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CROATIA'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY AS AN EXPORT BRANI

INTERVIEW MIKE DURANT, HELICOPTER PILOT U.S. AIR FORCE (RET.) THE RETURN OF THE

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CONFERENCE

The Conference entitled "Croatian Defence Industry as an Export Brand" took place in Zagreb in early September 2017 under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Croatia, supported by the Ministry of Defence.

Alongside private sector representatives Croatian and international state, economic, military and academic institutions together with experts in the defence industry, the Conference was also attended by the Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Damir Krstičević, Interior Minister Davor Božinović, President of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce Luka Burilović, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of Croatian Armed Forces Lieutenant General Drago Matanović and many others.



CROATIAN SOLDIEDS ARE FOUNDED ENTIDELY MUTH



CROATIAN SOLDIERS ARE EQUIPPED ENTIRELY WITH WEAPONS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT **MADE IN CROATIA**. INVESTING IN EQUIPMENT AND MODERNISATION OF THE NATION'S DEFENCE SYSTEM IS THE FOCAL POINT OF CROATIA'S INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED DEFENCE INDUSTRY...

The Conference featured lectures, presentations and expert panels covering the growth and importance of the defence industry to Croatia for its security and wellbeing, the Armed Forces and other defence/ security institutions, to the economy as a whole as well as the research and academic communities. Delegates analysed the current situation and potential for future development and achieving a better export balance, discussed progress in the R&D (research and development) sector and received presentations on the experiences of other countries and defence industry-related projects in the EU and NATO.

the EU and NATO. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Damir Krstičević stressed that the dynamic and high-tech profile of today's Croatian defence

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY - A VITAL PARTNERSHIP

As with any industrialised nation, Croatia's Ministry of Defence is intrinsically linked to its defence industry and has co-operated successfully with many of its indigineous defence firms for years. Earlier this year the Ministry signed contracts for the purchase of defence equipment to meet the needs of the Croatian Armed Forces worth 230 million Kuna (about 31 million EUR), encompassing the procurement of over four hundred different types of footwear, clothing, equipment, services and related works. Such contracts represent a significant contribution to the nation's economy, particularly with regard to manufacturing military equipment and other defence systems-related activities. This co-operation establishes the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Armed Forces both as consumers and, more importantly, significant generators of development within the industry and most effective promoters of the top-quality defence products currently manufactured in Croatia.

Author Domagoj VLAHOVIĆ, Photos by Stjepan BRIGLJEVIĆ



200 MILLION EUR IN EXPORTS

The defence industry is of strategic importance to any country and the Republic of Croatia is no exception, where its industry has seen a growth of 20% annually. In 2016 exports of weapons and military equipment from Croatia totalled circa 200 million EUR. The growth of defence exports continues, as evident from comparison of the industry's 2015 export figures, which exceeded the 2014 total by 36.8%.

INDUSTRY AS AN EXPORT BRAND

industry was an important factor in the county's overall economic development, promoting further innovation within the industry's complementary sectors. Praising the fact that Croatian soldiers were equipped entirely with Croatian-manufactured products, the Minister stated that investment in the equipping and modernisation of the country's defence system was at the core of the development of Croatia's defence industry.

Minister Krstičević cited the example of the multipurpose fighter aircraft as an excellent opportunity for the industry. "One of the main choice parameters concerning the fighter aircraft will be our future business and economic co-operation package with new partners, who will be expected to upgrade the level of technology and promote the economy, Croatian businesses and to create new jobs".

"The Ministry of Defence aims to be the key partner in the development of the defence industry, to develop new capabilities and invest in research and development", Minister Krstičević concluded.





INTERVIEW

Roman MIKULIĆ, Assistant Defence Minister for Material Resources

A STRONG DEFENCE INDUSTRY Guarantees a strong and capable caf

Since the early days of Croatia's hard-won independence, its Ministry of Defence has attached the greatest importance towards the nation's innovative and successful defence industry, both with respect to equipping the Croatian Armed Forces and serving the wider national economic interest, accordingly providing vital long-term support to the sector. Meeting the equipment needs of the Croatian Armed Forces in an ever changing and competitive global security environment calls upon a constant partnership between defence companies and the military to develop effective systems that will not only protect those defending the nation's sovereignty but will also meet the diverse range in defence needs of potential customers around the world. The Assistant Defence Minister with responsibility for Material Resources (including defence procurement) talks about the current situation and future strategy for co-operation between the Ministry of Defence and the industry that has proven to be one of the most remarkable success stories of recent years.



THE SEVENTH HRVCON (CROATIAN ARMY CONTINGENT) RECENTLY DEPLOYED TO AFGHANISTAN IS EQUIPPED WITH THE INDIGINEOUS VHS-2 RIFLE. HOW SIGNIFICANT IS THAT FOR THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES AND THE CROATIAN DEFENCE INDUSTRY?

It has been twenty years since the first involvement of Croatian soldiers in peace missions worldwide and operations (the UNAMSIL to Sierra Leone in 1999) have provided the Croatian Armed Forces with a range of new operational skills and experience that has paved the way for Croatia's expanding defence industry, in light of the need to design, adapt and produce the high quality equipment and assets we need for geographical environments and challenging conditions differing from those at home. In view of our international commitments, the need arose for systems and equipment that would perform impeccably, not only in Croatia but in desert terrain and other extreme operating environments. Croatian soldiers have the tools necessary and adaptable to do their jobs effectively and most significantly, those tools are products of the Croatian defence industry. The excellent VHS-2 assault rifle, designed by our own HS Produkt is one of the best examples of our determination and commitment to manufacturing a Croatian product of truly international quality.



Armed with their VHS rifles, Croatian soldiers in Afghanistan and other vital missions promote the Croatian defence industry abroad and serve as the best ambassadors for its innovative capacities. I really must emphasise that a strong economy supporting a strong domestic defence industry is the guarantor of a nation's strong armed forces. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence has emphasised several times that 2017 has been the soldiers' year, with a widespread programme of activities aimed at upgrading living and working conditions, ranging from construction of new accommodation and other infrastructure to the modernisation and successful delivery of weapons and military equipment.

CAN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND CROATIAN ARMED FORCES REALLY TAKE CREDIT FOR THE DOMESTIC DE-FENCE INDUSTRY'S BURGEONING EXPORT RECORD?

Nowadays, ministries of defence do not exercise the direct control over their defence industries that they did in former times. The defence sector forms a branch of industry as a whole and is subject to the same regulations as any other. The Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Armed Forces undertake no management of the industry nor do they have any direct control over market trends within the sector, nevertheless it is within the interests of the Ministry and the CAF that it continues to expand and prosper. Our defence industry needs to be robust enough to guarantee its continuous growth and the development of the Croatian Armed Forces' capability. The Croatian Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, as the defence industry's primary customer have given added value and increased business potential of the domestic industry worldwide. As an example, the excellent underwear produced by Croatian manufacturer Galeb in the coastal town of Omiš has been a mainstay of the Croatian Armed Forces for years and in early 2017 the firm became a supplier to NATO as well.

The use of our own products by the nation's armed forces has proven to be the biggest validation of both their quality and effectiveness.

The Ministry of Defence and Croatian Armed Forces have made use of every opportunity, from bilateral meetings to joint exercises to promote the quality and value of the Croatian defence industry's products and services. The staff and infrastructure

Author: Domagoj Vlahović, Photos: Tomislav Brandt

CROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

The defence industry needs to be robust enough to guarantee continuous growth and the capabilities of the Croatian Armed Forces. The Croatian Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces, as the defence industry's primary customers, have given added value to the domestic business sector. The adoption of equipment and services provided by the industry to its national armed forces is its single biggest quantifier.

INTERVIEW

resources of the Ministry and Armed Forces have supported research and development projects, providing the domestic defence industry with the access it needs to leading international markets, an example of which was the sale of 10,000 VHS rifles by HS Produkt of Karlovac to the government of Iraq.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE CONFERENCE ON THE CROATIAN DEFENCE INDUSTRY AS AN EXPORT BRAND?

Although the Ministry of Defence isn't primarily responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of the business activities of Croatian firms, amongst our long-term strategies is the exchange of know-how and experience with our domestic defence industry through discussion forums and other official channels. Conferences are a valuable communication channel that we have readily adopted and which will continue to be used under various guises in the future. We believe quality communication is essential to providing an environment favourable for the positioning of our defence industry according to its potential and the business results achieved.

CAN CROATIAN FIRMS BE BROUGHT INTO ALL EQUIPMENT AND MODERNISATION PROJECTS FOR THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES, INCLUDING FOREIGN SYSTEMS (PZH 2000, KIOWA WARRIOR, FUTURE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT)?

The leading Croatian firms such as Patria and Đuro Đaković have engaged in major capability-building projects for the Croatian Armed Forces. The partnership working between our domestic firms and foreign defence suppliers during programmes to reequip the Croatian Armed Forces is nothing new.

The various components of Croatia's defence industry are welcome to participate in current and future projects but need to be aware of the competence levels necessary, particularly where advanced technological solutions are concerned, in order to be competitive against larger foreign companies and to become equal and effective partners with the best of them. I would like to see Croatian firms manufacturing the highly complex and sophisticated defence systems we need, with foreign firms as partners. Until that time the Ministry of Defence will continue to support its domestic manufacturers, whilst maintaining open and honest processes for achieving both quality and value for money.

HOW WOULD YOU RATE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, CROATIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE CROATIAN DEFENCE INDUSTRY COMPETITION CLUSTER?

The Croatian Chamber of Commerce is a close and formidable partner, with whom we co-operate on a daily basis, particularly in establishing the presence and promotion of Croatian firms at international trade fairs and defence industry conventions. We enjoy excellent co-operation with our industry and IT sectors and the Association of Arms and Equipment Producers, with whom we exchange information on upcoming events and potential projects available through NATO and the European Defence Agency. Croatia's Chamber of Commerce provides us vital support with statistical and other data necessary for analysis and planning, the organisation of ASDA and similar activities. The Croatian Defence Industry Competition Cluster, formed separately within the Investments and Competition Agency includes most members of the latter and hence the importance



of co-operation with the Cluster, to whom we provide support in line with relevant legislation. Whilst co-operation has been very productive so far, there is always room for improvement and future strategy will focus on broadening the sophistication of the communication and partnership working between government bodies and representative organisations in the defence industry.

WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON THE ASDA TRADE EXHIBITIONS SO FAR - WILL THEY CONTINUE INTO 2019 AND BEYOND? DOES CROATIA OFFER POSSIBILITIES FOR OTHER EVENTS OF THIS KIND?





ASDA 2017 has been our most successful defence expo yet, drawing in no fewer than 63 domestic and 68 foreign exhibitors of weapons, military equipment and related products from 22 countries. We were joined by 33 international delegations of senior military and state officials, who held meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Armed Forces. ASDA has again proven to be an excellent platform and productive opportunity for showcasing Croatia's domestic defence industry and I remain confident that ASDA 2019 will outdo its predecessors in drawing an even greater number of the world's leading defence industry exponents.

There is always space for similar events of this kind and we intend to realise any potential for supporting Croatia's defence industry. The plan is to organise a trade convention at national level, to bring existing defence manufacturers closer together, to identify and attract others who might potentially be interested in expanding their business model into the defence sector. This is still an idea at present and if it comes to fruition, will be planned and co-ordinated in partnership with our relevant institutions (the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and Croatian Defence Industry Competition Cluster), with full consideration for the business plans, manufacturing capacity and economic requirements of the sector.





CAN WE EXPECT TO SEE NEW TOP-QUALITY PRODUCTS FROM THE DOMESTIC DEFENCE INDUSTRY BEING DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES?

