is also noted by Jacob: »Security commands profound power in transforming national, international and global political orders over the world,« (2019, p xxvi). The deterioration of relations between NATO and Russia, the crisis in Ukraine, security challenges in the Middle East, and the instabilities on NATO's southern flank require mutual trust, increased responsiveness of NATO forces, and an enhanced capacity for rapid military intervention. On NATO's southern flank, an increased number of new threats are emerging from terrorist groups such as Al Qaida and other extremist groups which connect with the local population in the territories of North Africa and the Middle East. All of this poses a potential threat to the spread of terrorism into Europe. Africa is a particularly sensitive area here, with its years-long conflicts between various ethnic groups, illegal activities, such as arms, drugs and other trafficking, poverty, climate change and other factors generating additional tensions in this part of the world. Threats are scattered, numerous and of various intensities. Despite the defeat of ISIL in 2019, the situation in Syria and Iraq continues to create conditions for the operation of ISIL dispersed groups, which can pose a serious threat and increase instability in the broader global security environment. A global coalition was formed to fight against Daesh. A specific security problem and a potential terrorism threat were represented by former ISIL fighters returning home to European countries, some also NATO members.

In 2015 and 2016, a major flow of migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and other fragile countries to Europe occurred due to the unstable situation in the Middle East and North Africa. The Balkan route remains one of the main land routes towards Western Europe and poses a security risk for the countries, which Kešetović and Ninković also note: »Migrations, especially the irregular ones, have huge security repercussions. Politicians can discuss illegal migration, and a certain public can regard it as a threat to the political, societal, economic and cultural security of the state and society» (2016, p 106). NATO has joined the Sea Guardian operation to address the migrant problem in Libya and the Aegean Sea¹⁹.

Hybrid and cyber threats are becoming increasingly present, as the development of information technology is extremely fast. Both individual states and NATO must therefore be able to counter such threats through effective situational awareness. Notwithstanding the fact that NATO's focus remains in this area, it is still the primary responsibility of member states to deal with such threats. They therefore need to improve the resilience of their own and the common information systems, and provide security to critical infrastructure, which is also noted by Cavelti: »Despite the increasing attention, cyber security is gaining security policy and despite the possibility of a major, systemic, catastrophic incident involving critical infrastructure, computer network vulnerabilities are predominantly a business and espionage problem at the moment,« (2019, p 424). In order to provide efficient cyber defence, it is important to ensure closer cooperation with partners, international

¹⁹ NATO, 2018; Operation Sea Guardian. "Through Operation Sea Guardian, NATO is contributing to the maintenance of a secure and safe maritime environment, while collaborating with other actors, such as the European Union (EU) by providing support for instance to Operation Sophia in the Central Mediterranean."

organizations and industry²⁰. It is important to build and develop defensive and offensive cyber capabilities, part of which should be combined at the NATO level. This, however, depends on the will and readiness of member states. Countering cyber and hybrid threats is primarily the responsibility of the attacked state, which can request assistance from another NATO member. Today's threats are different from threats in the past, because they were clear and it was quickly possible to recognize the location from which they came. Today, however, this is no longer the case.

2.3 Enhancing military responsiveness as a reaction to new security challenges

Enhanced military responsiveness is a reaction to new security challenges. To this end, NATO has modernized and improved the responsiveness of the existing NATO Response Force. This has been achieved with the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and by assigning greater importance to the second echelon (Initial Follow-On Forces Group). The C2 operational structure with standing reception and integration units (NATO Force Integration Unit) has been upgraded and the utilization of the existing corps structure has been improved. As human and material resources are limited, the efficiency is provided through Advanced Planning.

Consequently, in 2017, NATO established an Enhanced Forward Presence in Poland, Estonia, Latvia and elsewhere. The primary purpose of forward presence is to deter threats with an unambiguous account of determination, ability and solidarity. The Alliance thus demonstrates its ability to respond to new threats in a quick and effective manner. In some countries, NATO Force Integration Units²¹ have been established. These units are intended to serve as a permanent link between the NATO Response Force capabilities and the national capabilities, where the deployment of forces is expected. Their mission is to receive and accommodate the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and possibly activate the subsequent NATO Response Force echelons. In this respect, NATO members in which NATO Force Integration Units are located bear the main burden of manning, while part of the burden is also shared by other members²².

