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**Pilot and
ground crew
training in the
State of Israel
("train the
trainers")**

**F-16
flight
simulator**

**Three years
of overall logistic
support, including
the presence of
instructors in
Croatia**



Equipment package for ground support

Initial weapons systems package

Construction and adaptation of infrastructure

Initial spare parts package

PROJECTED AIRCRAFT SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE:

All aircraft to undergo 25-year service life extension

Spare parts and consummables supply chain

Component repairs

Automated maintenance support systems

Logistic support contract in Croatia with engineer support in Israel

INTERVIEW

DAMIR KRSTIČEVIĆ,
CROATIAN MINISTER OF DEFENCE

OUR DREAM IS TO SEE MODERN, FOURTH GENERATION JET AIRCRAFT FLOWN BY CROATIAN PILOTS ON THE CROATIAN SKYLINE IN 2020- THE YEAR OF CROATIA'S PRESIDENCY OF THE EU AND THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILITARY AND POLICE OPERATION STORM; IT IS A MATTER OF NATIONAL PRIDE AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS FUTURE GENERATIONS.

The decision on the procurement of a multi-role fighter aircraft and modernisation of our combat strength will remain one of the greatest and significant moves during the term of office of Croatia's present Government and in particular of its Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević, who has invested enormous energy and effort in the modernisation of the Croatian Armed Forces across all operational areas and towards the enhancement of their defence capabilities. Minister Krstičević shared his views and praise for the Decision, together with its implications for the future of the Croatian Armed Forces, with the team of CROMIL Magazine.

CROATIAN COMBAT AVIATION TRADITION WILL LIVE ON

Croatia has procured no new fighter aircraft since the 1991-95 Homeland War. There had been talk of procurement over the past 15 years without result and it had seemed as if the decision would never come. Now at last, thanks to your persistence it has become a reality.

This is a historic moment for the Croatian Armed Forces and the Croatian Air Force – after 15 years the present Croatian Government has adopted the Decision on the procurement of a multi-role fighter aircraft, and both the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Armed Forces are ready to implement this important project.



I am proud that we have achieved one of our crucial goals – the retention of a national capability to monitor and protect our sovereign airspace. The Croatian Air Force played a vital role in the Homeland War – it helped us prevail on a number of occasions and I am glad that the tradition of Croatian military aviation lives on.

Our dream is to see modern, fourth generation jet aircraft flown by Croatian pilots in the Croatian skyline in 2020 – the year of Croatia's presidency of the EU and the 25th anniversary of the military and police Operation "Storm"; it is a matter of national pride and our responsibility towards future generations.

This decision is important for all of Croatian society; it is not merely a gain in terms of security and defence – it opens the door for Croatia to intensive economic and research co-operation. Croatia is not only acquiring a multi-role fighter aircraft but also receiving valuable expert knowledge and operational experience. Croatian pilots will have an opportunity to fly fourth-generation jet fighter aircraft and learn from some of the best in the world.

What is the planned timeline for the delivery of the aircraft and equipment? You have mentioned the arrival of the first two aircraft during 2020, the year of Croatia's the EU presidency and the 25th anniversary of Operation Storm. Will there be any delays, as was the case with the decision on procurement?

The introduction of the multi-role fighter aircraft into operational service and the transition from third- to fourth-generation jet fighters takes some time, depending on the personnel, material and financial resources available as well as the aspirations, requirements and training timeline put forward by the successful bidder. We anticipate that the first multi-role fighter aircraft will be delivered to Croatia in 2020, with six more in 2021 and the remaining four in 2022.



**GENERAL
MIRKO ŠUNDOV,**

CHIEF OF THE
GENERAL STAFF OF
THE CROATIAN ARMED
FORCES

The monitoring and protection of our national airspace is the responsibility of the Croatian Air Force and is undertaken by the use of fighter aircraft. Current strategic documents, namely the Long-Term Development Plan and the National Security Strategy, require that the two capabilities be maintained and further upgraded. They form part of the wider defence effort and are a permanent NATO function within the NATINAMDS (NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System). In the event of the loss of these capabilities, the Alliance's entire defence system would have to be adapted to new circumstances; the monitoring and protection of our national airspace would have to be arranged bilaterally with neighbouring partner countries and once lost, capabilities are very difficult to restore.

The introduction of a fourth-generation jet fighter aircraft into service will enable the continuation of tasks currently performed by MiG-21 aircraft, and will create the opportunity to develop a whole new range of capabilities related primarily to greater interoperability and co-operation with other branches of the Croatian Armed Forces. Greater flying ranges allow a broader spectrum of missions, better trained pilots and enhanced weapons systems enable the performance of additional tasks and more complex undertakings. We should also emphasise that the aircraft is fully NATO-compatible.

Croatia boasts a long aviation tradition; the introduction of a new aviation asset, particularly its systems, is a major challenge but also an opportunity to maintain and strengthen our technical skills base in aviation.

We must not forget the follow-on impact of new state-of-the-art technology on educational requirements and on the defence and aviation industries.

The higher education system and segments of industry in Croatia will also indirectly benefit from this procurement. I believe that the decision on the procurement of a multi-role fighter aircraft will lead more young people to choose the profession of military pilot and technical roles in the armed services.





CROATIAN AIR FORCE

COLONEL DAVOR TRETINJAK,
HEAD OF THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND
HEAD OF THE EXPERT TEAM ASSIGNED TO THE MULTI-
ROLE FIGHTER AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT PROJECT



Prior to delivery, each aircraft will undergo a SLEP (Service Life Extension Programme) consisting of detailed checks and strengthening of the structure and integrity of the fuselage and other vital components. Modification will be undertaken on all F-16 aircraft, in compliance

with guidance and specifications from the US manufacturer Lockheed-Martin and includes the airframes due for delivery to Croatia. The works undertaken will remove the effects of environment and usage, with the Israelis guaranteeing a further 3,000 flying hours, amounting to 36,000 equivalent flying hours for the whole fleet and ensuring a service life of 25 years for each aircraft. The Decision regarding procurement of a fourth-generation multi-role fighter aircraft is one of the most important strategic decisions in the defence sector since the Homeland War, and one of the largest ever investments in the Croatian Armed Forces in terms of project size and complexity. By introducing the multi-role fighter aircraft, Croatia will retain sovereignty over its national airspace, continue to act as a guarantor of air defence in the region and will set new standards in its equipment and expertise. The Croatian Armed Forces will retain existing and develop new capabilities, whilst the nation's Air Force will receive a new and essential ingredient in meeting NATO requirements for integrated air defence and assurance of the continuation of an air superiority fighter-based air force.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ŽELJKO NINIĆ,
OFFICER COMMANDING, 91ST CROATIAN AIR FORCE BASE



Barak (Lightning), the Israeli variant of the F-16 aircraft, is among the best upgraded models, and given the type and quantity of weapons and equipment with which it can be mounted enables the performance of a wide range of tasks. The flying sensation, the view from the cockpit and

the integrated sensor systems including HOTAS (Hands on Throttle and Stick) are unimaginable with the current type in use (the Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-21bis).

We have initiated draft plans and project documentation for the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the new multi-role fighter aircraft. Co-ordinating construction work with ongoing flying operations and other activity at the "Lt. Col Marko Živković" airbase will be a demanding task but, taking into account the ultimate objective I am convinced that the infrastructure will be ready within the specified term.



KEY SELECTION PARAMETERS

The key factors taken into consideration during the selection process focussed around the aircraft's performance specifications as well as proposed inter-governmental agreements, cross-national business and economic packages, and the price.

The Expert Team's evaluation of all four proposals was concluded within deadline on 30 November 2017 and a Feasibility Study prepared that would serve as the basis for a decision that would in due course be made at national level.

Key steps in the decision-making process included the recommendation of the Defence Committee of the Croatian Parliament and National Defence Council, with the final decision being made at the Croatian Government level. The Parliamentary Defence Committee unanimously endorsed the multi-role fighter project on 14 December 2017, followed on 27 March 2018 by Croatia's National Defence Council, composed of the Croatian President, the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, Prime Minister, Min-



BRIGADIER GENERAL MATO MIKIĆ,
CROATIAN AIR FORCE COMMANDER



This is a most significant day for the Croatian Air Force. It is not just about the Decision on the procurement of fighter aircraft, it is about retaining a combat air arm, which is highly important for the Croatian Air Force and the wider armed forces. Anybody who understands trends in inter-

national military systems also understands that once lost, a capability is extremely hard, if not impossible, to restore. We have over the past 26 years invested significant efforts and knowledge to ensure our Fighter Squadron continues its constitutional role of control and protection of our national airspace at all times. In addition to asset maintenance, we have also continuously invested in our most important resource - personnel - pilots and aircraft technicians, with essential support from other branches of the Croatian Air Force.