Another excellent example of a new product being developed by the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Armed Forces in a close and successful partnership with the Croatian defence industry - HS Produkt and R&D institutions such as the Ruđer Bošković Institute - is undoubtedly the highly effective Croatian-made VHS-2 assault rifle and grenade launcher that has won praise from defence experts around the world.

The production of a new camouflage uniform for the Croatian Armed Forces has followed much the same pattern. Developed by the Ministry of Defence in partnership with the Association of Arms and Equipment Producers, it serves as a valuable opportunity for the Ministry of Defence to retain and facilitate the career development of specialists in this area, as their knowledge and expertise continues to be crucial for managing the cyclical development of defence-related projects.

The ongoing rationalisation of the Ministry has seen the amalgamation of some departments formerly tasked with working alongside the defence industry and defence-related development agencies. Those tasks continue and we understand the necessity of maintaining the resources and expertise to continue realising the excellent potential of our defence manufacturing capabilities. In order to achieve the best solutions, the Ministry is actively engaged in working towards improving capacity, to ensure the continuing and successful development of Croatia's defence industry towards meeting the ever-evolving needs of the Croatian Armed Forces.

Dependant upon resources available in the future, the Ministry is in the process of discussing plans for the funding of up to three new research projects per year, to ensure that anticipated defence capability targets can be met. It should be emphasised here that our most expensive defence requirements will not necessarily be



top of the agenda. We shall focus on more realistic, lower-cost programmes to reinvigorate the process of research and development into Croatia's defence requirements, reinforce the nation's defence industry and formerly neglected methods of generating solutions of our own to sustain our own domestic needs.

DOES THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE PROVIDE SUPPORT TO DUAL-USE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES PART-FUNDED BY THE EU?

Current legislation assigns no responsibility, either directly or indirectly to the Ministry of Defence for contributing towards EU funds and the Ministry has very limited options for drawing on EU funds for defence-related initiatives. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence remains close to Croatian firms and industry organisations regarding any issues and assistance, within its legally defined boundaries of responsibility. We retain an oversight of European Defence Agency statistical data and the information emanating from EU member states about their experiences, which is available online via the Ministry's website. We also channel and distribute Invitations to Tender from the European Defence Agency to our domestic defence producers and provide detailed information regarding potential opportunities and available funding as well as assisting other government teams, such as the research projects managed through the Ministry of Science and Education and so forth.

The ever-changing security environment in Europe and the EU's new Common Security and Defence Policy are paving the way for defence funding from EU sources, specifically the European Defence Fund. However, the EU continues to focus on dual-use research, and so for the time being at least developmental funding of new military and defence systems remains out of reach. In view of the lack of access to EU funding for directly national defence projects, and bearing in mind Croatia's presidency of the EU from January 2020, we intend to assume a more active role in defence planning and programming phases during the next budgetary cycle (2021–2027), by which time fresh human and organisational resources will be trained and in place to facilitate the management of EU funds for defence purposes.





MULTINATIONAL EXERCISE

DEMONSTRATES COLLECTIVE DEFENCE



The multinational military exercise Saber Guardian 17 (SG17) formally opened at NATO Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast in Novo Selo, Bulgaria on 11 July 2017. Led by the U.S. Army's European Command (EUCOM) and the Bulgarian Armed Forces, the Exercise was hosted by the land components of the armed forces of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. The Exercise was conducted at various locations, with logistical hubs based in the Novo Selo training range in Bulgaria and Kogălniceanu Air Base, Romania. Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast served as the Exercise command and control centre and was based in Novo Selo. The object of Exercise SG17 was to demonstrate allied and partner nations' preparedness for collective defence, through a command post exercise (CPX), computer-assisted exercise (CAX) Dacian Guardian in Novo Selo (Bulgaria) Bucharest, Cincu training range (Romania) and Postojna, (Slovenia). This was followed by a live firing Air Defence Exercise at Šabla, Bulgaria, a live-fire exercise on the Capu Midia training range in Romania, several river cross-

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ROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



MULTINATIONAL EXERCISE **SABER GUARDIAN 17**, CONDUCTED **FROM 25 JUNE TO 25 JULY 2017** ACROSS **HUNGARY**, **ROMANIA** AND **BULGARIA** ENGAGED MORE THAN **25,000 SOLDIERS** OF THE U.S. ARMY'S EUCOM, TOGETHER WITH 22 ALLIED AND PARTNER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING 258 MEMBERS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES. THE OBJECT WAS TO DEMONSTRATE COLLECTIVE DEFENCE THROUGH A CLUSTER OF SMALLER EXERCISES, TOBRUQ LEGACY, PEACE SENTINEL, EAGLE SENTINEL, DACIAN GUARDIAN, RESOLUTE CASTLE, GETICA SABER, SZENTES AXE, BLACK SWAN, BRAVE WARRIOR, SWIFT RESPONSE AND DRAGOON GUARDIAN. CROATIAN ARMED FORCES WERE ENGAGED IN EXERCISES GETICA SABER, BRAVE WARRIOR AND BLACK SWAN...

ing exercises and a casualty simulation at Borduşani, also in Romania. Mass Casualty (MASCAL) exercises were conducted at the country's Kogălniceanu Air Base, field exercises (FTX) in Novo Selo and Koreno in Bulgaria, a joint combined arms live-fire exercise (CALFEX) and live-fire artillery fire support co-ordination exercise (FSCEX) on the Cincu training area, as well as special operations field exercises (SOFEX) on the Újdörögd training range, Tata Military base and Szolnok Air Base in Hungary.

Meanwhile, Exercise Getica Saber 17, conducted in the Cincu training range focussed on the demonstration of collective defence capabilities in the event of an agression into the region. •••

The Exercise Command included four Croatian representatives headed by the National Representative of the Croatian Armed Forces at SG17, Major Samir Mršić of the Croatian Army's Guards Motorised Brigade, who co-ordinated the operations of all Croatian components engaged in the Hungarian and Romanian exercises.

The object of all these combined activities was to underline the United States' commitment to the collective defence and prosperity of the Black Sea region, enable the Alliance's command and control functions, and to put into practice the deterrence measures agreed by NATO allies at the 2016 Warsaw Summit.

MULTINATIONAL EXERCISE



Exercises of the kind presented the elements of the Croatian Armed Forces, allied and partner armed forces with realistic experience of the challenges of deploying units and assets to an area of operations, logistic support, integration and co-ordination with other forces, joint training within a multinational framework whilst meeting the challenge of linguistics and terminology.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS DAY

The Distinguished Visitors Day for Exercise Saber Guardian 17 was held at the Cincu range on 15 July, attended by more than 260 senior visitors, among them the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, the Commanding General of United States Army Europe (USAREUR) Lieutenant General Benjamin Hodges, Commander of the Romanian Land Forces, Brigadier General Marius Harabagiu and other senior military and civilian officials from over 20 allied and partner nations whose armed forces participated in the whole spectrum of subordinate exercises within SG17.

The visiting Croatian delegation, headed by Armed Forces Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Drago Matanović, included Commander of the Croatian Army, Lieutenant General Mate Ostović; the Commander of the Guards Motorised Brigade, Colonel Tihomir Kundid; Commander of the Mechanised Battalion of the Guards Motorised Brigade ("Tigrovi"), Major Mario Mlinarić and Executive Officer in the Office to the Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces, Lieutenant Colonel Siniša Ciglenečki.



Engagement in an exercise of this kind gave the Croatian Armed Forces, its allied and partner armed forces realistic experience of the challenges of deployment across the region, logistic support, integration and co-ordination with other units, joint training and operations within a multinational environment whilst meeting the challenges of linguistics and terminology.







CROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



The main Croatian training element comprised soldiers of the 1st Mechanised Company, 1st Battalion, Guards Motorised Brigade and the Armoured Company of the Armoured Battalion, Guards Armoured Mechanised Brigade, who were integrated with First Mechanised Battalion of the 3rd Armoured Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, U.S. Army.

The participants from 22 countries including Croatia, Armenia, Montenegro, Romania, Ukraine and the United States exceeded 25,000, armed with more than 1,500 combat vehicles and weapons. The visiting Croatian generals met with Croatian Army soldiers engaged on SG17. Addressing the elements of the Guards Motorised and Guards Armoured Mechanised Brigades on parade, Lieutenant General Matanović pointed out that SG17 was the largest international military exercise involving the Croatian Army since its victory in The object of **Exercise Saber Guardian 17 was** to demonstrate allied and partner nations' preparedness for collective deterence, through a command post exercise (CPX), computer-assisted exercise (CAX) **Dacian Guardian at** Novo Selo, Bucharest, Cincu T.R. and Postojna.

the Homeland War. "Croatian soldiers have demonstrated their professionalism, responsibility and preparedness and, as commanders we are privileged to be a part of the armed forces proudly flying the flag of our fellow combatants from the Homeland War."

Lt. Gen. Matanović underlined that Croatian forces had achieved a great affinity with other national contingents and partner elements with whom they had worked well in close and effective collaboration. Participation in SG17 has been particularly significant for the 1st Mechanised Company of "Tigrovi", who are due to be deployed to the NATO mission in Lithuania soon. Following a long and exhausting training programme, Lt. Gen. Matanović confirmed that the Company has successfully demonstrated a high-level readiness for their mission.

The majority of the Croatian Contingent, consisting of headquarters staff, Mechanised Company and Armoured Coy, task-force Logistics team and an evaluation cadre were based at the Cincu training range in Romania. Contingents of Special Forces Command and Intelligence Branch were located at the Újdörögd training ranges, the Tata Army Base and Szolnok Air Base in Hungary. Croatian Armed Forces personnel were also assigned to NATO Headquarters, Multinational Division Southeast, centred in Novo Selo, Bulgaria.



MULTINATIONAL EXERCISE



The troops of the 1st Mechanised Company, Battalion "Tigrovi", Guards Motorised Brigade and an Armoured Company of the Guards Armoured Mechanised Brigade trained jointly on the Cincu Training Range in Romania with elements of the 1st Mechanised Battalion, 3rd Armoured Brigade of the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division. Exercise Getica Saber consisted of reconnaissance, defence and counter-offensive drills. The joint training ob-

jectives of all the participating units included placing obstacles, integration, interoperability and fire support co-ordination. Deployment of Croatian military assets began in

late June. First to arrive at the Cincu range were an advance party of the Guards Motorised Brigade, led by 1st Company Commander Captain Marko Krpan and Major Miroslav Katuša, Officer Commanding the Military Training Range. The advance party included one of Support Command's logistics teams, who set up the military camp accommodating the main participating forces. The camp comprised "Alaska" type military tents with twenty Arm-O-Bunk beds per tent equipped with heating and air conditioning, as explained by the team commander, 2nd Lieutenant Martina Mataković Barun.

Having successfully completed their task, Support Command's logistics element headed back to Croatia, returning to Romania again on 18 July to strike camp.The advance party of "Tigrovi" Battalion adCroatian forces participating in Exercise Getica Saber were represented by the 1st Company, of the 1st Battalion "Tigers", Guards Motorised Brigade. The Company conducted offensive and defensive operations in tandem with U.S. combat forces.

HEIRSINE

EVERYONE WORKING AS A TEAM

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ministered the smooth arrival and reception of the Exercise participants and their assets.

The main Croatian contingent for SG17 arrived at the Cincu ranges on 4 July 2017. Thirty Croatian Army vehicles arrived by rail at the Voila marshalling yards in Romania, 15km from the ranges late in the evening of 7 July and commenced unloading the following day -

13 Patria AMVs, a Patria SAN and one Patria recovery vehicle; four M-84 tanks, an AMTV vehicle, a water tanker and two Iveco Trakker trucks; container carriers belonging to the NBC Defence Battalion, a mobile workshop for maintaining the M-84s, a Puch Pinzgauer vehicle, four MAN lorries for troop transport and a fuel bowser.