²⁰ In order to improve its situation, in 2016 the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Cyber Security Strategy, which provides an overview of the existing situation, defines the vision and sets goals.

²¹ NATO, 2018; NATO Force Integration Units: "As part of NATO's adaptation to security challenges from the east and the south, the Alliance has opened eight Force Integration Units in Sofia (Bulgaria), Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Vilnius (Lithuania), Bydgoszcz (Poland) and Bucharest (Romania), Bratislava (Slovakia), and Székesfehérvár (Hungary). These small units represent a visible and persistent NATO presence in these member countries.

"The primary mission of NFIUs is to foster collaboration between national forces and the NATO High Readiness Forces in times of military-political crises. Specifically, these small units provide broad planning support to facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the Eastern part of the Alliance and support collective defence planning. They also work with host nations to identify logistical networks, transportation routes and supporting infrastructure."

²² As part of the standing military forward presence, the Republic of Slovenia deployed its first SAF contingent to Latvia in 2017. In Hungary, it provides permanent manning of a duty in the NFIU.

Increased potential for terrorist threats on the southern flank, migration, illegal trade and other factors bring new security challenges for the Alliance. In order to strengthen and respond more effectively to threats, a NATO-led Hub for the South was set up in 2017. The Hub constitutes part of NATO's command structure, within the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, and also includes SAF personnel.

NATO has increased the number and status of multinational military exercises. In a qualitative sense, they have been upgraded by the new NATO Doctrine for Education, Training, Exercise and Evaluation, which provides a broader spectrum, interoperability, and a more extended planning period for exercises²³. International exercises also contribute to security stability, build connectivity between Alliance members and partner countries, and contribute to the visibility of the implementation of Assurance Measures.

2.4 Adaptation of the SAF to new security challenges

New security challenges in the international security environment are increasingly unpredictable, which is also noted by a number of authors, such as Grizold, a Professor and former Minister of Defence²⁴. NATO needs to adapt and be prepared to respond adequately to these security challenges. The Alliance is a community of countries, including the Republic of Slovenia, which operates on the principle of solidarity, unity and cohesion. In a broader sense, this means that if NATO members are adapting, NATO is adapting. Consequently, the SAF, as part of the defence system, is constantly facing new challenges. These require constant adaptation by adjusting the organizational structure and maximizing the available human and material resources for the construction and combat effectiveness of military capabilities built for national needs and for the needs of the Alliance. This is also our binding obligation according to Article 3 of the Washington Treaty. Only in this way can the Republic of Slovenia provide effective deterrence to various threats, which is also noted by Rode: »But deterrence – created by both our own capabilities and those gained through NATO membership – is our best way forward,« (2018, p 46). The SAF has been organizationally adjusting in such a way that it is able to perform its legally mandated tasks. Additionally, it follows NATO's modern trends in the field of military education and training, both individual and collective, with the goal of acquiring its combat character. Due to the economic downturn, defence-related financial resources were reduced

²³ NATO, 2018, p 1; NATO Education Training Exercise and Evaluation (ETEE): "NATO Education Training Exercise and Evaluation (ETEE): NATO plans and conducts education, individual and collective training, exercises and evaluation at strategic, operational and tactical levels. Therefore, policy documents exist to provide a guideline to all ETEE related activities. The overarching document is the MC 458/2, NATO ETEE Policy and all Bi-SC directives are derived from it."