The introduction of new technology - a fourth-generation jet fighter aircraft - brings a new challenge for the members of the Fighter Squadron of the 91st Air Base and for the entire Croatian Air Force; it is a special challenge and also an emotional moment for me as a fighter pilot.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHRISTIAN JAGODIĆ,
COMMANDER OF THE CROATIAN AIR FORCE'S
FIGHTER SQUADRON



Concurrently with initiating the selection process for a multi-role fighter aircraft, the Fighter Squadron has stepped up preparations for its introduction. In my capacity as Commanding Officer, I have also been involved in the selection process, and implemented preparatory activities

where feasible, irrespective of the final decision. Aware of how much work there was to do once the Decision was made, we did not hesitate for a moment and began preparations in addition to our usual workload. These consisted of joint flying activities with partner air arms in aircraft shortlisted for procurement, practice in relevant flight simulators, visits to air bases and the exchange of experiences with pilots flying the proposed variants of aircraft.

Aircraft technical staff have also been engaged in preparatory activities, with an emphasis on intensive English language study and reviewing available reference material on modern aircraft systems, equipment and weaponry. We have tailored training programmes for personnel in various aviation areas, enhanced physical and psychological training, staffing our units and other activities.

ister of Defence, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Minister of Finance, the Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces, Chairman of the Parliamentary Defence Committee and the Defence Advisor to the President of the Republic. Both the Defence Committee and Council endorsed the views and recommendations of the Expert Team, stating that the most suitable proposal was that received from the State of Israel and consequently made a recommendation to the Croatian Government to formally uphold its decision on the procurement of a multi-role fighter aircraft from the Israelis.

By introducing the multi-role fighter aircraft, Croatia will retain sovereignty over its national airspace, acting as a guarantor of air defence in the region and will set new standards in its equipment and expertise. The Croatian Armed Forces will retain its existing and develop new capabilities, whilst the nation's Air Force will receive a new and essential ingredient in meeting NATO requirements for integrated air defence and assurance of the continuation of an air superiority fighter-based air force.



Our challenge therefore is to be able to conduct a full range of special operations and in order to do that, we need to conduct joint, combined operations, incorporating multiple nations in a more regionalised context.

INTERVIEW

VICE ADMIRAL COLIN J. KILRAIN,
NATO SPECIAL OPERATIONS
HEADQUARTERS

THE THREATS THAT WE FACE ARE SO COMPLEX THAT NO NATION CAN HANDLE ALL OF THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES ON THEIR OWN. ALLIANCES, PARTNERSHIPS AND FRIENDSHIPS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER IN TODAY'S COMPLEX WORLD. THOSE RELATIONSHIPS TAKE WORK, COMMITMENT AND SHARED RISK...

SOF HAVE PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE SECURITY OF OUR NATIONS

NATO's "First SOF Officer" visited the Republic of Croatia at the beginning of March. He met up with numerous political and military officials, including the President, the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces. The aim of his visit was to deepen relations between his Headquarters and Croatian institutions, and also to promote Croatia's Special Operations Forces. A Croatian officer, Major Andrija Mihanović is currently working at Special Operations Headquarters and there may be more Croatians there soon...

How are your Headquarters set up and what are its basic tasks?

My organisation, the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ), is located in Mons, Belgium, adjacent to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). NSHQ was formed about 10 years ago, as a result of our shared deployed Special Operations experiences. The nations of NATO saw that many of the Special Operations Forces (SOF) working together in Afghanistan had great capability. At the time, there were challenges in co-ordinating these various national capabilities partly because some of the eastern NATO nations were organised along former Soviet-bloc lines.

If the Croatian military is a reflection of your society - which I think most militaries are - then Croatia has much to be proud of. I also think Croatia is making the right investments in its military, to ensure that it can face future challenges.

The consensus among SOF commanders was that "clearly our SOF forces are all well trained, but we have different communications and different ways of conducting operations." Learning from trial deployments of multinational operations, commanders believed it was important to create an organisation that could help bring the SOF community together, with the goal of improving interoperability and communications. Furthermore, we believed that increased co-operation would both synchronise and maximise our overall impact. As a result of these ideas, NSHQ was created to help build that interoperability, in which we focus on three priority areas.



First, relying on our training campus, we learn from other nations, build training programmes and deliver courses to our allies and partners, which ultimately builds NATO's Special Operations' capability. Our campus started with just a handful of courses and has grown to more than 26 different programmes. This is our core function, one of the duties that we perform and which is really helpful for the Alliance.

The second task my headquarters undertakes for the Alliance is war planning. Part of NSHQ is devoted to developing war plans to support the Alliance in the event of combat operations. In this context, we address everything from small-scale to major operations.

The third task we perform for the Alliance is strategic Special Operations advice. During combat operations, my Headquarters primarily provides advice to SACEUR and NATO Commands on how to make best use of special operations.



What have been your Headquarters' most important achievements since its establishment?

I don't think it is any one thing, rather it is a combination of people and our ability to rapidly adjust that adds value for the nations and the Alliance. However, if pressed, I would say that adapting our Headquarters to meet the needs of the Alliance, raising awareness of SOF, together with the positive enhancement and integration of SOF capabilities are probably our biggest achievements to date. SOF have played a prominent role in the security of our nations and I think that bringing these complementary capabilities together is a big accomplishment.

How would you explain the terms "Special Operations" and "Special Forces" in your own words?

I wish we could have a different term for "Special Operations". I say that because I think sometimes there is a bit of a perception that Special Operations are special people. I don't necessarily think that. We are very ordinary people that are specialised to do certain types of things. There are a lot of movies and books about Special Operations that I think make us appear to be action heroes and I think that the fiction of movies has spread that perception.

It is true that Special Operations Forces have specialist skills, but I believe strongly that we need to work with conventional forces in order to maximise our effect. Our capabilities are best optimized when we work with others in support of our missions and the same is true in reverse, as opposed to working alone. I think this has been learned during the last 15 plus years of sustained operations in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Africa. We need to work with as many organizations as possible to make best use of our specific skills.

So, to answer your question, I think we have specialized skills and specialised training but we do not have a monopoly on heroism or military dominance. We have a supporting role to play but it fits within a larger context.

How much do NATO member countries insist on their special forces acting independently today? Do they like to keep their secrets and their special training for themselves?

Well, I think this ties into your second question. The elements of secrecy and unilateral missions varies for different countries. Some countries try to keep their Special Operations isolated and be very secretive about everything that they do. Other countries, including my own, are looking to share more of what they do so that they can benefit from relations with other organisations. As I have said before, we have exceptional support from conventional units, police units, and our intelligence agencies, which makes us all better at what we do.

It is true that SOF have specialist skills, but I believe strongly that Special Operations Forces need to work with conventional forces to maximise our effect. Our capabilities are best optimised when we work with others in support of our missions and the same is true in reverse, as opposed to working alone. I think this has been learned during the last 15 plus years of sustained operations in places like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Africa. We need to work with as many organisations as possible to make best use of our specific skills.

Are you preparing more joint exercises and training for Special Forces from NATO countries?

Yes, we are continually trying to expand our efforts in the right areas. Over the last decade or so, we were primarily focussed on small contingency operations. Now, we are looking at larger scale operations in order to test our capabilities. From an Alliance point of view, we can deploy forces to Afghanistan and elsewhere to do contingency or small counterterrorism-type campaigns, however some of the threats we face today are different than the ones we were faced with years ago. Our challenge therefore is to be able to conduct a full range of special operations and in order to do that, we need to conduct joint, combined operations, incorporating multiple nations in a more regionalised context.



Today, the role of SOF is more relevant and more intrinsic to our collective defence.

You started out as a Navy SEAL. Are different branches of the Special Forces starting to resemble one another or do their roles remain specialised?

Yes and no. Again, I will speak for my country. When I first joined the Navy, over 30 years ago, we did not work much with other organisations. Most of our training focussed on how to support our own Navy. We have progressed since those days and now work much more closely with other services. Plus, a lot of our training and operations involve international partners and when you broaden that training, you tend to share information and tactics. You quickly learn from each other, so your techniques start to evolve and look very similar in a lot of ways. That said, as a Navy SEAL, we still like to maintain our dominance in maritime operations. Although we may operate in very similar fashion to an army unit on land, we still understand that our core function is as a maritime force and that is the area in which we want to remain specialised. So, yes, we are starting to resemble each other more and more, but we maintain our focus on sea-based operations.

How much has the importance of Special Forces and Special Operations grown in the last 30 or so years?