The Exercise Getica Saber was a first major step in evaluating the Croatian Army's key operational capabilities, primarly with respect to logistics support, detailed land movements preparation, embarkation of combat and non-combat assets, secure cross-border rail transit, disembarkation of assets and transfer to national contingent base areas, delivery of fuel and lubricants, demonstrating problem-solving capacity and a self-contained electro-mechanical vehicle maintenance capability together with support from partner countries.

The team responsible for land transport was tasked with ensuring safe transit of the national contingent's combat and non-combat assets along the



scheduled movement route.

The Commander of the 1st Mechanised Company, Captain Marko Krpan praised the unit's integration with other participating units, including elements from the armed forces of Armenia, Ukraine, Montenegro, Romania and the United States.

"During the training we achieved a high level of coordination and competence in the conduct of tactical offensives and counter-offensives", said Capt. Krpan. He commended the efforts and professionalism of all members of the Mechanised Company and the attached Armoured Company.

Armoured Company leader 1st Lt. Ivan Anić confirmed the crews had measured up to the necessary levels of training and preparedness for operating in a multinational military environment.

"This is the first deployment of our tanks beyond the borders of the Republic of Croatia and all the Exercise participants have worked as one team", said 1st Lt. Anić, commending his soldiers' success working in close collaboration with colleagues from allied and partner armed forces.

Exercises conducted simultaneously in the Black Sea Region involving elements from the 22 allied and partner nations of Saber Guardian 17 had the common objective of undertaking collective training for collective defence, furthering partner capacity and improving interoperability to promote a stable and secure Black Sea Region.











This year's U.S. Army-led multinational Military Exercise Saber Guardian '17, involved ten smallerscale exercises and engaged no fewer than 258 soldiers of the Croatian Armed Forces. The exercise aimed to highlight the collective defence capabilities, specifically the ability to mass forces at any given time anywhere in Europe, through a cluster of subordinate exercises named Tobrug Legacy, Peace Sentinel, Eagle Sentinel, Mascal, Dacian Guardian, Szentes Axe, Black Swan, Brave Warrior, Swift Response and Dragon Guardian. Croatian soldiers were engaged in three of the exercises – Szentes Axe, Black Swan and Brave Warrior. Exercise Brave Warrior '17 conducted in Hungary from July 4 to 21, involved 19 soldiers of the Croatian Army currently serving in the Armoured Squadron of the Guards Mechanised Brigade. The Squadron was on its first deployment abroad, participating in a field exercise and live firing at the Várpalota training range near Veszprem. The deployment was undertaken jointly with the U.S. Army, and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, the Hungarian Defence Forces and the British Army. We visited the Croatian soldiers during the exercise and learned from their commander, 1st Lieutenant Adam Dubravac of the Headquarters Coy,



"The main objective of the Exercise was to test capabilities and interoperability and working in an international environment, and to identify differences in unit leading procedures, of course, was an opportunity to identify differences in tactics and procedures.

Guards Mechanised Brigade, that an armoured squadron (four sections with four tanks) was engaged on Brave Warrior, with 19 soldiers stationed at Camp Újmajor.

As he explained, "The main objective of the Exercise was to test our capabilities and interoperability with working in a multinational environment, and to identify differences in unit command processes, as well as an opportunity to identify differences in tactics and procedures. Emphasis was also placed on troop movement, battlefield deployment and tactical command and control.

All of our objectives were achieved – the Armoured Squadron conducted live firing tasks at the company level alongside the 4th Squadron of the 10th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, operating Bradley M2 fighting vehicles.

This deployment represents a historic occasion for our tank units, as we were exercising beyond our national borders for the first time, "said 1st Lieutenant Dubravac.

The Americans' Bradley fighting vehicles were tasked with area reconnaissance, contact with 'enemy' advance party and forming a defensive line, while the Croatian tanks were ordered to pass through their positions, engage the enemy



Author: Vesna Pintarić, Photos by: Tomislav Brandt



CROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

SOUADRON ENGAGED IN EXERCISE



A 19-MEMBER CONTINGENT OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES COMPRISNG AN ARMOURED SQUADRON OF THE GUARDS MECHANISED BRIGADE TOOK PART IN EXERCISE **BRAVE WARRIOR 17**, THAT TOOK PLACE ON THE VÁRPALOTA MILITARY TRAINING AREA IN HUNGARY FROM 4 – 21 JULY 2017. IT WAS THEIR FIRST EXERCISE ABROAD WITH TROOPS OF THE U.S. ARMY AND INCLUDED THE ARMED FORCES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, SLOVAKIA, POLAND, ROMANIA, THE HUNGARIAN DEFENCE FORCES AND THE BRITISH ARMY...

and then return to their start line, where the joint armoured forces awaited the bulk of the enemy group's advance. The sheer size of the Várpalota Training Area makes it a very convenient facility for training of this type and scale.

The Croatian Armoured Battalion commander, Major Ivan Stipić emphasised the importance of adopting joint tactics, techniques and procedures. He explained that Croatian forces undertook joint manoeuvres with an American armoured coy operating M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks.

"The Exercise defined the competence of our Armoured Squadron in completing its allotted tasks successfully and meeting the required levels for armoured units according to the aims and objectives of the Exercise. Their firing scores and the good feedback received from our partner forces proves again that our soldiers are capable of responding to any challenge", said Major Stipić.

The VIP visitors' day for the Exercise Brave Warrior 17 welcomed the Croatian Army's Commander, Lieutenant General Mate Ostović and the Commander of the Guards Mechanised Brigade, Brigadier General Denis Tretinjak, who praised the oustanding professionalism and determined commitment to their mission by the Armoured Squadron





1st LIEUTENANT ADAM DUBRAVAC,

COMMANDER, HEADQUARTERS COY, GUARDS MECHANISED BRIGADE

"The main objective of the Exercise was to test our capabilities and interoperability with working in a multinational environment, and to identify differences in unit command processess as well as an opportunity to identify differences in tactics and procedures. Emphasis was also placed on troop movement, battlefield deployment and tactical command and control. This deployment represents a historic occasion for our tank units, as we were exercising beyond our national borders for the first time," said 1st Lt. Dubravac.



On 1 and 2 August 2017 the crews of the Helicopter Squadron of the Croatian Air and Air Defence Force's 93rd Air Base at the Mirko Vukušić barracks at Zemunik, performed live firing exercises from their Bell OH-58D Kiowa Warriors. It was their first live-fire experience with the new weapons system and concluded the flight conversion training provided by U.S. flying and technical instructors.

The pilots conducted aerial firing and rocket launching against ground targets at the range using their 12.7-mm machine guns and Hydra 70mm unguided rockets, with target evaluation undertaken by U.S. evaluation teams. The tests also served as the final field combat training for the squadron's helicopter maintenance technicians. At the conclusion of the nocturnal live firing phase, the pilots were each presented with certificates of competence for completion of their conversion programme and authorising them to train other Croatian pilots on the Kiowa. The aircraft technicians were similarly rewarded.

The newly-certificated pilots made their maiden operational flights with their new Kiowa helicopters a few days later on 5 August, as they performed an aerial salute with other Air Force crews marking the 22nd anniversary of Croatia's legendary Operation Storm. The Helicopter Squadron has received 16 OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters, under a joint programme to re-equip the Croatian Armed Forces with a rotary wing attack/reconnaissance capability supported by the United States.

U.S. Army instructors will remain at the Zemunik Air Base to oversee the first conversion course for pilots, as well as the corresponding pilot/ technician instructors' training syllabus.

Learning to fly a helicopter with such a broad range of operational capabilities is a major step forward for both pilots and squadron; the Kiowas are acknowledged as the best attack/reconnaissance helicopters currently operating, with a proven combat record in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is likely they will also be employed in all-weather search-and-rescue with a subsidiary role in border control. There is understandable pride amongst the Kiowa pilots; in the process of developing their own rotary wing skills they are at the forefront of expanding the operational capabilities and effectiveness of the Croatian Armed Forces. Authors: Željko Stipanović, Marinko Karačić, Photos by: Tomislav Brandt

ROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

LIVE FIRING AND ROCKET LAUNCHING

CROATIAN PILOTS HAVE CONDUCTED THE FIRST LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE WITH 12.7-mm MACHINE GUNS AND 70-mm HYDRA UNGUIDED ROCKETS LAUNCHED FROM THEIR NEW KIOWA WARRIOR HELICOPTERS ON THE EUGEN KVATERNIK TRAINING RANGE, MARKING THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF FLYING TRAINING...





At the core of the system is the Mast-Mounted Sight above the helicopter's main rotor, housing a night vision and thermal imaging sensor, television sensor, laser range finder/target designator and an optical sight, enabling operations under day/night, hot/cold and other adverse weather conditions. This highly potent system can independently designate and track up to six individual targets at a distance of eight kilometres simultaneously.

THE EUGEN KVATERNIK MILITARY TRAINING RANGE





Upon completion of the live firing test phase, the Squadron's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Krešimir Ražov explained that the Croatian pilots enjoyed flying with their highly experienced and knowledgeable U.S. instructors, and had consistently given their best throughout the training programme. "Live firing is the ultimate experience for every combat pilot and is often the prime motive in becoming military aviators in the first place. This is a career peak and we greatly look forward to achieving full operational capability with the Kiowa and to the new challenges that lie ahead for our Squadron. We are Croatian combat pilots and the Helicopter Squadron is at the forefront of enhancing our recce and attack capabilities on the modern battlefield", said Lt. Col. Ražov.

The unit's aircraft technicians underwent their own extensive training in helicopter maintenance and safety, passing exams throughout the programme comprising basic flight-line maintenance (technical specs, aircraft documentation, flight systems, daily- weekly- and periodic inspections and repairs). Additional training was undertaken by various specialist technicians for the instrumentation and communications equipment, IR/weapons systems and armament. The engine technicians also trained with Rolls-Royce personnel from England on maintaining the Kiowa's M250-C30R turboshaft.

The final phase of the training syllabus required the aircraft technicians to demonstrate expert supervision of all systems and documentation pertaining to the Warrior, with particular emphasis on weapons systems and armament safety procedures.



The OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter is a dedicated armed reconnaissance and anti-armour platform, employed in close air support, road convoy escort, range finding and precision target seeking as well as airborne command and control using digital modems and secure communications. The Kiowa War-

rior is also deployed on civilian tasks including search and rescue, border control, disasters and emergencies relief work and the aerial monitoring and recording of incidents.



In a further boost to operational efficiency under emergency and combat conditions, the technicians are now qualified and skilled in refuelling the helicopters with engines running.

The training phase completed on the ranges near Slunj afforded the technical crews their first opportunity to prepare the Kiowas for live firing and as with the aircrews, successfully rounded off their training prior to continuing to maintain and service the new assets themselves, with specialist guidance and support from U.S rotary-wing technical teams. The 93rd Air Base's chief engineer, Lt. Col. Marin Žunić emphasised that the rotary wing maintenance crews were an integral part of the final stage programme. "The in-classroom training, delivered by expert teams from the U.S., is in its last phase and upon completion of the follow-on engine maintenance instruction, advanced training on inspection regimes and weapons systems, we shall have aircraft technicians fully trained for the support and maintenance of the Kiowa Warrior fleet", explained Lt. Col. Žunić. Earning praise from their U.S. instructors, the technical training benefitted from the fact that the Croatian Air and Air Defence Force already has significant skill and expertise in the operation and maintenance of the Bell 206 helicopter family. Given its superb manoeuvrability, resistance to detection and enemy countermeasures, its all-weather capability and versatility offering a broad operational flexibility, the procurement and introduction of the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior to the country's military inventory delivers exciting new opportunities for the Croatian Armed Forces.