²⁴ Grizold states: "...that, after the end of the Cold War, the international security environment has become increasingly unpredictable and uncertain. The fundamental characteristic of this environment is the complexity of security threats, which includes the following essential elements: integration, intertwining and interaction between military and non-military security threats (e.g. military and ethical conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, terrorism, natural and other disasters, famine, infectious diseases, environmental pollution etc.)" (2005, pp 22-23).

by around 40%. Consequently, the financial plan of the Ministry of Defence in 2010 amounted to 552.6 million EUR, and in 2014 to only 339.9 million EUR. Over the past two years, the defence budget has been rising again; however, not enough to eliminate the past backlogs. Moreover, the current economic growth in the Republic of Slovenia has changed the situation on the labour market, and the public sector salary system, which also includes the SAF, has not adapted, as the economic principle of supply and demand would require²⁵. A number of measures have been adopted; however, they have not brought about a significant improvement. In addition to ensuring the necessary number of personnel, the level of defence expenditure, with a due share for the development and modernization of the SAF, is also an important factor to be considered in transformation processes. Despite the positive budgetary trend over the past two years, it remains a major challenge for the Republic of Slovenia to provide sufficient and stable budgetary funding for the development of the necessary military capabilities for both national and NATO needs, considering the major lag in modernization. Bearing in mind the accepted 2% commitment, defence expenditure in the Republic of Slovenia is not growing fast enough.

The table shows the implementation of the MOD's financial plans from 2008 to 2017, and defence expenditure in nominal terms and percentages as well as the adopted changes to the 2018 financial plan.

Table 4:
MOD's financial plans and defence expenditure from 2008 to 2017
Source:
Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia (www.mo.gov.si/si/o_ministrstvu/).

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
MoD financial plan (million EUR)	546.3	549.8	552.6	448.3	396.7	350.7	339.9	343.9	389.2	406.6	435.6
RS def. exp. (million EUR)*	566.2	575.1	583.0	478.9	423.0	381.7	366.5	361.4	406.2	425.5	448.6
RS def. exp. (% of GDP)*	1.49	1.59	1.61	1.30	1.17	1.05	0.97	0.93	1.00	1.00	0.99

In addition to providing the necessary personnel, the main financial challenge for the future is the building of two medium infantry battalion groups representing the SAF's backbone, as well as the replacement of spent equipment and armaments.

²⁵ Močnik, 2018, p 76: "The worse scenario concerning the SAF is one where the military organization loses more than 6% of their troops each year; while on the other hand achieving a low level of Recruitment Successful Rate (RSRI) with those individuals who fail to qualify for a job in other sectors of society.

"The armed forces as an organization in states does not have a direct obligation to compete with non-military organizations in terms of salaries, deferred compensations and benefits in-kind, because this is under the direct responsibility of the government, which sets up conditions for them in society."

Due to its limited financial resources, the Republic of Slovenia can provide certain military capabilities by participating in Smart Defence projects, the Connected Forces Initiative and the Framework Nations Concept²⁶.

Smart Defence includes multinational cooperation in the development of individual military capabilities in their procurement, maintenance and sharing. It is implemented in accordance with the adopted NATO strategic priorities, through projects incorporated in the first set of smart defence projects. As cyber threats are becoming increasingly dangerous, Cyber Defence projects are the ones that offer member states different opportunities for cooperation. In selecting its projects, the Republic of Slovenia pursues long-term and medium-term development goals laid down in the documents. The Connected Forces Initiative allows for improved interoperability between member states and partner nations. Its aim is to improve the readiness, interoperability and combat effectiveness of NATO and the Allied and partner forces with an extended training programme and multinational military exercises. Within this Initiative, the SAF is taking an active part in multinational military exercises. In the period of reduced defence resources and strategic reorientation of the United States, the Framework Nations Concept provided an organized way of ensuring European allies had the required capabilities and enabling them to assume a proportionate share of the burden and responsibility for common security and defence. The concept enabled the formation of groups of countries under the aegis of a framework nation providing comprehensive military capabilities. In this context, framework nations with a broader range of military capabilities and the main contribution collaborated with smaller nations that make smaller and more specialized contributions. This concept offered a long-term partnership in the provision of the full spectrum of military capabilities. With its contributions the SAF takes part in multinational forces led by a framework nation in pooling forces within NATO's response forces, multilateral land forces and IOMs.