Today, the role of SOF is more relevant and more intrinsic to our collective defense. More importantly, both political and military leaders outside of Special Operations know how to use them. If I look back at the Cold War, I am not sure that conventional forces or leadership fully understood how to use Special Operations effectively. I'm also not sure that Special Forces knew how to properly organise and make maximum use of their own capabilities.

It has been a journey of learning about how to become relevant. Since 9/11, SOF have played a prominent role undertaking counterterrorism operations but that doesn't mean that we're going to play a leading role in every type of conflict. In the last decade or so, we have developed a wider capability and made a significant impact. Our challenge moving forward is to maintain that same level of relevance in other threat scenarios.

Is there a problem today with filling vacant posts in the Special Forces? And can the candidates for these roles respond to increasing demands?

It varies from nation to nation. There seems to be only a certain percentage of the population in each society that wants to do these types of activities. But bottom line, I do not think there are enough Special Operations Forces. Our challenge is, how do we grow without degrading our qualifications, training or standards? We need our leaders (both military and political) to understand this dynamic and to provide incentives to create an environment in which SOF can recruit, pay, train, and sustain themselves and their families. Following on from that, the next challenge is retaining that talent once it has been cultivated.

You've talked about co-operation with civil forces. Are the duties of military Special Forces becoming more intertwined with their civilian colleagues in Special Police Forces?

It varies from country to country, depending on the laws of each respective nation. Special Forces are ideally suited to work with a variety of partners to accomplish their mission, including Special Police Forces and other elements of a nation's security forces.

Are you satisfied with what you have seen and become acquainted with during your stay in Croatia?

First of all, it's a beautiful country. Croatia has a special appeal and a special charm. It has a good history and its people are very competent. If the Croatian military is a reflection of your society - which I think most militaries are - then Croatia has much to be proud of. I also think Croatia is making the right investments in its military, to ensure that it can face future challenges.

How much do you know about the history and activities of Croatian Special Forces?

Well - not enough, but I am learning about the history of how SOF was created within Croatia and the role it has played to defend your nation.

What else needs to be done to face future challenges?

The threats that we face are so complex that no nation can handle all of the problems and challenges on their own. Alliances, partnerships, and friendships are more important than ever in today's complex world. Those relationships take work, commitment, and shared risk. They have to withstand disagreements as well. No matter what is happening, politically, I think it is always important for militaries to be able to have a dialogue. Unfortunately, we do not have that in some cases. But, it is something worth striving for. I think it is safe to say that the Balkans has had a complex history. It certainly presents a number of challenges, but on a positive note, it also presents many more opportunities.



PEACE MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS

45TH ANNIVERSARY



Author: Leida PARLOV, Photos: Croatian Military Publications and Publishing Department

The Republic of Croatia deployed elements of its military to ISAF from 2003 until late 2014, establishing itself as a key partner to the nations assisting Afghanistan and reaffirming its commitment to building and maintaining peace wherever necessary. The Croatian Armed Forces' participation in the ISAF mission has also improved their interoperability with other NATO forces and further enhanced Croatia's political and military credibility with the Alliance.

The ISAF mission is part of an overall effort by the international community, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1510, which has focussed from the outset on creating conditions for the Afghan government to exercise its authority independently throughout the country. NATO formally took command of the Operation in 2003, the year in which the Croatian forces joined it.

FROM ISAF TO RESOLUTE SUPPORT

The first Croatian contingent, a 50-member platoon of mainly military police, was deployed on 28 February 2003. The Croatians operated successfully within the multinational Military Police Company, part of the Kabul-based Multinational Brigade. Each rotation employed drug and explosives sniffer dogs as well as their search-and-rescue equivalents, the only contingent at the time to do so.

The Republic of Croatia and its armed forces have firmly established themselves as a key partner to the nations assisting Afghanistan and reaffirmed their commitment to building and maintaining peace wherever necessary.



Recognition of the Contingent's professional conduct came with the appointment of Major Tihomir Zebec (5. HRVCON's Commander) as the Multinational MP Company Commander (CO, MNMPCoy) and Military Police Advisor to the Kabul Brigade Commander.

Through its participation in ISAF, Croatia gave substantial support to the international effort towards the security, stability and reconstruction of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Contingent's range, force structure and role evolved over time alongside the expansion of Operation Resolute Support and Croatia's own accession agenda. Croatian forces took on increasingly complex tasks including force protection, training and mentoring local forces. The size of Croatia's military contingents increased annually. In addition to military police personnel, staff officers and NCOs serving within ISAF's command structure, the first Croatian medical team deployed in 2005.

Building upon its successful commitment to peace and stability, that year Croatia also appointed diplomats to ISAF's civilian mission assisting the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Feyzabad, northeastern Afghanistan.

The Croatian Ministry of the Interior commenced its involvement in Afghanistan in December 2004, dispatching two civilian police advisors to ISAF to train and mentor the Afghan National Police.

OF CROATIAN ARMED FORCES ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA DEPLOYED ELEMENTS OF ITS MILITARY TO ISAF FROM 2003 UNTIL LATE 2014. THE FIRST CROATIAN FORCES, A 50-MEMBER PLATOON OF MAINLY MILITARY POLICE, WERE DEPLOYED ON 28 FEBRUARY 2003. A TOTAL OF 24 CROATIAN CONTINGENTS TOOK PART IN ISAF OPERATIONS, THE LAST BEING CONVERTED INTO THE 1ST HRVCON ELEMENT OF THE NEW RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION, WHICH HAS TO DATE SEEN THE DEPLOYMENT OF SEVEN CROATIAN CONTINGENTS. THE HRVCONS INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF ALBANIA, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO AND MACEDONIA, THEIR CORE TASK BEING TO TRAIN, ADVISE AND ASSIST THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY AND POLICE...



PEACE MISSIONS AND OPERATIONS



Shortly thereafter the Croatian Armed Forces sent a Mobile Liaison Observation Team, (MLOT), a highly mobile component of the PRT, patrolling settlements in the area of operations and engaging closely with the local population. Croatia's contribution expanded significantly in 2006, with the deployment of an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) entrusted with training, advising and mentoring infantry units of the Afghanistan National Army (ANA). The Croatian Armed Forces were involved from an early stage in assisting the ANA to restructure and enhance its operational capability – a high priority and demanding operational task for the international forces in Afghanistan.

Successful deployment of the infantry OMLT was followed by others – a Garrison OMLT, Instructor Team for the ANA's School of Logistics, a Police OMLT, an Air Force mentoring team – the summit of which was Lead Nation status at the School of Military Police from 2011. The ANA's MP School was one of ten training institutions in Afghanistan established within NATO's Training Mission in direct support of Afghanistan's National Security Forces. The Croatian Advisory Teams at the Afghan Military Police School were repeatedly praised by senior NATO officials for their excellent work in helping the ANA establish its military police force from scratch. Following a decision by the Croatian Parliament, HRVCON's presence in the period 2007-2011 increased from 150 to 350.

The Croatian forces in Afghanistan have provided an array of training, mentoring and other critical skills. These have included mentoring Afghan Air Force helicopter crews and technicians, mentoring infantry units, engineer corps, the military police as well as developing their training infrastructures and personnel; supporting the development of logistics, finance and administration and mentoring members of the civil police. The Croatian Contingent were also assigned staff roles, security and protection of personnel and facilities, investigating incidents, logistical support and a series of other tasks related to the stability of Afghanistan and enhancing the ANA's capabilities in preparation for it to assume full responsibility for security throughout the country.

Faith in Croatia's Armed Forces was underlined by the deployment of a multi-national Combat Support Operational Mentor Team (CSOMT) with Croatia as Lead Nation, composed of personnel from the Croatian Army and the Minnesota National Guard. The Team trained in Croatia and its establishment demonstrated beyond all doubt the excellent job done by Croatia's Armed Forces and civilian personnel in Afghanistan.

Since those first days in Afghanistan, Croatian soldiers have been well received by the local population in return for showing due respect for their customs, tradition and religion. The Credit for Croatia's performance in that regard goes to the Religious Committee of the Islamic Community of Zagreb, which enjoys an excellent partnership with the Croatian Armed Forces, actively participating in the HRVCON pre-deployment training. As an illustration, the Committee and the Croatian Ministry of Defence published a Glossary of Islamic Terms written by the Mufti of the Croatian Islamic Community, Dr Aziz Hasanović that formed part of the Pre-Deployment Manual for Members of the Croatian Armed Forces in ISAF. The Manual provided insight for members of the Croatian Contingents to the religious and tribal characteristics of the destination country, contributing to their exemplary professional performance and earning the gratitude and respect of local leaders, which also enhanced the Contingents' own safety whilst on operations.