Author: Željko Stipanović, Photos by: Tomislav Brandt

EUGEN KVATERNIK MILITARY TRAINING RANGE

THE SELF-PROPELLED PZH 2000 HOW ZER SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING A FIRING TES

THE SELF-PROPELLED PZH 2000 HOWITZER IS CHARACTERISED BY HIGH MOBILITY, FIREPOWER AND PRECISION TARGETING, AS WE OURSELVES SAW DURING THE FAULTLESS TEST FIRING OF THREE PzH2000 HOWITZERS...

Three PzH Howitzers successfully completed a live firing test at the "Eugen Kvaternik" military training range near Slunj on 23 June 2017, where recently integrated systems, including Croatian language software, a precision ballistics computer and all-target accuracy systems underwent a thorough programme of field testing.

Following completion of the live firing exercise, Commander of the Army's Self-propelled Howit-



zer Battalion, Major Dražen Musić informed us that operation of the PzH 2000 was tested in a range of fire positions including reloading, charging, firing and the accuracy of fall of shot.

"My rating of the firing is reasonably positive; praise goes to all members of our Artillery and Missile Regiment who manage the new assets and to all the highly motivated personnel involved in preparing and organising the live firing exercise", said Major Musić.

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EUGEN KVATERNIK MILITARY TRAINING RANGE

The project of equipping the Croatian Armed Forces with self-propelled Howitzers was launched with an agreement signed between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia and the Ministry of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany in late 2014, aimed at procuring for the Croatian Armed Forces the L52 155-mm artillery system, boasting high firepower and multiple round-types with precision-guided munitions.

The project meets the modernisation and equipment needs of the Croatian Army for state-of-the-art self-propelled artillery and ensures the country's fulfilment of its NATO capability targets.

Under the agreement signed with Germany, the Croatian Ministry of Defence has procured 16 Howitzers: 12 for operational use, one for driver training and three serving as spares for the new fleet. The Ministry of Defence planned to procure 16 Howitzers: 12 for operational use, one for driver training and three serving as spares. The Howitzers serve a valuable tactical role, providing concentrated firepower, precision targetting and exceptional battlefield mobility. With a crew of five, fully automated and equipped with a hybrid navigation system, they operate autonomously, guaranteeing long range precision, with target engagements carried out by two of the crew.

The total value of this powerful weapons system is circa 55 million EUR. Acquisition of the Howitzer force has significantly increased the self-propelled artillery capability of the Croatian Army placing it among NATO's best equipped mobile gunnery units. The PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzer will further reinforce the Croatian Armed Forces' deterrence capability, countering any threat to Croatian sovereignty and to wider international security and stability commitments in support of its allies.

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Total value of this powerful weapons system is circa €55 million. The acquisition of the Howitzer force has significantly increased the self-propelled artillery capability of the Croatian Army, placing it among NATO's best equipped mobile gunnery units.







INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EXERCISE







CROATIAN ARMED Forces take part in U.S. Eucom's



THE MULTI-NATIONAL EXERCISE OPERATION **SABER STRIKE 17**, CONDUCTED ON THE PABRADĖ TRAINING RANGES IN LITHUANIA FROM 10–24 JUNE 2017 WAS ONE OF THE LARGEST MILITARY EXERCISES UNDERTAKEN THIS YEAR, ORGANISED BY THE UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND (EUCOM) AND INVOLVING PERSONNEL OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES, WHO PARTICIPATED AS LEAD NATION OF THE MULTINATIONAL SUPPORT BATTALION COMMAND (MNSPTBN), LED BY COLONEL IVICA RAGUŽ, SUPPORT COMMAND'S HEAD OF PLANNING. A TOTAL OF 59 MEMBERS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES WERE INVOLVED, TRAVELLING TO LITHUANIA BY ROAD AND RAIL...

The multi-national exercise Operation Saber Strike 17, conducted on the Pabrade Training Range in Lithuania from 10–24 June 2017 was one of the largest military exercises undertaken this year, organised by the United States European Command (EUCOM) and involving personnel of the Croatian Armed Forces.

Saber Strike 17 took place in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland and encompassed five smaller exercises engaging a total of 11,000 troops from twenty countries.

The Croatian Armed Forces took part as Lead Nation of the Multinational Support Battalion Command (MNSPTBN), under the leadership of Colonel lvica Raguž, Support Command's Head of Plan-



ning. A total of 59 members of the Croatian Armed Forces were involved, travelling to Lithuania by road and rail.

For this Exercise, the Multinational Support Battalion comprised elements of the Croatian Armed Forces, U.S. Army and Norwegian Armed Forces. The Croatian contingent consisted mostly of personnel from the Support Command and some other Croatian military units, who undertook headquarters roles in the Multinational Support Battalion, the RSOM Platoon and the CIS (signals) section, with ROLE 1 and 10 assigned to the Headquarters of the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion of the 136th Infantry Regiment, Minnesota National Guard. The Multinational Support Battalion practised its capabilities



Author: Ines Benković Photos by: Josip Cebić

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COLONEL IVICA RAGUŽ, COMMANDER OF THE MULTINATIONAL SUPPORT BATTALION



What was the main objective of the Croatian Armed Forces' participation in the multi-national military exercise Operation "Saber Strike 17"?

The main objective of our participation this year was to enhance our partnership with the U.S. Army. This was the first occasion in which the Croatian Armed Forces assumed the role of Lead Nation of the Multinational Support Battalion, which was a challenge both in the planning and operational phases. The American planning staffs having declared their interest in our logistic capabilities, the Support Command was assigned the main leadership role. In the planning phase the Support Command personnel were closely involved in the multinational planning conferences and undertook reconnaissance of the

main and alternative deployment routes along the roads and within the "Pabrade" training range chosen as this year's Exercise venue. Conferences, workshops and training events were organised at national level on the operational matters of logistics and CIS communications. The Multinational Support Battalion's mission throughout the Exercise was to provide logistics and medical support, co-ordinate logistics operations with partner forces in accordance with the Exercise objecitves and to implement various training programmes with U.S. Army personnel.



with the C2 system setup, transportation, cargo and fuel handling, ROLE 1 Medical Support and the organisation and maintenance of battalion-level CIS. During the Exercise the Battalion used two lorry trailers for container transportation, a gantry crane, three forklifts, a fuel tank, a van, an ambulance and equipment storing containers.

In order to achieve interoperability with the U.S. Army, the Croatian troups undertook several joint training events, including practice operating machinery (in particular the cargo handling machines), troop leadership, first aid, the use of CIS communications systems and radio procedures, fuel handling, local topography and NATO Universal Tranverse Mercator (UTM) grids. The successful completion of these joint training events within Operation Saber Strike re-affirmed the Battalion's interoperability with regional partners, its high level of readiness and continuing record of good co-operation between the U.S. and the Croatian military.

In being the last to leave the Pabrade training ranges, the Croatian Armed Forces demonstrated credible support to their Allies and the importance of effective logistics for any armed forces on the battlefield. Participation in the Exercise proved beneficial at both Armed Forces and individual level, in terms of experience operating within a multinational environment. The exchange of best practices and procedures in day-to-day operations and the immediate experience of task implementation by the armed forces of partner countries are of great importance to the professional development of Croatian Armed Forces personnel. Looking back on the Exercise, I believe that the main objectives for the Croatian Armed Forces have been fulfilled and our partnership with the U.S. Army (including the Minnesota National Guard)have been further enhanced, as evidenced by the written commendations and visit of U.S. Army generals to the Support Command.

During the Exercise, the military camp was named after an American national hero of Croatian origin, Peter Herceg Tomich. How did the idea come to you? After the camp was set up, in discussion with our U.S. partners, I made a proposal to name the Croatian camp in honour of an American national hero of Croatian origin - Peter Herceg Tomich, who was serving in the U.S. Navy during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour of 7 December 1941, sacrificing his own life to save the crew of the battleship USS Utah. President Franklin D. Roosevelt posthumously awarded him their highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor. The U.S. Navy's Senior Enlisted Academy at Newport is named after him, as well as the award for best student at the Academy, and also a destroyer escort the USS Tomich (1943-72). The idea was warmly received by our American partners, including the generals, who had been informed of Chief Tomich's bravery before visiting the Croatian Camp. The story of P. H. Tomich is symbolic and in many ways serves to emphasize the excellent partnership that exists between the U.S. Army and CAF. I believe that the story was further strengthened and enhanced through the excellent co-operation we enjoyed with our U.S. partners and the professionally executed tasks undertaken together in Operation Saber Strike 17.

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EXERCISE













CAPTAIN HEATH A. BERGMANN, 1st SUPPORT BRIGADE, CHIEF LIAISON OFFICER TO THE MULTINATIONAL SUPPORT BATTALION

This is my first participation in Saber Strike, as previous exercises have seen the liaison task assigned to reserve units of the National Guard.

The U.S-Croatian partnership on Operation Saber Strike began a couple of months ago, during the pre-exercise training. Key to the success of any partnership is mutual respect and good communication irrespective of location, as illustrated by the willingness of our units to learn from each other, from both a military and a cultural point of view. The support task at the training ranges may appear to be a routine one, but it is nevertheless an important training event for the soldiers of both armies.



I have had an excellent time with my colleagues in the Croatian Armed Forces, learning a great deal from fellow officers of the Multinational Support Battalion, in particular the medical staff and have gained a good general impression of the Croatian Armed Forces and their soldiers' motivation to learn from every training opportunity with their U.S. colleagues. For the U.S. soldiers, collaborative training with their Croatian colleagues offers a really valuable experience, be it medical services practice or operations in the field, our soldiers appreciating the opportunity to train with members of allied forces. The military and cultural experiences they acquire will be of use in their future careers.

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STATEMENTS BY THE PARTICIPANTS

LT. COL. IVICA KORDIĆ,

CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE MULTINATIONAL SUPPORT BATTALION

As executive officer of the Multinational Support Battalion, I had a multiple role in the Exercise, responsible for the day-to-day prioritisation of all assigned tasks and for instructions to personnel to ensure the execution of the Commander's orders. As chief of staff, I was responsible for the co-ordination, management and supervision of the staff, for timely planning and the organisation of tasks and after-action reporting. The two responsibilities are combined in the post of the Deputy Commander of the Battalion, in which capacity I was responsible for providing recommendations and advice to the Commander with respect to decisionmaking, and commanding the Battalion in his absence.

The Staff operation was organised on a 24-hour basis, with support to our partner armed forces' battalions in the field organised and delivered through the Tactical Operations Centre.



I had the pleasure of briefing senior officers of the U.S. Army, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Armed Forces on our staff organisation, mission and operation and presented our Staff to the Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces, the Commander of the Croatian Army and the Commander of the Support Command during their visit to Camp Tomich, a moment of great pride. Despite the challenges of operating in a multinational environment under demanding field and weather conditions, I would like to emphasize the valuable experience we have all gained from this Exercise. It was most gratifying to be in charge of multinational personnel and inform the participants that we had achieved full operational readiness in just 72 hours, establishing the camp and delivering effective support to our partner armed forces. The activities of the Multinational Staff were characterised by teamwork, task focus and the timely execution of orders, serving as a model staff operation for the Multinational Support Battalion.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL RUŽICA PAVIĆ-KEVRIĆ, PHYSICIAN AND MEDICAL ADVISOR TO HEADQUARTERS MULTINATIONAL SUPPORT BATTALION

During the Exercise I was intrinsically involved in all of the Staff operations, drafting annexes pertaining to medical support (Medical Support Concept, Ground and Air MEDEVAC implementation plan and MASCAL), co-ordinating medical services for the Pabrade training area including the Minnesota National Guard, the armed forces of Portugal, Lithuania and Croatia, the civilian medical services of ROLE 3 in Vilnius and conducting training activities in accordance with the overall Exercise plan. To ensure the implementation of tasks in line with NATO's doctrine



of joint medical support, our focus was on the three indicators of inter-operability: operational proficiency (through education and training), equipment and also materials, as well as focussing on the provision of medical support services.