Conclusion During the 15-year period of the Republic of Slovenia's membership of NATO, the SAF has made substantial progress in terms of quality. Some of its military capabilities, sustainability, deployability and other features have increased. Significant progress has been achieved in individual and collective training and building the NCO chain of command. During this period, the SAF has gained abundant experience from its Allies, as well as shared its own experience with other partners both as a participant, organizer or co-organizer of various multinational military exercises, camps, and other events, as noted by Jazbec: "Slovenia was dispersing its experience, know-how and lessons learned throughout the region, be it either directly to the relevant institutions (the MoD and Armed Forces) or to civil society, the media, academia etc." (2014, p 43). It has also become recognizable and respected in international settings. It has been deploying personnel to numerous

²⁶ *Smart Defence was presented by NATO Secretary-General Andres Fogh Rasmussen at the Munich Security Conference in February 2011; the Connected Forces Initiative originates from the Chicago Defence Package, adopted in May 2012, and the Framework Nations Concept was first discussed at the Ministerial Meeting in June 2013 and presented to member states in more detail in September 2013.*

IOMs and contributing its representatives to NATO's command structure and force structure, standardization bodies and elsewhere. Through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, it has been striving for a noticeable role in the more immediate region. The Republic of Slovenia's membership of NATO enables the SAF to contribute to the Alliance on a daily basis, as well as to improve its own quality. Despite the delay in the modernization of the SAF, which has been hindering its combat power, the SAF has, through the integration process, achieved the necessary interoperability so that it can smoothly collaborate with the armed forces of other NATO member states. Like other NATO armed forces, the SAF continues to adapt by making maximum use of all its available human and material resources, with the aim of providing military capabilities both for national needs and the needs of NATO. Part of the SAF's capabilities is double-faceted, enabling effective support of the system of protection against natural and other disasters and the internal security system.

Due to the reductions in defence expenditure, the ratio between personnel, operations, and investment costs has worsened. From the 2014 and 2018 Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence, it can be seen that the SAF's financial plan, which falls under the financial plan of the Ministry of Defence, amounted to 265.7 million EUR in 2014, 80% of which was spent on personnel costs, 19% on operations and 1% on investments. Over the past two years, however, financial assets and the spending ratio have improved. In 2018, the financial plan for the SAF amounted to 360.7 million EUR, 71% of which was spent on personnel costs, 22% on operations, and 7% on investments²⁷. In this regard, the key problems lie in the lack of equipment and weapons to build major military capabilities, in the overuse of part of the equipment and weapons, and in the lack of personnel. All of the above result in the poor readiness posture of the SAF.

In the future, the SAF will have to be effective, sustainable and deployable. It will be necessary to increase its combat power and maintain its combat character so that it will be able to participate in operations of different spectra and greater intensity. Due to the lack of personnel and financial resources, the SAF must now use its available human and material resources in the most efficient and rational manner. To add to its quality, it must remain active and recognizable in the international environment through IOMs, multinational military exercises and other activities. It is important that it remains actively present in the Slovenian environment and enjoys a good reputation among Slovenian citizens. In accordance with the regulations and decisions of the competent authorities, it must support the system of protection against natural and other disasters as well as the internal security system. Due to the growing shortage in human resources, however, the competent authorities in the Republic of Slovenia must establish normative and other conditions for the military profession to become competitive in the labour market, which will provide the necessary personnel for the SAF. Furthermore, to enable the modernization

²⁷ *The Annual Report of the Ministry of Defence for 2014, p 79 and the Annual Report of the Ministry of Defence for 2018.*

it is important to establish stable and adequate financing, which will facilitate an increased combat power of the SAF. In doing so, the SAF and politicians will have to promptly and thoroughly reflect on which military capabilities will be developed with these financial resources. The resource will always be constrained; therefore it is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered by various projects within NATO and the EU.

During Slovenia's membership of NATO, the SAF has gained a great deal in terms of quality development, which has also been recognized within NATO, the EU and elsewhere. Despite the constant new challenges that the Republic of Slovenia is facing, NATO membership remains the most effective and rational solution to ensure its national security. However, the Republic of Slovenia must be solidary in assuming its share of the burden within NATO, and allocate more resources to defence spending than it is allocating now.

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