The Contingents were rotated on a six-month cycle, with individual participation on an entirely voluntary basis, as with all of Croatia's international operations and missions. Throughout each period spent in-country, training standards continually improved and experience gained from Croatia's 1991-95 Homeland War proved critical to the Contingents' successes in the field. Training was conducted in conditions similar to those in the area of operations, with major progress achieved during joint training of all Contingent elements in the exercise cycle codenamed "Hrvatski Ponos" ("Croatian Pride"). During the eleventh year of its presence within ISAF,



Croatia had the opportunity to appoint a female officer to a general post, Brigadier General Gordana Garašić, who served as Gender Advisor (GENAD) to the ISAF Commander. The GENAD post has enabled NATO to invest additional effort in training Afghan Security Forces and government personnel, enhancing gender awareness and equal employment opportunities within the Army and Police. Brig. Gen. Garašić successfully undertook this duty from April 2014 until the conclusion of the ISAF mission. Overall, more than 4,500 Croatian Armed Forces personnel have participated in the ISAF Operation in Afghanistan. The final Croatian contingent, 24th HRVCON was reassigned mid-tour as 1st HRVCON to the new peace mission under the banner Resolute Support.

RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION

Following the conclusion of ISAF's mission in late 2014, NATO and its partner nations continued their contribution to the security and rebuilding of Afghanistan through a new mission entitled Resolute Support, launched on 1 January 2015 following the passing of UN Resolution 2189. Under deployment at that time, 24. HRVCON was re-badged 1. HRVCON, Resolute Support and its mission adapted to one of advice, training and support, with secondary protection of the advisory teams and the Contingent's base, whenever necessary.

HRVCON teams have since been deployed into two geographical zones of responsibility: Train, Advise and Assist Command (TAAC) in the Afghan capital Kabul and TAAC North (TAAC-N), at Mazar-e-Sharif where the majority of Croatian forces are concentrated.

Overall responsibility for the security situation in these areas of operation now rests with Afghan National Security Forces, whilst the HRVCON has been given new roles in training and advising the ANA and Police. The Croatian contingent now consists of four advisory teams: one in the ANA Regional Corps Battle School, one at the National Police training facility at Mazar-e-Sharif, another with the ANA Special Forces Battalion and a fourth assigned to the ANA Advisory Team.

The vital task of security for the advisory teams in TAAC-N at Camp Shaheen near Mazar is entrusted to the Force Protection Train, Advise and Assist Company (FP-TAA-Coy). Members of the Situational Awareness and Recovery Operations Centre (SAROC) provide shared intelligence for the area of operations in TAAC North and are tasked with co-ordination of the activities of the advisory teams and forces protecting Camp Marmal adjacent to the airport at Mazar-e-Sharif.

In line with HRVCON's altered structure and role within Resolute Support, Croatian infantry units have also assumed a safe haven role protecting Camp Shaheen from harm. The infantry component includes members of the Army of Montenegro, while some of the SAROC posts are staffed by members of the armed forces under the A-5 Initiative.

2. HRVCON-RS incorporates personnel from the armed forces of Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. The Contingent also continues to provide additional advisory/mentoring teams to Afghanistan's Special Police Training Centre (where Croatia is Lead Nation) and to Air Force rotary wing units.

To date, a total of seven Croatian military contingents have been deployed to the Resolute Support Mission, their core task being advisory support to members of the Afghan military and police. Since early March, 8. HRVCON has been serving in Afghanistan, assuming the tasks of the previous Croatian Contingent.



ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

Members of the Croatian Armed Forces have been engaged on NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence - peacetime activities aimed at achieving and maintaining the readiness and strengthened security of the Alliance and its members - primarily through joint exercises and enhancing interoperability. The Croatian Armed Forces deployed their home-manufactured 122-mm M-92 Self-propelled Multiple Rocket Launcher (MRL) system (Vulkan) including staff and logistical support elements together with their associated weapons, equipment and vehicles. 1. HRVCON is composed of 71 members of the Croatian Armed Forces, integrated within the artillery elements of the US-led Battlegroup, which also comprises forces from Romania and the United Kingdom, reinforcing the Polish Armed Forces' 15th Mechanised Brigade. Preparation for the 1. HRVCON's deployment began in early 2016 with the introduction of the Vulkan Multiple Rocket Launcher into operational service followed by primary and pre-deployment training.



The Croatian Contingent undertook numerous basic unit and specialist military training, various complementary courses, rocket drills, developing tactics, techniques and procedures, tactical live-firing exercises up to Battery level – readiness evaluation and force protection tasks – as well as the obligatory NBC drills, combat first aid, improvised explosives and unexploded ordnance disposal (CIED/UXO), survival courses, cold weather training and individual marksmanship using Croatia's excellent VHS-2 assault rifle.

1. HRVCON TO eFPBG-US IN POLAND

A 122-MM M-92 VULKAN MOBILE MULTIPLE ROCKET LAUNCHER BATTERY, INCLUDING STAFF AND LOGISTIC SUPPORT PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED TO NATO'S US-LED BATTLEGROUP STATIONED IN THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND. THE 1. HRVCON eFPBG-US, INCLUDES PERSONNEL AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT ELEMENTS TOGETHER WITH THEIR ASSOCIATED WEAPONS, EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES. 1. HRVCON IS COMPOSED OF 71 MEMBERS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES, INTEGRATED WITHIN THE ARTILLERY ELEMENT OF THE US-LED BATTLEGROUP, WHICH ALSO COMPRISES FORCES FROM ROMANIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM, REINFORCING THE POLISH ARMED FORCES' 15TH MECHANISED BRIGADE





Edited by: Željko STIPANOVIĆ, Photo archive: MPPD

Training activities comprised the preparation of the self-propelled Vulkan MRL units and all the Contingent Battery's equipment, staffing, foreign language training, medicals, admin and drafting schedules for training and evaluation.

1. HRVCON JOINT TRAINING EVENTS

1. HRVCON's 10-member advance party arrived in Poland at the start of October 2017, with the main force deploying two weeks later. The Contingent was based at the Bernowo Piskie Training Area (BPTA) with a member assigned to the Polish 15th Mechanised Brigade at Giżycko Barracks.

Upon arrival, the HRVCON undertook a series of training events, including a joint exercise with US and British Armed Forces at Bernowo Piskie from 18 to 20 December 2017 involving integrated fire support missions for the Battlegroup. The Croatian Contingent deployed its



HRVCON FORCE STRUCTURE

SELF-PROPELLED 122-MM M-92 VULKAN MRL 64 TROOPS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES

STAFF PERSONNEL TO THE BATTLEGROUP AND 15TH POLISH MECHANISED BRIGADE 3 MEMBERS

MILITARY POLICE TEAM 4 MEMBERS OF THE CROATIAN ARMED FORCES

1. HRVCON'S PLANNED TERM OF DEPLOYMENT IS SEVEN MONTHS, AFTER WHICH IT WILL BE REPLACED BY 2. HRVCON.

ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

home-manufactured Vulkan Battery, the Americans their 155-mm Howitzers, 60-, 81- and 120-mm mortars, while the British contingent deployed a recce company as forward observers to direct artillery fire.

In line with the Battery's training and co-ordination schedules with command staff in charge of Battlegroup fire support, the 72-hour live-firing exercise kicked off, its objective to effectively integrate all fire support elements for offensive operations by the Battlegroup's mechanised infantry battalion; competence in handling the Battery's rocket ordnance was also rigorously tested.

As was stressed during the post-Exercise debrief, despite hostile weather conditions, the Exercise was successfully and professionally completed; the Croatian Battery was classified "trained" and its high level of target accuracy praised by the Exercise staff.



Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević and the Chief of the Croatian Armed Forces General Staff, General Mirko Šundov met with 1. HRVCON members of NATO's eFP in Poland on 28 December 2017, on the occasion of which the US-led Battlegroup Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Scott Cheney briefed the Minister and Chief of Staff on the Battlegroup's activities in Poland and commended the professionalism of its Croatian members.

The Polish 15th Mechanised Infantry Brigade's commander, Brigadier-General Jaroslaw Gromadzinski also expressed his Brigade's high esteem for Croatia's soldiers and the country's participation within NATO's eFP mission in Poland.

In addition to their day-to-day roles, HRVCON members took part in sports competitions alongside other contingents and won the football tournament. They were also engaged in the "Toy Drive" charity campaign, collecting toys and stationery for children in hospitals, orphanages, kindergartens and schools in six towns across Poland in the run-up to Christmas.

The Exercise was conducted mostly at night in adverse weather conditions, characterised by low temperatures, sleet and strong northern winds. All the Croatians' tasks were successfully completed, confirmed at the post-Exercise debrief.