Working meetings of the heads of the participating medical support teams (the United States, Portugal and Lithuania) definitely contributed to a more efficient implementation of the Exercise objectives and retrospective analyses through the principle of "lessons learned", that we introduced on a daily basis in Camp Tomich. Having a first-hand opportunity to witness the organisation of medical support services in various nations and the sharing of methods and doctrines, was both an invaluable and enjoyable experience.

CAPTAIN NENAD VEČENAJ,

PERSONNEL LIAISON OFFICER TO 2ND COMBINED ARMS BATTALION, 136TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD

Six members of the Croatian Army were assigned to the Staff of the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion of the Minnesota National Guard's 136th Infantry Regiment (2-136 CAB) as part of Exercise Iron Wolf, which formed one of the subordinate exercises to Saber Strike '17. Its purpose was to plan and implement tactical defensive operations by a mechanised armoured battalion.



The main benefits of this Exercise for those involved were the opportunities of working in a multinational environment, including the exchange of practical knowledge and skills with the Staff of 2-136 CAB and developing our interoperability with the U.S. Army. Participating Croatian Army staff dealt very competently with all the challenges, fulfilling all of their assigned tasks in a thoroughly professional manner, as underlined by the Commander of 2-136 CAB, Lt. Col. James Benson, who confirmed that the successful integration of Croatian officers into the operations staff ensured that Saber Strike '17 was completed to the highest standards.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL TANJA TOPOL, PHYSICIAN AND COMMANDING OFFICER ROLE 1

This had been the first time ROLE 1 was establised in an "Alaska" tent and equipped with an ambulance, providing medical support in full compliance with NATO standards. Throughout the Exercise, our ROLE 1 personnel were fully



integrated with the medical teams of the U.S., Portuguese and Lithuanian Armed Forces. We were also involved in the design and administration of the U.S. Army's first aid course, tailored according to our own HRVN STANAG 2122. Emphasis was placed on practice, with the focus on CPR (Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation), blood loss stopping and correctly applying the "9-liner" MEDEVAC procedure. INTERVIEW

Mike DURANT, helicopter pilot U.S. Air Force (Ret.)

THE RETURN OF THE BLACK HAVE

THE EPISODE FROM OCTOBER 1993 WHEN A UNITED STATES MH-60 BLACK HAWK MILITARY HELICOPTER, CALLSIGN SUPER SIX FOUR WAS DOWNED IN THE BATTLE FOR MOGADISHU, WAS FIRST DESCRIBED IN THE BESTSELLING VOLUME BLACK HAWK DOWN AND RECEIVED INTERNATIONAL FAME WITH THE EPONYMOUS HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER Author: Domagoj VLAHOVIĆ, Photos by: Tomislav BRANDT, private album

ROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



Black Hawk crew callsign Super Six Four, with technician Winn Mahuron (at left) shortly before departing for the action in Mogadishu. Mike Durant is at right. In between them, from right-to-left are Raymond Frank, William Cleveland and Thomas Field, all of whom lost their lives in the Somali attack that followed the helicopter crash.



WERE HELICOPTERS YOUR MAIN MOTIVE FOR BECOMING A MILITARY PILOT?

It was. I was still very young – thirteen years old, I think - when I first flew a helicopter and it seemed to me the most exciting thing in the world. When I realised it could be my job, my profession,

I decided that it was really what I wanted to do. In that period there was nothing else that inspired me the same way.

WERE YOU INTERESTED IN FLYING MILITARY HELICOPTERS?

It's hard to learn to fly helicopters outside the Army, and very costly. The flying hours are very expensive and it is hard to log enough time unless you are in the Army service. So most pilots in the United States are in the military or ex-military.

YOU BECAME QUITE FAMOUS FOR THE MOGADISHU EPISODE. YOU ONCE SAID THAT YOU DON'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT BUT FEEL OBLIGED TO DO SO?

I have a very special story to tell, although I was one of four hundred members of Task Force Ranger that were on the same mission. It drew a large amount of attention and it still draws it today; if I refused to tell it would draw suspicion, people would think I was

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hiding something. The way the story is perceived being true, I am proud of what we did, and when asked to talk about it I do talk.

YOU WERE ALREADY AN EXPERIENCED PILOT AT THE TIME. WHAT WAS YOUR MISSION?

I think our mission was one of the most demanding. It was a significant urban area with obstacles and extremely dusty, as if it were a desert. The enemy threatened, and there were 20-25 U.S. helicopters that were all heading towards the same district. Our helicopters had dimmed lights, and the city lights had been out as well, as the blackout was in force. Hard to imagine a more perilous flying situation. I am happy that we were all so well-trained and with enough practice.

DID YOU HAVE TIME TO REACT AFTER YOUR HELICOPTER WAS DOWNED?

Yes, we did, but a short time. I am pretty sure, though not with a hundred percent certainty, that the heliocopter's tail was hit with a RPG grenade. I was flying and, at first it felt as if I'd driven the car too fast over a speed bump. Nothing else felt wrong, the handling and flying instruments weren't impaired. A few seconds later we heard a squeaking sound [caused by the detonation] of the grenade, which had damaged part of the tail rotor. The gears were still working, but the oil began to leak, probably aggravated by some other failure. Within a few seconds the reduction gear broke apart, which caused the squeaking; a sound of disastrous failure was heard and the helicopter began to spin, which happens when the Black Hawk or Kiowa Warrior helicopters lose their tail rotors. Such a situation doesn't leave you much choice. If your altitude is high enough you can land further away, but we were at thirty metres and the only thing we could do was to switch the engines off, which my co-pilot did. He turned off a part of the engine, as a matter of fact, which slowed the spin before we fell to the ground.

DID THE FACT THAT TWO AIRCRAFT WERE HIT BY RPGS LEAD TO A REVIEW OF HELICOPTER SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES?

During the mission our aircraft came under attack from a total of 125 RPGs. I don't know how many were launched at me but, it wasn't a one-in-a-million but a one-in-ten chance of a hit. We were flying at a moderate speed, probably 70-80 knots. I think the enemy in time learned to target in front of the flying aircraft and struck two helicopters, both in their tails. Maybe they were engaging from a position behind us. The Black Hawk is a big helicopter. If it's flying slowly and at close range it would be a lucky, but not impossible hit. The basic tactics of the U.S Army haven't changed, as you cannot do much in such situations. If the RPGs are employed on the battlefield, you have to reduce your exposure time, fly by night, as we have always done. Having found that the enemy was using many RPGs, we discontinued daily flights in operations of this sort in urban environments, as it was too risky.

YOU SPENT ELEVEN DAYS IN PRISON AND YOU ALSO SAID THAT YOUR CAPTORS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS YOU CHANGED?

Exactly! The crowd beat me, and my captors were very hostile towards me at first. A few days later their attitude softened and we even communicated. I didn't do it on purpose, I simply used the survival methods I'd learned in training; it was primarily about avoiding hostility.

When you are in prison, you want to survive, you act co-operatively to the limits you have to obey as soldier. I did simple



things – I said thanks and please, I was polite, and I needed no training for that, I was brought up that way. I think that won their acceptance, they realised that although an enemy I was still a person, a human being and not an abstract enemy. Some studies reveal that even the worst enemies, if placed in a situation which forces them to engage with one another, discover the things they have in common and establish a relationship, and I think that it happened during my brief captivity as well.

YOU REMAINED IN THE SERVICE AFTER THE EPISODE IN MOGADISHU?

Yes, for eight more years. Flying was my life, my dream come true. I made up a part of a very special unit, and had very special friends (the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment – the Night Stalkers) and I could not imagine myself leaving the Army. I faced some challenges; the Army didn't want me to fly, because of a permanent back lesion due to the fall with the helicopter, but I struggled against the system and flew helicopters for five more years. It was rewarding to win the battle and remain in the military service.

YOU RETIRED IN 2001. WAS THAT BEFORE OR AFTER THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11?

I had retired before – in February 2001, which was a rather bad time to retire. I felt like a bench warmer. It was before one of the most important dates for my country and the world and, if I had remained in the service I would have been involved rather than standing at the sidelines. It was hard for me to take, but I did, accepting that I was getting older and that there were other competent people who were excellent at their job and that my role had now changed.

DO YOU PREFER THE BOOK BLACK HAWK DOWN TO THE FILM, OR VICE-VERSA?

The books are always better, I think. There are hardly any exceptions to the rule. But the film is good too, better than I imagined it.

I think Croatians can be proud of their independence and everything they have achieved since the 1990-ies.

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HOW ACCURATE ARE THE SCENES FROM THE FILM?

I always say they are accurate enough. Maybe not a hundred percent but enough. Most scenes you saw on the screen did take place, or were slightly different from the real situation. In general, the film depicts the events of that day faithfully.

WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION, WATCHING THE ACTOR RON ELDARD PORTRAY YOU?

We met and he is a really good guy. He didn't portray me exactly the way I see myself, but maybe this is the impression shared by anybody portrayed in a film, I don't know. None of my friends told me what they thought of my portrayal, I didn't even ask.

DOES THE FILM PROPERLY COMMEMORATE THE HEROISM OF YOUR FALLEN COLLEAGUES?

I think the film really encouraged public remembrance. Without it, the story would not have drawn such attention, it would have fallen into oblivion despite its moral and other memorable scenes. I only watched the film once. I wasn't distressed but I see no point in watching it again. I am not keen on reliving the experience more than is necessary, so I don't think I'll watch it ever again.

DO YOU INTEND TO GO ON WRITING?

Writing a book involves a great deal of work that goes on below the radar. Handling the facts, the writing itself, the editing etc. It took me a year to write my first book, which isn't that long, but I spent many nights writing. As a matter of fact, I felt the need to write, and I don't feel it now, although I must say I enjoyed it. The industry has changed today – paperbacks are like dinosaurs, not yet extinct but on their way.

YOU ALSO HOLD SEMINARS. WHAT KIND OF SEMINARS ARE THESE?

It depends. I've held some four or five hundred seminars so far for various firms, big and small alike. Different organisations are looking for inspiration, management wisdom, organisational efficiency, teamwork, problem solving etc. However, I have less and less time for the seminars as I am committed to the firm I started in 2009, which has grown in the meantime and demands more and more work. One thinks that the beginning is the hardest, but it also applies to a later period - however, our business is a source of satisfaction and pride.

YOUR FIRM MOSTLY EMPLOYS VETERANS?

Yes, some three quarters of the firm's personnel are veterans. We promote loyalty towards veterans and it is true that they possess the best skills that we need. These are pilots and aircraft technicians with military experience. Our business is related to many aspects of the air industry except the manufacturing of aircraft, so we do the assets, pilots, maintenance, simulation systems, training and training systems, technical publications and the like. To give an example, we are an associate of the U.S. Army's Special Operations Command.

THE U.S. OH-58D KIOWA WARRIOR HELICOPTERS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED INTO OPERATIONAL SERVICE WITH THE CROATIAN AIR AND AIR DEFENCE FORCES. WHAT BENEFITS WILL THEY BRING?

I have never flown a Kiowa but it is a fantastic aircraft. I am not sure I approve of the decision to withdraw them from use in the U.S. Army. Considering their operational properties, the figures from military conflicts, the cost of flying hours and their





capabilities, I think they are generally accepted as an excellent platform. Yes, some of those tasks will be, if not replaced then at least supported by UAVs (drones), but the Kiowa's capacities still remain enviable and Croatia has profitted from procuring them. I am glad that the programme is proceeding well.

CAN YOU DRAW A COMPARISON BETWEEN U.S. AND FORMER EASTERN BLOC TECHNOLOGY?

Well, I have flown some Russian-made aircraft and my general impression is that Russian platforms are basic, of somewhat outdated design and are focussed on simple power-to-weight ratios, which are essential for an aircraft but today's environment requires technology.

ARE YOU STILL PARTICULARLY ATTACHED TO THE BLACK HAWK?

The Black Hawk and I are having an affair. It is a great machine. I have flown a number of helicopters but the Black Hawk for me is the best multi-purpose helicopter ever made, with so many capabilities. It is a versatile solution for a small fleet with one model. I first flew MEDEVAC tasks, followed by airlanding and personnel transport, including landing 3,000 pounds of gear on the frontline; I also flew special operations involving fast ropework and infrared target detection. We were working aboard ships, in jungles and deserts and doing so efficiently. You just need to imagine which capability you need and it is right there.



Black Hawk helicopters and other aircraft recently taken out of operational service with the U.S. Army can be acquired through the Excess Defense Articles programme at a significantly lower price. If maintained properly, they can remain in use for years. The U.S plan is that the Black Hawks remain functional for some twenty or thirty years and applies to models offered through this programme.

DO YOU STILL FLY HELICOPTERS?

My company has a Black Hawk, which I still haven't flown, but I am planning on doing so. Three years have passed since I last flew a helicopter, when I took my first flight on an AH-1 HueyCobra and it was fun. It isn't easy flying only now and then. Maybe I will do it more often, when I definitely retire!



INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS OF THE HOMELAND WAR

THREE BRITISH VOLUNTEERS OF THE HOMELAND WAR.

DANIEL KINGTON, LARS NEWBOULD AND DR. MARTIN G. PARRY WERE THE SPECIAL GUESTS AT A CEREMONY MARKING THE ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION STORM. THEY CAME TO CROATIA IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE HOMELAND WAR, ALONGSIDE A NUMBER OF OTHER FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS, DESPITE HAVING NO PREVIOUS CONNECTION WITH THE COUNTRY. JOINING THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED MILITARY UNITS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES, THEY VENTURED INTO THE WAR.

This year's commemoration of Operation Storm was especially emotional for three Croatian war veterans, reviving their dormant memories and imbuing them with a sense of great pride. This year's event would perhaps be nothing in particular, were it not for the presence of three British volunteers of the Homeland War: Daniel Kington, Lars Newbould and Dr. Martin Parry who, in the 1990's joined the Croatian military alongside hundreds of other foreign volunteers, and who were honoured as special quests at this year's ceremony marking the nation's Day of Victory. At the time Operation Storm was launched the three had already been demobilised and returned to the UK but their hearts seem to have remained in Croatia. When the media started covering the situation in Croatia and the victories of the Croatian Army, for Daniel it was one of the strongest sensations he had ever experienced - a feeling of immense pride, relief and satisfaction. "I felt like a father whose son had just attained his doctorate. I was once a part of that military force and watching it advance swiftly to victory was a unique sentiment.

Author: Vesna Pintarić, Photos by: Tomislav Brandt

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THEIR RECOLLECTIONS OF THAT TIME AND THE EMOTIONS REMAIN VIVID. MODESTLY REITERATING THAT THEY DID NOTHING SPECIAL, THEIR PRESENCE IN CROATIA CAME AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY NEEDED IT MOST, HENCE THEIR VALOUR AND IMPORTANCE. TODAY, THEY CAN SAY WITH IMMENSE PRIDE THAT THEY WERE SOLDIERS OF THE CROATIAN ARMY.

IT WAS AN HONOUR - AND A PRIVILEGE.

Daniel had followed developments within the Croatian Army during that period and was unsurprised to learn of the operations that paved the way to Lightning and Storm a few months later. "However, Operation Storm was an extraordinary and impeccably executed campaign, as if conducted by a western professional Army. I was euphoric, proud and happy to know the people responsible and certain in their abilities to achieve that kind of victory. Watching the Croatian Army's progress and later, the educational secondment of Croatian officers to the United Kingdom and the engagement of the Croatian Armed Forces in international missions, I was convinced Croatia would enter NATO. When it happened, I knew that my beautiful Croatia would be forever safe". Lars described his enthusiasm upon seeing the first reports of Operation Storm on TV, which were albeit brief and only partially unbiased as he appreciated from experience in previous years that the media were capable of distorting the facts and prone to denigrating the Croatian Army, which frustrated him.

I exclaimed, Yes! But why am I not there? I was proud to have worn the same uniform that I now saw on TV, to have been with those soldiers in combat, making friendships with those brave young men and women. I remember saying, Finally, after all they have been through, Croatia and the Croatian Army have succeeded. It was very touching to listen to them speak openly and almost ecstatically, as if they were still the same young men who in 1991 enthusiastically joined in an unrepeatable war story that would change them forever.

WE FELT AN INCREDIBLE TOGETHERNESS AND WERE CONVINCED CROATIA WOULD WIN

Our three interviewees were among the first foreign volunteers to arrive in Croatia, despite having had no previous connection with the country. Joining the newly established military units of the Croatian Army, they ventured into the war.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS OF THE HOMELAND WAR

Despite a mass of distorted information in the foreign media, they sensed where the truth really lay and felt an irresistible inner calling to go and help, to join the righteous struggle of a small nation for its liberty and independence. Their next stop was inevitably Croatia.

During his stay in Taiwan, English teacher **Lars Newbould** followed the worsening situation in Croatia, as well as the lack of interest and understanding from idle political élites, reading the reports appearing in the Bangkok Post, South China Morning Post and Taipei News. What brought the 25-year old to join the Croatian Army is not difficult to explain. He said he was ashamed at the conduct of important figures in his country, who seemed determined not to understand the situation in Croatia whilst everybody else did. The British media seemed to be depicting the situation with a bias against Croatia.

Lars could not bear it and wanted to show that there were people who thought otherwise and clearly understood the situation; that some actually supported Croatia and wanted to help and he knew he was not the only one. Meeting a Croatian dancer in Taiwan was a decisive moment for him; with the financial assistance of the Croatian girl, Lars and a friend made the long trip overland from Hong Kong and a month later were in Zagreb. Upon arrival and asking where the worst fighting was, he learned that it was in an area of the eastern Slavonian town of Vinkovci known as "Mala Bosna". He and his friend made it there shortly after the besieged town of Vukovar had fallen. The only units still accepting foreigners were the Croatian Defence Forces (HOS), with whom Lars spent several months on the battlefield at Mala Bosna. He had no military experience except what he had learned from his father about various weapons. He remembers receiving a M48 rifle, based on the German-made K98 that he had first seen when he was five and not believing that twenty years on he







was holding an obsolete model from the last world war. He emphasised however that he knew of Croatia's difficulties with the procurement of arms and understood who was partly responsible.

With an ironic smile, he explained that "Maybe tomorrow" were the first Croatian words he learned, amidst the shortage of arms and other essential items. Nevertheless, he and his fellow combatants learned fast, adapting to their situation and making friendships that last to this day. After a few months, Lars left Vinkovci and joined the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) in the Posavina pocket in northern Bosnia. After five months on the battlefield he was allowed his first leave and visited his mother in Trieste, where he had spent part of his childhood. His mother only learned that he had joined the Croatian Army when she saw him being interviewed on TV. He was often saddened by news reports that tried to dig the dirt on the Croatian Army whilst he was in combat and unable to see or respond at the time. What he did see and feel however, was that Croatia would one day achieve its' freedom. In 1991, Martin G. Parry was working as a medical doctor, an anaesthesiologist, in a London hospital. By chance he was working alongside a German doctor whose father was of Croatian origin and lived in Split. They delivered supplies to Croatia in the early days of war. His colleague eventually left to join the Croatian military medical services but Martin soon heard from him again, when his colleague asked if he would be prepared to join Croatian Army, which was short of doctors and Martin readily accepted. He arrived at Split in early 1992 and was assigned to the famous 4th Guards Brigade, received a uniform and weapon and joined the fast pace of events. Martin was posted with soldiers of the "Pauci" Brigade to the war's southern sector for his first combat mission. And he still vividly remembers the locations where he was deployed – the emergency hospitals



he also assisted in the main hospital in Split. After a short time spent in the UK undergoing specialist training, in September 1992 Martin was back in Split. He recalled that his family were not happy with his decision, but nevertheless understood his motivation to be where people most needed his help. To this day, Martin admires the immense sacrifice and humanity demonstrated by the soldiers, nurses and doctors saving the wounded Croatian defenders of their Homeland.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

When war broke out in Croatia, Daniel Kington was working as a civil servant in the Department for the Environment. He was 24 at the time and idealistic, believing that each human being is entitled to freedom and each nation to defend its independence. The absence of support for the fledgling state of Croatia was apparent to everyone. Croatia had no allies at the time and he wanted to do something rather than stay at home and look on helplessly. Daniel told none of his family about his intentions, knowing that they would only try to dissuade him. In October 1991, he secretly arrived in Vienna and then travelled on to Zagreb, where he turned up at the Emigration Information Centre and offered his services. He had served three years in the British Army, which proved to be a decisive factor, as the embryonic Croatian military badly needed people with military experience. From the special police barracks at Tuškanac, Daniel was taken to Vinkovci by bus alongside other volunteer soldiers. Only after arrival did he eventually call his father to let him know he was safe, despite a cacophony of explosions and gunfire in the background. He recalls the words of his father; "Dan, do whatever you think you have to do, I know you are doing the right and



at Imotica, Topolo and Livno. On several occasions

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honourable thing. I am proud of you". His mother was less happy about it but in time and as Daniel called home regularly, she became calmer and more accepting of his decision to defend Croatia. The eastern part of Croatia was exposed to the most attacks; Daniel was assigned to the 83rd Independent Zagreb Volunteers Battalion defending Nuštar and Vinkovci, before he was soon transferred to the legendary anti-tank platoon the "Pustinjski štakori" of the 204th Vukovar Brigade of the Croatian National Guard. In an action undertaken in early November during a diversionary raid along the Marinci to Bogdanovci road, his vehicle hit a landmine, killing and wounding the occupants including Daniel. After his evacuation and recovery, Daniel worked as a military instructor, devising programmes and conducting the training of new soldiers. He also remembers instructing whilst on the frontline, giving soldiers useful advice on weapon handling, self-preservation and fieldcraft. "It was gratifying to see the Croatian soldiers take on board our advice. We trained and learned together. We taught them military skills, whilst they taught us their language and culture. We talked about everything, made jokes and became very real and close friends. True Brothers in Arms". Many foreign volunteers arrived at the eastern Slavonian battlefields, integrating quickly and successfully into locally-based units.

"The level of cohesion among the many different nationalities was amazing", says Daniel. "Young soldiers who spoke English reached out to us and were always close when necessary. A few of the older ones were suspicious and distrustful at first but later on, realising that we were genuinely there to fight by their side, they accepted us like brothers and showed the greatest respect and gratitude. They also faced hard and unpredictable times and grieved over fellow combatants who lost their lives. The enduring friendships and connections made in those fateful days reinforced their combined strength. Daniel remembers one episode in Nuštar, in the basement of a house which had lost its upper floor while tank shells and mortar bombs were busy destroying the remainder of the building. He recalled his impressions, the expectation of imminent death and the talk about freedom, democracy, the future, of life in general and how similar they all were, despite belonging to different nationalities.