PRE-DEPLOYMENT OF 2. HRVCON TO eFPBG-US

Preparing for its participation in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in the Republic of Poland, the Commander of 2. HRVCON, Captain Dario Bilješković and his team conducted a preliminary reconnaissance of the eFP deployment area between 28 January and 4 February 2018 to familiarise themselves with living and working conditions, the HRVCON's role and exercise schedules as part of the US-led Battlegroup.

In Giżycko they met with the Polish 15th Mechanised Infantry Brigade's commander, Brigadier-General Jaroslaw Gromadzinski and attended a joint live-firing exercise involving the Vulkan MRL Battery, US-led Battlegroup components and the 15th Mechanised Infantry Brigade.



Members of the 1st Croatian Contingent to NATO's US-led Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup (HRVCON eFPBG-US) in Poland, participated in "Croatian Culture Week" at Giżycko, organised by the Croatian Embassy in Poland and Croatian Defence Attaché, Colonel Jugoslav Jozić. The Culture Week featured a multi-faceted exhibition about the Republic of Croatia, located in the gallery of the 15th Mechanised Brigade's Mess and primarily highlighting Croatia's UNESCO-listed heritage, the history of Croato-Polish relations, a tourism promotion and multimedia exhibition showcasing the epic natural beauty of Croatia.

The opening of the Exhibition was attended by commanders of the eFPBG-US's national contingents and by the Croatian Ambassador to Poland, H.E. Andrea Bekić and Croatia's Defence Attaché to Poland and the Baltic states, Colonel Jugoslav Jozić, the Commander of the Polish 15th Mechanised Brigade, General Jaroslaw Gromadzinski, the mayors of Giżycko and neighbouring towns, members of the Polish Parliament and dignitaries from the Warmia-Masuria province of northeastern Poland.

The exhibition drew many visitors, both military and civilian and served to "enhance the promotion of the Republic of Croatia, both as a credible ally and as a peaceful country with a rich cultural tradition and tourist attractions", said Ambassador Bekić.



1. HRVCON TO eFPBG-DEU IN LITHUANIA

NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence emerged as a strategy from the Warsaw Summit of 2016, aimed at enhancing the safety of the members on the Alliance's eastern flank and represents an important milestone in addition to implementing new defence capabilities. By participating in the Enhanced Forward Presence, NATO nations demonstrate their united capability and purpose to defend the sovereign integrity of the Alliance's borders and re-assure member nations that NATO will always fulfill its principal mission – to defend all member states from potential threat.

The Enhanced Forward Presence consists of the rotational deployment of four NATO Battlegroups stationed in the member states of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland respectively. Each of the four battlegroups comprising multinational forces clustered around four core nations-Canada (in Latvia), Germany (in Lithuania), the United Kingdom (in Estonia) and the United States (in Poland). The decision to deploy Croatian Armed Forces within

On the occasion of the first anniversary of NATO's Enhanced Presence in Lithuania, NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller emphasised that the Enhanced Forward Presence conveyed a strong message that the Alliance was "strong, united and would treat an attack on one member nation as an attack upon all".

NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania was passed by the Croatian Parliament on 30 June 2017. Members of the Croatian Armed Forces will take part in training activities designed by NATO to achieve and maintain a state of readiness to enhance the security of its member nations, primarily through joint exercises and enhanced interoperability.

Within the German-led Battlegroup, the Croatian element is represented by a mechanised company equipped with Patria vehicles, alongside the forces from Belgium, Norway, Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands and Lithuania to reinforce the Iron Wolf Brigade of Lithuania's Armed Forces. Pre-deployment training of the 1. HRVCON to eFPBG-DEU went through a one-year training cycle comprising practice and evaluation from individual to squad, platoon and company level. Live firing exercises were undertaken at full unit strength as part of Exercise Udar 17 at the Eugen Kvaternik training ranges near Slunj in October 2017, where the Company ("Tigrovi") was declared "combat ready."



Edited by: Željko STIPANOVIĆ
Photoarchive MPPD

CROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE



THE 181-MEMBER 1. HRVCON (1ST CROATIAN CONTINGENT) HAS DEPLOYED TO LITHUANIA FOR A 7-MONTH PERIOD AS THE CROATIAN ELEMENT OF THE GERMAN-LED BATTLEGROUP FORMING NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE. THE CONTINGENT IS MAINLY COMPOSED OF MEMBERS OF THE 1ST COMPANY, 1ST MECHANISED BATTALION ("TIGROVI") OF THE CROATIAN ARMY'S GUARDS MECHANISED BRIGADE, ASSISTED BY LOGISTICAL SUPPORT ELEMENTS AND EQUIPPED WITH WEAPONS, EQUIPMENT AND FOURTEEN PATRIA ARMOURD VEHICLES. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE IS TO STRENGTHEN COLLECTIVE DETERRENCE AND DEFENSIVE POSTURE ON THE EASTERN FLANK OF NATO, RE-AFFIRMING THE UNITY OF MEMBER STATES AND THEIR STRONG TRANSATLANTIC BOND....



1. HRVCON SEND-OFF CEREMONY

The send-off of 1. HRVCON to Lithuania was held on 24 November 2017 at the "Barracks Predrag Matanović" in Petrinja. The 181-member contingent mostly consists of members of the 1st Company, 1st Mechanised Battalion ("Tigrovi") of the Croatian Army's Guards Mechanised Brigade, assisted by logistical support elements and equipped with weapons, equipment and 14 Patria vehicles.

Members of the Croatian contingent are stationed at the Rukla Barracks, 110 km northeast of Vilnius, with a seven member Croatian National Support Element (NSE) also deployed to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Poland.

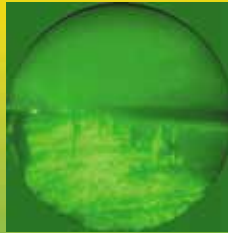
Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Damir Krstičević, representing the President of the Republic at the send-off ceremony said "Never, not for a single moment, forget that you are representing the Republic of Croatia – a credible and reliable NATO member nation.

ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

I expect you to display responsibility and commitment. Mind the safety of your colleagues and your own as your foremost priority”.

Upon arrival at their Rukla Barracks base in Lithuania and assuming their duties, the Croatian soldiers attended a ceremony of flag exchanges symbolising the Transfer of Authority over the 1. HRVCON from its Commander, Captain Marko Krpan to the Battlegroup Commander, Lt. Col. Thorsten Gensler.

Alongside their regular commitments, the Croatian soldiers have undertaken frequent tests, drills, and military competitions aimed at boosting the competitive spirit among the participating nations, such as the small arms shooting competition held at Rukla Barracks on 3 January 2018. The Croatian contingent won the event in the H&K G36 rifle and P8 pistol categories, coming in at second place overall, with an equal aggregate score as the champions.



FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE BATTLEGROUP

A ceremony marking the first anniversary of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence held at the Rukla Barracks on 5 February 2018, was attended by the Croatian Minister of Defence Damir Krstičević and his staff, who met afterwards with members of the HRVCON. Minister Krstičević expressed appreciation on the occasion of the 1st anniversary of the successful Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania, stating that Croatia was a dedicated NATO member state, whose participation in the eFP had improved their Armed Forces' interoperability, through joint training events and the exchange of valuable experience. "I am proud of our Croatian soldiers – the members of the Battalion "Tigrovi" who have admirably represented Croatia, here in Lithuania".

During his stay in Lithuania Defence Minister Krstičević met with the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė, with whom he discussed the joint engagement of Croatian and Lithuanian armed forces within NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. Minister Krstičević expressed his gratitude to Lithuania for its fine hospitality to Croatia's soldiers and other NATO members.





Far more demanding was the exercise conducted in late February 2018, when Contingent members performed live firing tests with their 82-mm M69 mortars as part of the final training phase of the Battlegroup's multinational teams. The firing was performed with the assistance of German forward observers, the Croatian Support Platoon demonstrating excellent preparedness in their fire missions. The aim of the exercise, conducted by Croatian, French and German units, was to hone their diverse tactics, techniques and procedures into an integrated function, taking account of the different weapons, signal and command & control systems used by the three nations.

1. HRVCON TO eFP FORCE STRUCTURE

MECHANISED INFANTRY COMPANY COMMAND	5 MEMBERS
COMPANY COMMANDER AMV 3 MECHANISED PLATOONS (WITH PATRIA VEHICLES)	7 MEMBERS
SUPPORT PLATOON	25 MEMBERS
LOGISTIC SUPPORT TEAM	10 MEMBERS
STAFF PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE BATTLEGROUP COMMAND	3 MEMBERS
MILITARY POLICE TEAM	4 MEMBERS
MEDICAL TEAM	4 MEMBERS
SIGNAL TEAM	3 MEMBERS
NATIONAL SUPPORT ELEMENT (NSE)	7 MEMBERS (TO ASSIST THE BATTLEGROUP'S DEPLOYMENT FROM NATO'S eFP AREA IN POLAND TO LITHUANIA).