"We had known it from the very beginning, on seeing the courage and the faith of the Croatian soldiers, who were citizen soldiers in the truest sense and who were short of food, arms and military skills, that they would win in the end. I didn't know how, or when it would happen but we could smell victory. I sensed their firm, unbreakable togetherness and was convinced in my heart that Croatia would survive."

Upon the arrival of UNPROFOR peacekeepers, the UN demanded the demobilisation of all foreign

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citizens from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia irrespective of the fact that their recruitment was perfectly legal, so that our interviewees were obliged to leave their Croatian units. Lars went on to fight on the Croatian side in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as did a significant number of other international volunteers. Daniel recalled his return home and the efforts he made to clarify the situation to people around him, having seen the war at first hand. As a foreign combatant in Croatia, he soon caught the attention of the media and despite some attempts to prevent him, he continued to explain his motives and helped to promote the values of the Homeland War imposed upon Croatia. It was a tough time for us, says Lars. "The media called us mercenaries and assassins, while we only wanted to state the plain truth. A question was often asked and it might sound hard to believe, 'On which side did you fight?' Unfortunately, many people understood nothing." In spite of all this, none of the three is in any doubt that they would do the same again if they found themselves in the same situation. "The experience made us better people, more tolerant, serious, more aware and different. You see both the lowest points in human nature and also unbelievably fantastic highs". Remembering their fallen comrades and the hard moments when they said goodbye to each other and

CFIVA CROATIAN FORCES INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION

The CFIVA was established in May 1995 by Daniel Kington, a veteran of the Croatian National Guard, together with a group of fellow international volunteers. Based in Southern England, it has members in Croatia, France, the U.S., Australia, Finland and Norway. CFIVA is an internationally recognised association of foreign veterans of the Homeland War and of the War for the Independence of Kosovo and is open to all foreign citizens who served as members of the Croatian Army or the Croatian Armed Forces; the Croatian Defence Council or the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo Liberation Army. The association is multinational, nonpolitical and anti-extremist, with rigorous membership criteria. The association presently has 25 active members, who constitute the core of an informal broader network of international veterans, aiming to identify their needs and procure solutions for their problems. The goal of the Association is to provide friendship, togetherness, mutual support, obtain welfare and mental health care for their veterans, particularly those who lack the appropriate support in their own countries. They organise social events and a campaign for recognition of their role in the Croatian forces; paying tribute to those who lost their lives, promote the values of the Homeland War, particularly the memory of Vukovar and advance the international reputation of the Republic of Croatia.





Information about CFIVA is available on:

- https://web.archive.org/web/20080517122158/https://www.cfiva.org/
- https://www.facebook.com/Croatian-Forces-International-Volunteers-Association-681101828675927/

For his committed humanitarian work and service to veterans' welfare, the founder of CFIVA **Daniel Kington has** received the Order of Mercy of Great Britain. Kington has since 2001 worked as a volunteer for the Royal British Legion - the main British veterans' organisation, similar to Croatia's HVIDRA.





all the amazingly brave people they encountered, they conclude, "The experience inevitably changes you". Although modestly reiterating that they did nothing special, it is enough for us to know that they were present when they were most needed, and this is both their quality and valour. They claim to be merely ordinary people who had the courage to do an extraordinary thing, once in their lifetimes. Today they proudly affirm, "We were soldiers of the Croatian Army! That is an amazing feeling and a great privilege!"

THE LARGEST FOREIGN CONTINGENT RECRUITED IN BRITAIN

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of international volunteers that fought in the ranks of the Croatian Army and Croatian Defence Forces and later on in the Croatian Defence Council, given the varying figures dependent upon the source. From personal accounts and a few online records, the Croatian Forces International Volunteers Association has completed a roll of 597 foreign combatants in Croatian units; they believe however that there were far more, but the various units' war records have not been accessible and so this figure is still not definitive. According to Daniel's research, as many as 55 foreign combatants lost their lives in the Homeland War, and with the wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo the toll rose to 122. Cur-


rently available data, whilst incomplete, reveal that the international volunteers came from 30 different countries with by far the largest contingent – nearly 200 - from Britain. The largest concentration of international volunteers was in eastern Slavonia, around Vukovar, Vinkovci, Osijek and Nuštar. Eight of them defended Vukovar and three were killed there. The best known among them is the French volunteer **Jean-Michel Nicollier**, executed at Ovčara and his remains missing to this day. All of them merit a place in Croatian history.

Inevitably, a few of the international volunteers joined the Croatian Army for the wrong reasons or with dishonourable intentions. Awareness of this was one of the factors that compelled the international volunteers to establish their Association and its members are determined to safeguard the positive image of all those who defended Croatia with only the most honourable motives. Their membership criteria are very strict and their rules of conduct clear and binding. Members contravening the Association's Constitution are asked to leave. One of the main goals of the Association is to assist all foreign veterans of the Homeland War who, after returning to their own countries faced problems ranging from a lack of acceptance and understanding to aggravated economic, social and health issues, particularly seeking to obtain proper care for disabled veterans and their families.

Each new member is expected to give priority to others, and this approach has brought members

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very close together in a spirit of mutual trust and respect. The Association's members actively promote positive values, military virtue and humanity as they guard the memory of their fallen comrades. They undertake numerous charitable campaigns and organise themselves in their respective countries, recently purchasing 45 school backpacks for the children in the SOS Village at Lekenik near Sisak. They also take part in commemorative campaigns and veterans' events in other countries. Their activities and organisation continues to develop year by year and they are willing to pass on their positive experience to the veterans' associations in Croatia, to assist them to deliver efficient and effective services to their members. The Association is proud of its members' excellent co-operation with both the Croatian Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Homeland War Veterans and the Embassy of the Republic of Croatia in the United Kingdom. Their positive efforts and objectives have gained widespread recognition and support in return. Its members have requested no material rewards from the countries they fought for, except only due recognition and appreciation for their contribution and the sacrifice of their comrades, something desired by every soldier. The Association has enjoyed friendly co-operation with Croatia at every level, particularly over the last two years. Their invitation to attend the ceremony marking Operation Storm was received with great honour and privilege. "You have every reason to be proud, without ever forgetting those who dedicated their lives to victory. We are very happy that Croatia is free and independent, and we wish it remains so for the next thousand years and beyond".

JEAN-MICHEL NICOLLIER, FRENCH VOLUNTEER AND DEFENDER OF VUKOVAR KILLED AT OVČARA



According to the Association's data, at least eight international volunteers fought at Vukovar and three were killed. The best known of them was Jean Michel Nicollier. Although knowing Croatia only from the media in France, the 25-year old headed to Croatia with only one intention in mind – to help those defending their country. He fought as an international volunteer at Sajmište in Vukovar, where on 9 November 1991 he was wounded and hospitalised. Following the fall of Vukovar and the entry of Yugoslav Army soldiers and Serbian militia into the Vukovar Hospital, Jean-Michel was abducted alongside other wounded soldiers, tortured and killed at Ovčara, and his remains are missing to this day. In the basement of the Vukovar Hospital, shortly before his removal and death, he told French reporters: "…I came to Vukovar as a volunteer? Because I think the Croatians deserved that help and I chose to fight by their side".



Upon arrival, the "Red Arrows" performed a dramatic flying salute in regular formation with their eleven British Aerospace Hawk T.1a aircraft, complete with vapour trails. They later exchanged views and proposals for future co-operation with their Croatian hosts. Ambassador Dalgleish praised the successful first arrival of the RAF aerobatic team, whereby the already strong partnership and cooperation between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Croatia is being further extended to their respective air forces. The "Red Arrows" visited Croatia and the "Wings of Storm" during the course of their return to the United Kingdom following pre-season training in Greece, as visitors to the Tanagra Air Force Base. The "Red Arrows" overseas flying training element is traditionally known as Exercise Springhawk and is conducted mainly from the Royal Air Force base at Akrotiri, Cyprus, as the fine weather offers optimal flying conditions necessary for the team's long and intensive working up period. The arrival and departure to and from Exercise Springhawk also represents an important phase, with flypasts and goodwill visits planned as valuable opportunities to build international friendships, exchange experiences and plan new and broader co-operation for the future. The ongoing activities at Zemunik Air Base suggest that the "Wings of Storm" have already begun their international air display season. In March, the base received a visit from Breitling's historic Douglas DC-3 as part of its world tour, followed by a friendly visit from the Italian Air Force's "Frecce Tricolori", another world-class aerobatic team. These visits were the culmination of years of overseas performances by the "Wings of Storm" and their evergrowing international reputation.

to the Republic of Croatia, H.E. Andrew Dalgleish emphasised that the visit of the Red Arrows to Zemunik exemplified the good co-operation and partnership between the two countries.

British Ambassador

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Text and photos by Igor SKENDEROVIĆ

Oce la

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ARROWS

AT ZEMUNIK

0.00

ON 2 JUNE 2017 THE "RED ARROWS" - ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST AND MOST FAMOUS AEROBATIC TEAMS-LANDED AT ZEMUNIK AIR FORCE BASE AS PART OF A GOODWILL VISIT TO CROATIA'S AEROBATIC TEAM "WINGS OF STORM"...

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION





AROUND SIXTY PERFORMANCES ANNUALLY

The RAF's "Red Arrows" aerobatic team was established back in late-1964 and commenced their first flying season in May 1965.

The team is a sub-unit of the Royal Air Force's Central Flying School and is based at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire. From 1965 to 1968 the team operated seven Gnat aircraft, soon increased to nine performing one of their most characteristic manoueuvres, the "Diamond Nine" formation, which features on the team's official unit badge. Since 1980 the team has flown the Hawker Siddeley/British Aerospace Hawk T.1a trainer aircraft and gained its official motto, "Eclat" (excellence). The Arrows make up a full 120-member squadron with the aviation and technical components manned on a voluntary basis from within the ranks of the Royal Air Force.

The display pilots serve in the team for three to four years and are drawn from the Air Force's regular frontline fast jet squadrons operating Panavia Tornado and Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft. The flight team consists of nine pilots, callsign Red 1 to Red 9. At air shows they are accompanied by Red 10 in the role of liaison officer, supervisor and commentator. The support staff (the Blues, so-called because of their special blue overalls) consists of 85 members, from whom nine technicians are selected annually to accompany each of the nine aircraft and often perform flypasts and aerobatics sitting in the Hawk's rear seat behind the pilot.



The flying sequence of the "Red Arrows" comprises a total of twenty-five precision aerial manoeuvres, with a typical sequence being about twenty-five minutes' duration.

The "Red Arrows" have performed over 4,800 times in 57 countries worldwide and in 2017 their estimated audience was as much as 10,000. Annually the team will display approximately sixty times.

The "Wings of Storm" first flew in company with the "Red Arrows" at the Rivolto air show, Italy in 2010 that marked the 50th anniversary of the Italian Air Force's "Frecce Tricolori" aerobatic team and last flew together in 2016 at the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, when the Croatian team won a highly prestigious international award, the King Hussein Memorial Sword, for the overall best flying performance of the tournament, the largest annual gathering of military aviation in the world.

GENUINE RESPECT FOR THE "WINGS OF STORM"

The Team Leader of the "Red Arrows", Squadron Leader David Montenegro, a member of the team from 2009 - 2011 and again from 2015, told us that the team performed a prominent role in the UK military as a whole, enhancing the country's international reputation and promoting recruitment for aviation and the armed forces, therefore the Royal Air Force attaches significant importance to



its international performances and establishing good relations.

Talking about the "Red Arrows" display season, which often extends into December, Squadron Leader Montenegro emphasised that the team's pre-season flying training sometimes lasts up to six months. Upon completion of pre-season training, they undergo a RAF Headquarters Certification process before receiving a Public Display Authority certificate authorising them to fly at air shows and other events. During the pre-season training the team will add newly devised manoeuvres to their sequence to further enhance their aerial displays.

Squadron Leader Montenegro praised the Croatian aerobatic team's talent for dynamic formation aerobatic manoeuvres, their approach to training and general flying capabilities and said he was always genuinely impressed by the "Wings of Storm". Squadron Leader Montenegro has flown the Pilatus PC-7, a training aircraft very similar to the Pilatus PC-9M flown by the "Wings of Storm" and understands the complexity of performing an aerobatic programme with such an aircraft, particularly within teams.

Unlike the Hawks flown by the "Red Arrows", with their arrow-shaped swept wings enabling faster and more dynamic performances, particularly evident when flying in unfavourable weather conditions, the Pilatus is straight-winged, rendering aerobatic flying more challenging in difficult weather. More differences lie in the powerplants of the aircraft flown – the "Red Arrows" fly turbojet-powered aircraft as opposed to the turbo-propped Pilatus PC-9 of the





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Croatian team, placing a higher demand on their flying skills to successfully perform their aerobatic programmes, which is why the "Wings of Storm" enjoy sincere respect of their British colleagues.

LOOKING FORWARD TO FUTURE VISITS OF THE RED ARROWS

Team Leader of the "Wings of Storm", Captain Darko Belančić explained that the Red Arrows' goodwill visit was the successful culmination of numerous informal contacts and meetings. "Wings of Storm" values its co-operation with the "Red Arrows" in view of their unblemished 52-year history of aerobatic flying, for the insights into their operating methodology, the mindset regarding flying training for each performance season and the exchange of ideas and experiences. Close partnership working with the "Red Arrows", as well as other military aerobatic teams is deeply beneficial for the future development of the Croatian team. Cpt Belančić expressed the hope that more visits from the "Red Arrows" and other display teams would follow, as the Zemunik air base offers fine weather and many amenities for aerobatics teams in search of preseason training areas uncluttered by civilian air traffic and that international co-operation would continue to strengthen and develop.

Drawing comparisons between the teams, Cpt Belančić pointed out that they basically differed in size and the larger pool of potential pilots available to the "Red Arrows". In addition, the "Red Arrows" were established as a dedicated aerobatic unit for showcasing their armed forces at air shows and other events, whereas the "Wings of Storm" are primarily a flying training unit of the Croatian Air and Air Defence Forces, who are nevertheless determined to make the most of every opportunity for serious aerobatic practice.

As their international reputation grows, the 2017 calendar for the "Wings of Storm" lists no fewer than twenty-five performances, including two international events in France and Slovakia.



HONOUR GUARD BATTALION

CEREMONY OF THE CHARGENOG

THE FIRST CHANGING OF THE GUARD CEREMONY TOOK PLACE IN ST. MARK'S SQUARE, ZAGREB ON 30 MAY 1991 AND WAS A REGULAR EVENT UNTIL 1 OCTOBER 2000. FOLLOWING A SEVENTEEN-YEAR PAUSE, THE TRADITION WAS REVIVED ON 27 MAY 2017, AS TROOPS OF THE HONOUR GUARD DRESSED IN THEIR HISTORIC UNIFORMS WILL AGAIN PERFORM IT EVERY SATURDAY AND ON BANK HOLIDAYS...





MAGAZINE

GUARD RETURNS TO HISTORIC ST. MARK'S SQUARE

HONOUR GUARD BATTALION



The ceremony of the Changing of the Guard by soldiers of the Croatian Armed Forces' Honour Guard Battalion will draw audiences into Zagreb's historic Upper Town again, after a pause of seventeen years. On 27 May 2017, the eve of the 26th anniversary of the establishment of the Croatian Armed Forces, the firing of the famous Grič cannon from the old Lotrščak Tower followed by a musical overture heralded the revival of the Changing of the Guard ceremony, originally concieved in late 1990. The event was performed by soldiers of the Honour Guard Company, part of the Honour Guard Battalion of the Croatian Armed Forces.

The Honour Guard Battalion as a unit is directly subordinated to the Croatian Armed Forces General Staff with responsibility for ceremonial and diplomatic protocol support to the government and military authorities (the President, Government and Ministry of Defence) and for providing security to the Supreme Commander of the Croatian Armed Forces. Most of the Battalion is housed at the special police barracks at Tuškanac in Zagreb, with some components detached to the Office of the President and at Peneda barracks on the Adriatic island of Brijuni.

The decision to establish an honour guard unit to undertake high-level ceremonial activities for the authorities was made by Croatia's first President, Franjo Tuđman following a proposal from Žarko Domljan, the first Speaker of the Croatian Parliament. 18 April 1991 saw the establishment of the Presidential Honour Guard within the Croatian Interior Ministry, manned by troops drawn from special and other police units (all volunteers of the Homeland War) under the command of Major General Velibor Kikerec. In addition to their ceremonial duties these troops, who had participated in the first counter-insurgency operations of the war in Pakrac and at Plitvice, underwent extensive training for close protection of the country's President (and Supreme Commander of the Croatian military) and of other top-level officials as well as providing security and protection of ministries in the capital's historic government quarter.





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On 14 July 2013, seventy members of the Honour Guard Battalion took part in the Bastille Day parade in Paris the world's oldest and most famous military parade. **Echoing their** influential presence in the city nearly four centuries before, marching down the Avenue des Champs-Élysées the Croatian soldiers in their distinctive ceremonial uniforms, disciplined and poised, won the admiration of the vast crowds attending the spectacle.



The Presidential Honour Guard first appeared in public at the momentous gathering of the Croatian National Guard in the "Zagreb" Football Club stadium on 28 May 1991. Two days later, the first ceremony of the Changing of the Guard was performed at St. Mark's Square and became a regular feature of the life of the capital until the turn of the millenium.

The initial idea had been to introduce Croatian soldiers dressed in traditional military uniform and through the Changing of the Guard ceremony emphasise to the nation's citizens the role and importance of the uniform as a small yet potent symbol of Croatian national identity and it has remained so to this day. The appearance of Croatian officers, NCOs and soldiers in eye-catching and elegant uniforms, skilled in drill and weapon handling was intended as a tangible display of the nation's aspirations towards international recognition and Euro-Atlantic integration, as well as demonstrating the Armed Forces' ability and will to defend the people, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Croatia.

GUARD UNIFORMS REVIVING A CENTURIES-OLD MILITARY TRADITION

The Honour Guard Battalion wear historical ceremonial uniforms designed on an original model that drew upon the formal dress of Croatian magnates and leaders of the Croatian Parliament during the historical period of Croatia proper (Banska Hrvatska) and from uniforms of the mid-nineteenth century period of the Croatian National Revival. The newlymodelled uniform thus incorporated centuries-old military tradition with the aspirations of the Croatian people for their own state.

45



HONOUR GUARD BATTALION





The Guard's uniforms are made from quality English cloth. The bright scarlet recalls the traditional uniform livery that distinguished Croatian fighting units from their enemy on the battlefield during the country's successful resistance of the invading Ottoman empire. The officers wear traditional uniforms of black and white. The overall design and vivid colours are complemented by a peakless cap bearing the Croatian coat of arms in gold, a tight-fitting braided jacket with a scarlet greatcoat slung over the left shoulder and secured by a lanyard, white gloves and officer's sword (worn by the commander) and a leather bandolier for ammunition around the waist. The most internationally significant part of the uniform is the famous black cravat worn around the neck of each guardsman, so named by fashionable Parisians after the Croatian troops who arrived in their city during the Thirty Years War and which became an everlasting symbol of Croatian military elan.

THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD CEREMONY - A WORK OF ART

The ceremony takes place in the main square between the Vice-roy's Palace (Banski dvori - the seat of the Croatian Government) and St. Mark's Church. It comprises several stages: the arrival of two guard details on the parade ground – the outgoing detail from the Governor's Palace and the incoming detail from the direction of nearby Kuševićeva and Ćirilometodska streets; the inspection of weapons of the incoming detail in a procedure known as "Presenting Arms", the peripheral changing of the guard at the entrance to the Vice-roy's Palace (Banski dvori), the ceremonial folding of bayonets on the rifles of the retiring detail, the main changing of the guard ceremony between the two details and finally the withdrawal of the outgoing detail to barracks.

It is performed by three officers (identifiable in their historic black and white uniforms) and 26 enlisted soldiers and NCOs wearing scarlet. Each of the officers, Commander of the Guard and the detail commanders wears a sword in a leather scabbard; the guardsmen are armed with the M59/66 semi-automatic rifle. Honour Guard musicians wear only scarlet jackets, to allow more freedom of movement.

The return of the Changing of the Guard ceremony will bring a charming new attraction to Zagreb, similar to many European capitals with popular militaryceremonial customs and will re-establish a tradition dating back to the foundation of the present-day Croatian state as well as drawing the Army and its citizens more closely together. Changing of the Guard will take place on Saturdays and bank holidays in the summer season (27 May to 1 October), also serving as a popular showcase for the Croatian Armed Forces and the country's centuries-old military traditions of which it is rightfully proud.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BATTALION

When Yugoslav Air Force MiG aircraft launched an unsuccessful bombing raid aimed at Croatia's President Franjo Tuđman as he worked at his official residence in the Vice-roy's Palace on 7 October 1991, the presidential honour guard remained steadfastly in position by their President's side throughout the whole attack, typically demonstrating the courage and professionalism of Croatian soldiers in the conduct of their duties in time of war. Following that attack the presidential guard was relocated to Pantovčak, where in addition to diplomatic protocol duties it provided security close protection for the President and his official residences until early 1992, when the Interior Ministry formed a dedicated Department of Presidential Security. Some of the Presidential Guard volunteered for front-line duty and were posted to the country's Southern battlefront, while others joined elite units of the Croatian Army.

Early in 1994 the Battalion was amalgamated as the First Honour Guard Battalion of the 1st Guard Corps and assigned ceremonial and other duties including the security of protected facilities. Following peacetime reorganisation and dissolution of the 1st Guard Corps the Honour Guard Battalion was formed as a natural successor, continuing to operate under the motto, "Shield and Pride, for the honour of the Croatian people and their government, from the first Croatian President to the first Croatian female President". The Battalion is currently led by Colonel Burčul, one of the original participants of the first historic Changing of the Guard ceremony in St. Mark's Square on 30 May 1991.



Our video products



7TH HRVCON EQUIPPED WITH ASSAULT RIFLE MADE IN CROATIA The 7th HRVCON to Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan is the first Contingent fully equipped with the weapons made in Croatia. The VHS 2 assault rifle is a product of the Croatian manufacturer (HS Produkt), whose quality and reliability have earned it reputation at the international level.



PzH 2000 SELF-PROPELLED HOWITZERS DRY-FIRE PRACTICE The PzH 2000 self-propelled Howitzers are characterised by high firepower and accuracy, as well as high mobility. We saw that for ourselves during the dry-fire practice.



26 PROUD YEARS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES

The video on the history, development and current capabilities of the Croatian Armed Forces was recorded on the occasion of the 26th anniversary of their establishment.



MILITARY EXERCISE "KUPA 17"

In the training range near Karlovac the members of the Engineer Regiment, alongside the members of the Guards Mechanised Brigade and the Armoured Battalion of the Guards Armoured Mechanised Brigade, demonstrated the acquired operational capability of overcoming the water obstacles.

KIOWA WARRIOR HELICOPTER DAY&NIGHTTIME TACTICAL LIVE FIRING AND ROCKET LAUNCHING

The Croatian pilots performed the first autonomous tactical day- and night-time live firing and rocket launching on the on the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters in the Training Range "Eugen Kvaternik" using the 12.7-mm machine guns and the Hydra 70-mm unguided rockets NRZ, engaging the targets from the helicopters with practice laser guided Hellfire missiles and Heckler & Koch G36CV assault rifles.

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