BARRACKS "LT. COL MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ"



A NEWLY BUILT FACILITY ACCOMMODATING CROATIA'S NATO COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS GROUP (NCISG) ELEMENT WAS RECENTLY INAUGURATED AT THE BARRACKS "LT. COL MARKO ŽIVKOVIĆ" AT PLESO, NEAR ZAGREB...

A symbolic ribbon-cutting ceremony inaugurating the newly built facility housing Croatia's NATO Communication and Information Systems Group (NCISG) component at the Colonel Marko Živković Barracks was held at Pleso near Zagreb on 7 November 2017. The ceremony was attended by the Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Damir Krstičević and the Director of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces, Rear Admiral Robert Hranj, alongside NATO's CISG Commander, Major General Walter Huhn.

Minister Krstičević extended his appreciation to the staff of the Ministry of Defence and of the Croatian Armed Forces who contributed to the successful implementation of this valuable project and also to Croatia's NATO partners, whose resources and expertise were essential to its success. "I believe that our strong and sincere partnership with NATO will continue with further development of the defence capabilities of the Croatian Armed Forces, guided by the experience and common values shared between NATO member nations and partners. The material cost of this facility is far outweighed by the inherent value of the programme, as it provides

NATO CIS

Building work commenced in February 2016 and was completed at the end of September last year, at a total cost of 3.73m Euros (\$4.62million US).



(the Alliance with) top-level, highly trained personnel. "These trained personnel make all the difference, and their long-term education in the best institutions will continue to contribute to the development of our Armed Forces in the demanding and fast developing area of information and communications technology". The Minister also expressed pride in its engagement in NATO-led missions of Croatia's Deployable Communication Module, whose staff showed themselves to be a thoroughly credible partner in the Alliance.

Major General Walter Huhn expressed assurances that the NATO-funded facility would also serve to enhance the capabilities of the Croatian Armed Forces. He also expressed NATO's appreciation to Croatia for participating in the project and stated that well-trained and highly skilled personnel working with proper equipment was crucial to the success of the Alliance, re-iterating that the success of the DCM facility was a good case in point. The inauguration of the DCM facility brings the infrastructure programme to its conclusion and is also a major turning point in Croatia's long-term endeavour to develop new capabilities relating to communications



Author: Nataša FORTUNA, Photos by: Mladen ČOBANOVIĆ



FACILITY OPENS

and information technology. The country's engagement in NCISG represents a long-term commitment and these new capabilities will serve to further enhance its contribution to NATO-led operations and missions. The DCM project is therefore of significant importance for the Croatian Armed Forces.

The development of its communication and information technology capabilities with the guidance and help of NATO experts upgrades the competence and expertise of the Croatian Armed Forces, training a new generation of military specialists, whose expertise will in turn lead to an improvement in overall national standards.

Commander of the Deployable Communication Module (DCM) Company, Captain Mario Lukežić stressed that the new facility and its equipment would enhance his company's dynamic and challenging work in the international arena. The Module is tasked with the establishment and maintenance of communications links to NATO commands deployed in the field.

The DC Module has already been engaged on NATO's Resolute Support Mission to Afghanistan and in support of NATO operations in Turkey.



CROATIA'S LARGEST MILITARY EXERCISE OF 2017 AND THE MOST IMPRESSIVE ONE TO DATE. WE WITNESSED THE FIRST ENGAGEMENT IN EIGHT YEARS OF AN ENTIRE INFANTRY BATTALION - IN THIS OCCASION THE 1ST MECHANISED BATTALION ("TIGROVI") OF THE GUARDS MECHANISED BRIGADE - IN AN OFFENSIVE OPERATION JOINT LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE, TESTIFYING TO THE HIGH LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS OF THE CROATIAN ARMY'S MECHANISED INFANTRY BATTLEGROUP...



STRIT



Authors: Marko ŠKOVRLJ, Domagoj VLAHOVIĆ, PA Service, Photos by: Tomislav BRANDT and Mladen ČOBANOVIĆ

CROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

The wheels of the LAV taking us across the ranges near Slunj are jamming in the glutinous, almost impassible mud; the rain has finally ceased, making the situation a bit more bearable for members of the "Tigrovi" Battalion and others. The field engineers have done their job but the Patria crews have to manoeuvre carefully along the boggy tracks across the Tactical Training Area. Such inhospitable conditions can only serve as good preparation for the real thing.

The Exercise "Udar 17" ("Strike 17") has been the single largest Croatian Army annual exercise since 2010. Its three main objectives were in the first instance the training and integration of the Mechanised Infantry Battlegroup comprising personnel from the Guards Mechanised Brigade (GMBR), to prepare them to conduct a full spectrum of operations including offensive, defensive, stabilisation missions and peace support operations. The second objective was to test and evaluate the Mechanised Infantry Battlegroup, and the third was for training group staff to lay on a field training exercise recreating a realistic PSO scenario.



THE LARGEST EXERCISE OF 2017

TESTING HELMETS

A ten-member squad of Guardsmen of the "Tigrovi" Battalion have been equipped with new helmets manufactured by the Croatian company Šestan-Busch. The item in question is the Advanced Combat Helmet (BK-ACH); as usual, Croatian soldiers receive a set of new products to evaluate and give an opinion on functionality and quality of manufacture. The ACH is a ballistic helmet intended for the military and is comparable to the US-made ACH. Constructed from aramid fibres or ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene (UHMWPE), the Croatian helmet is designed to provide maximum flexibility and comfort whilst minimising head trauma. A special EBSP manufacturing process ensures a high level of protection against all types of debris, shrapnel and bullets. Resistant to any weather conditions, the new helmet is available in three general models: regular, mid-cut and high-cut.



The Exercise "Strike 17" was novel in being the first engagement in eight years of an entire infantry battalion – on this occasion the 1st Mechanised Battalion "Tigrovi" of the Guards Mechanised Brigade – in an offensive operation joint live-fire exercise. Coincidentally, 1st Mechanised Company of the Battalion "Tigrovi" is now the core unit of the Croatian Armed Forces Contingent (HRVCON) currently serving a 6-month rotation within NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania. Taking place over three weeks (18 September – 6 October 2017), the Exercise culminated on 3 October with a tactical live-fire exercise over several hours. The Tactical Training Area formed the location of the main assault scenario, which featured live-ammunition shooting from the Patrias and D-30 Howitzers, self-propelled multiple rocket launchers and anti-armour systems, combined with the Croatian Air Force with Pilatus PC-9 close support aircraft and Mi-8 MTV tactical lift helicopters. In simulated battlefield conditions, integrated fire and manoeuvre actions were directed and co-ordinated against 'enemy' forces.

HRVCON TO NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

The Croatian contingent assigned to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania comprises the "Tigrovi" Battalion's 1st Mechanised Company, reinforced by a support section from the same Battalion's Logistics Company, a signal team also drawn from the Battalion and from the Guards Mechanised Brigade HQ, a PAO, a four-person MP team and other supporting staff and personnel.



The initial phase of the Exercise contains a series of practice drills, tactical movement, offensive and defensive actions, scenarios featuring numerous incidents and the use of various weapon systems. Each segment of this phase is subject to rigorous evaluation according to strict criteria. The 1st Mechanised Infantry BG was initially evaluated in 2014 and has now been reaffirmed, says Battlegroup commander and Commanding Officer of the Tigers Battalion, Major Mario Mlinarić. His Battalion is taking a lead role in the field, co-ordinating with other elements of the Group. The Participants include Artillery and Missile Battery crews, an Engineer Battalion and Air Defence Regiment, as well as the Guards Mechanised Brigade's Command and Intelligence Company, a PSYOPS and a CIMIC team drawn from several units. The training group comprises over 800 personnel, in addition to Exercise evaluation teams and the 'enemy' – OPFOR or Red forces – bringing the total number of personnel involved in the Exercise to more than a thousand.



The Tactical Training Area was fairly swarming with an entire reinforced battalion and a mass of Patria AFVs, whose crews practised various roles including area protection and assaulting Red Forces' positions utilising, in addition to their standard vehicles specialised ambulance and medical Patrias, forming a base for the ROLE 1 team. At various intervals armoured vehicles, MRAPs, off-road vehicles or trucks emerged from cover carrying members of the Tigers who debussed to practice assaults or tactical manoeuvres, advancing skillfully across wet and hostile ground. "This is really a rough terrain. What is most important is that the crew operates as a highly co-ordinated team. We come across some tricky situations as well, but learning to cope with them is the best preparation for our respective tasks. Engagement in a foreign country - such as Lithuania - is undoubtedly a professional challenge regardless of how much and intensive our preparations at home", says Guardsman Martin Ratkić, a gunner and operator on a Patria remote weapon station.

DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE HUNGARIAN ARMY, MAJOR GENERAL GABOR BORONDI RECALLED THAT IN JUNE CROATIAN UNITS HAD TAKEN PART IN AN EXERCISE IN HUNGARY.

"The Exercise "Strike 17" is impressive, very well-organised and conducted by soldiers who are real professionals. We began this co-operation as both neighbouring states and NATO member nations. Trust building and mutual respect is highly important", said Maj.Gen. Borondi.



SHAPE EVALUATORS

Exercise evaluation was completed by 66 certified evaluators in compliance with the Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL) criteria under the supervision of four General Staff officers of the Croatian Armed Forces, two representatives of the Defence Inspectorate and four NATO observers. This was the first time that strategic-level evaluators from SHAPE had assessed a Croatian military exercise at this level. The Exercise Strike 17 evaluation was duly counter-signed by NATO officials and its successful completion reported to NATO LANDCOM in Brussels.

"I am deeply impressed with your capabilities, your active approach to NATO and your efforts to demonstrate your capabilities. I appreciate the opportunity to be here and to evaluate your skills. The Croatian Evaluators are well-trained and highly skilled. The officers assigned to the evaluation of units are doing excellent work. I can say that your national-level evaluation is fully compliant with NATO standards, which is very important to us", stated the Team Head of NATO Evaluators and Senior NATO Monitoring Officer, Colonel Jarosław Pyła.

SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION OF CAPABILITIES

A VIP Visitors' Day, featuring a tactical live-firing exercise, was attended by Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević and Chief of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces, General Mirko Šundov, as well as Deputy Commander of the German Bundeswehr, Lieutenant General Carsten Jacobsen and Deputy Commander of the Hungarian Army, Major General Gabor Borondi.

Defence Minister Krstičević emphasised that the Exercise had demonstrated well-co-ordinated, inter-service co-operation through the integrated multiple-capabilities of the Croatian Army, Air Force and Support Command, and that exercises of this kind significantly improved the nation's defence capabilities.

"I hope that new defence capabilities will soon be integrated with those demonstrated here, to provide a new dimension to the Croatian Armed Forces. My congratulations on the level of preparedness shown here, which is the same as we had in the Homeland War", said the Minister.

The Exercise Director Brigadier General Tihomir Kundić said: "We have for the first time integrated a live-fire exercise within a combat readiness evaluation event. We observed well-co-ordinated fire and movement amongst the battlefield elements demonstrating a high level of efficiency and preparedness within the Croatian Armed Forces, along with proper equipment that enables them to complete any assigned task".

THE TRAINING OF A SECOND GROUP OF PILOTS AND GROUND CREW ON THE NEW OH-58D KIOWA WARRIOR ATTACK/RECONNAISSANCE HELICOPTER BEGAN AT THE CROATIAN AIR FORCE'S 93RD AIR BASE AT ZEMUNIK, NEAR ZADAR IN EARLY FEBRUARY 2018. THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE THIS TIME AROUND LIES IN THE FACT THAT IT IS BEING ENTIRELY ADMINISTERED BY ROTARY WING SQUADRON INSTRUCTORS, WITH GROUND-BASED TECHNICAL TRAINING TAKING PLACE AT THE CROATIAN AIR FORCE OWN TRAINING CENTRE...

THE READINESS



Authors: Vesna PINTARIĆ, Krešimir RAŽOV, Photos by: Tomislav BRANDT

CROATIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

The training of a the second group of pilots and ground crew on the new OH-58D Kiowa Warrior attack/reconnaissance helicopter began at the Croatian Air Force's 93rd Air Base at Zemunik in early February 2018. The major difference this time around lies in the fact it is being entirely administered by instructors of the Croatian Air Force's Rotary Wing Squadron, with ground-based technical training taking place at the Air Force own "Rudolf Perešin" Training Centre.

The Squadron's first training course was conducted under the guidance of a US contractor - i3 - using specialist pilots and technical crews with the objective of achieving initial operational capability for the Squadron's OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters by late 2017.

Lieutenant Colonel Krešimir Ražov, the Commander of the Rotary Wing Squadron, confirmed that the objectives of the joint partnership working had been fulfilled, with the i3 staff - flying instructors, test pilots and technicians - and the U.S. Security Assistance Training Management Organization (USSATMO) commending the successful training outcomes. Having completed a very intensive seven-month programme (including 1,200 flying hours) the newly-qualified pilots received Certificates of Conversion for the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior attack/reconnaissance helicopter, Full Combat-Readiness and Air Mission Commander Certificates, Helicopter Flying Instructor and Test Pilot Qualifications.

IMPERATIVE

Upon completion of the current training programme, the Rotary Wing Squadron will attain full operational capability by late 2018.

CROATIAN AIR FORCE

Following successful qualification on daytime live firing trials, the Squadron's pilots also qualified on the customary nighttime live missile, rocket and machine gun firing at the training ranges, with each pilot achieving excellent scores. Qualification for attack/recce helicopter pilots is always evaluated at night, preceded by daytime preparatory machine gun, rocket and missile live firing. To this end, Squadron personnel underwent three separate evaluated machine gun, rocket and missile live firing/launching cycles before qualifying at individual level, as a crew and as paired helicopter flights.

The final phase, crowning the overall training programme, was the evaluation of simultaneous live firing and missile/rocket launching by pairs of helicopters against ground targets in nighttime conditions. Aircraft technicians and engineers qualified in helicopter maintenance Levels I and II under three specialisms: Aircraft Engine, Instruments/Avionics and Aircraft Weapons systems. Having completed the live firing and rocket/missile launching phases on the training ranges, trainee ground crews qualified in the day- and night-time establishment of Forward Arming and Refuelling Points, designed to provide rapid re-arming and re-fuelling of the helicopters with engines running.

“TRAINING THE TRAINERS“

The programme to introduce the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior into operational service required the training of ground crews to begin several months beforehand, to allow hands-on training to coincide with flying training.

The “Over The Shoulder“ training method allowed for US instructors with real combat experience to pass on their knowledge and skills to the trainee ground crews. The principle behind the tactical flying programme being “Train as you fight; fight as you train“. Tactical flying training was conducted according to the old maxim, “Train as you fight; fight as you train“.

It means that students qualify to administer the succeeding training cycle, training new pilots and ground crew in-house. This enables them to maintain the continuity of flying missions, develop training programmes to meet their own country's specific needs and bring new generations of pilots and ground crew into the full operational spectrum of the Rotary Wing Squadron's extensive capabilities.

SECOND GROUP OF PILOTS AND GROUND CREW TRAINED

The training of the second group of pilots and ground crew by instructors from the Rotary Wing Squadron began in early February, with ground-based technical training taking place at the Croatian Air Force's “Rudolf Perešin“ Training Centre. With the classroom phase of training completed, ground technicians and engineers undertake practical training and mentoring with the helicopters during the day-to-day pilot training schedules.

Training takes almost five months and comprises practice on the training ranges, including live machine gun firing,



Having completed a very intensive seven month programme (including 1,200 flying hours) the newly-qualified pilots received Certificates of Conversion for the OH-58D Kiowa Warrior attack/reconnaissance helicopter, Full Combat-Readiness and Air Mission Commander Certificates, Helicopter Flying Instructor and Test Pilot Qualifications.

rocket and missile launches in both day- and night-time conditions, during which the trainee ground crews gain qualifications in servicing, rapid refuelling and rearming at the FARP, whilst during the same period the student pilots complete the conversion course for the recce/attack helicopter role and undertake tactical combat training up to full combat-ready status. Where necessary, some pilots may additionally qualify as flying instructors or test pilots. Upon completion of their training, aircraft technicians and engineers will be qualified in helicopter maintenance Levels I and II in the aircraft engine, instruments/avionics and aircraft weapons systems specialisms and where necessary will qualify for flightline controller status once they have acquired a sufficient level of relevant experience. Having completed their training, and in accordance with legislation on the airworthiness and maintenance of military aircraft, ground crews receive aircraft maintenance licences from the Croatian Military Air and Maritime Traffic Service.

TRAINING DYNAMICS

The second group of Croatian pilots have now completed the first of a total of four phases of conversion training on the Kiowa Warrior, consisting mainly of emergency procedures in the event of various technical failures during flight.

Meanwhile, ground crews are sitting for their initial classroom-based Aircraft Engine specialism exams, followed by similar tests on Instruments/Avionics and Aircraft Weapons systems.

Other duties performed by the Rotary Wing Squadron include ab initio training for the Croatian Air Force's 22nd and 23rd generations of student helicopter pilots on the Squadron's fleet of Bell 206B helicopters (a lighter, more basic version of Bell's Model 406 Kiowa Warrior) as well as





As many as 11 helicopters on the apron ready to depart on training missions indicates the intensive nature of flying activities at Zemunik. It requires the support of the very best aircraft technicians, engineers, armourers and support personnel and these are found in abundance among the professional men and women of the Croatian Air Force's Rotary Wing Squadron.

elementary flying instructors earmarked for conversion training onto the OH-58D.

Training for the third group of pilots will also be undertaken in the current year.

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"COMBAT READY" FLIGHT STATUS

The flying training programme, conducted on the Eugen Kvaternik training ranges near Slunj, includes conversion onto the OH-58D and tactical combat manoeuvring to attain "Combat Ready" status for the pilots, who also practice day- and night-time live machine gun and rocket/missile firing. Kiowa Warrior aircrews must train for a broad spectrum of combat missions in nighttime and adverse weather conditions. In addition to the pilot and co-pilot qualification and complete mastery of the helicopter's complex flight control systems at night and in bad weather, pilots are required to undergo annual evaluation in their individual, crew and helicopter pairs night-time live firing skills, which inevitably requires an intensive regime of flying training and tactical exercises.

The Squadron's Commander praised the attitude and commitment of both air and ground crews in training to operate the new Kiowa Warrior fleet, which had brought a renewed esprit de corps and unified focus to the Squadron's overall objectives.

"We are all engaged in building visible new capabilities and the operational readiness of the Croatian Armed

Forces as a whole, and in such circumstances these excellent results come as no surprise". Lt.Col. Ražov also underlined the significant contribution of the Croatian Air Force's "Rudolf Perešin" Training Centre and its teaching staff with their vast range of English language documents and reference material, assisting the students with their numerous enquiries.

FOC BY LATE 2018

Upon completion of the current training programme, the Rotary Wing Squadron will attain full operational capability by late 2018 as planned.



Although full operational capability at unit level suggests the required ratio of air and ground personnel has been reached within its organisational structure, the Squadron is in fact already prepared to conduct a full spectrum of missions and tasks, actively participating in inter-service exercises, establishing and developing attack/reconnaissance helicopter tactics in the Croatian Armed Forces. This was evident from a recent exercise, when the Squadron provided support to ground forces in the training area, demonstrating effective joint working and inter-service operability.

The exercise was conducted at the Gašinci training range along with the Croatian Guards Mechanised Brigade, with a Kiowa Warrior team providing support to company-level practice assaults. It also served to test the skills and knowledge acquired during the recent training with US instructors and its application to fully integrate the attack/recce helicopter with the Croatian Army units.

For the purposes of the exercise, helicopter crews were tasked with recce and fire support. Missions flown in conjunction with the Brigade's armoured squadron were highly successful as the helicopters directed and adjusted artillery fire.

VERSATILE WARRIORS

Thanks to its inherent versatility, the Kiowa Warrior is ideal for civil operations such as night-time border control or maritime surveillance) Lt.Col. Ražov explains that the Squadron's pilots are trained to operate in any conditions, including nighttime and that plans remain in place for this to continue.

The broad flexibility of the Kiowa Warrior, enabled by its sensors and other equipment, can be of inestimable benefit in situations of this kind where a helicopter, receiving adequate logistical support, can hover for extended periods of time in the operational area. In the broader concept of civil Homeland Security, the Kiowa Warriors will prove a highly valuable national asset.

Lt. Col Ražov says the decision whether to deploy the OH-58D helicopter on international missions rests with the Croatian Parliament, stressing that Croatian pilots would be proud and honoured to serve in the defence of peace, stability and the interests of the Republic of Croatia in an elite unit alongside NATO partners representing their Homeland and throughout the world.



CYBER COA

CYBER COALITION, NATO'S BIGGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT CYBER DEFENCE EXERCISE INVOLVED OVER 700 MILITARY AND CIVILIAN EXPERTS FROM 25 NATO MEMBER NATIONS, FOUR OBSERVER COUNTRIES AND PERSONNEL FROM SEVERAL NATO AND EU INSTITUTIONS, INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA. THE EXERCISE WAS ORGANISED AND CONDUCTED BY THE ALLIED COMMAND FOR TRANSFORMATION (ACT), TAKING PLACE FROM 27 NOVEMBER TO 1 DECEMBER 2017 AT DOZENS OF LOCATIONS WITHIN VARIOUS MEMBER STATES. THE CROATIAN COMPONENT FACED THE CHALLENGE OF RESPONDING TO TODAY'S STATE-OF-THE-ART CYBER THREATS.

In 2016 NATO experienced more than 500 hostile incidents against its IT systems caused by unauthorised cyber activity, an increase of 60 % compared with 2015. In the first half of 2017 as many as 380 such incidents were recorded, 20% more per month than in the previous year, suggesting that the attackers hiding behind their computers are constantly changing tactics and multiplying their attacks, mostly against software, personal appliances and networks connected with NATO's operational systems.

Some of these attacks are automatically detected and countered by the hardware and software assets of NATO and its individual nations, however some require expert analysis and response. NATO's own networks are safeguarded by a staff of some 200, while the defence of networks owned by individual member states remains a national responsibility. In view of the level of hostile attacks on the Alliance's defence systems, the importance of the Exercise Cyber Coalition for institutions of its member nations cannot be overestimated.

NATO's Fifth Dimensional Warfare experts organise a top-level exercise every year – hardly a surprise, bearing in mind the high velocity of threat as the technology and responses employed by both sides develop with member nations constantly needing to maintain their cyber defence capabilities.

Cyber Coalition involved more than 700 military and civilian experts from 25 member nations, four observer nations and personnel from several NATO and EU institutions. The Exercise was organised and conducted by the Allied Command for Transformation (ACT), taking place from 27 November to 1 December 2017 at dozens of locations within various member states.

Management and execution of the Exercise centred on NATO's Cyber Range in Tartu, Estonia. This country ranks highly in the world of cyber defence and is home to NATO's Co-operative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE). For a major simulation of real conditions, most participants were engaged in the Exercise from their normal places of work, connecting with colleagues throughout Europe to resolve the many incident scenarios, either individually or through the exchange of information, shared experience and software tools for defence. An attack against any member state can affect the entire Alliance, so that any potential future conflict will inevitably have a cyber dimension as well. NATO remains fully committed to defend all of its members against any threats in cyber space – be it on the ground, at sea or in the air, stated the Exercise briefing. The Croatian Armed Forces have participated in Cyber Coalition since 2009, initially as observers before actively engaging in the annual Exercise since 2013.



Author: Domagoj VLAHOVIĆ
Photos by: Mladen ČOBANOVIĆ

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ALITION 2017

From 2016 the country's lead exercise co-ordinator (on behalf of the Ministry of Defence) has been the CIS Division of the General Staff – a unit of the Croatian Armed Forces specialising in CIS systems comprising a wide range of experts from the Ministry of Defence (MORH), the National CERT, the Information Systems Security Bureau (ZSIS), the Security and Intelligence Agency (SOA), Croatia's Regulatory Authority for Network Industries and the Croatian Academic and Research Network (HAKOM), the Office of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MVEP). The Croatian component also included Zagreb University's Faculty of Electronic Engineering and Computing, Diverto and Span, representing the business and academic community, in line with the strategic motto that cyber defence works best when it engages experts from all segments of society. The Exercise consisted of two main training objectives: those of NATO and those of individual national units. For NATO, the focus was on managing operational and strategic cyber threats against NATO bodies and dealing with the effects of those incidents. The Alliance tested its NATO Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) and the capabilities of the NATO Communication and Information Systems Group (NCISG) in relation to the defence of stationary or deployable NATO networks against an increasingly frequent and broadening range of (tactical) cyber incidents. Simultaneously, national training units focussed on testing the robustness of their national bodies' pre-planning and the co-ordination and execution of cyber defence at tactical level throughout national networks and infrastructure. The overarching objective was to test and evaluate co-ordination between national and NATO bodies when responding to common cyber threats and incidents, in accordance with both national and international law.

The most interesting aspect of exercises of this kind – simulating small-scale computer wars – are their scenarios. The Cyber Coalition organisers provided five versions of the basic scenario, with a sixth intended exclusively for NATO training units. The fact that the Croatian component, headed by ZSIS, accepted all five versions illustrates the high level of competence and technical capabilities of the unit and its supporting organisations.

The main scenario featured a fictitious country (a NATO

partner) and another country known for its widespread spying activities, a NATO mission, and a radical organisation possessing sophisticated cyber capabilities. The five versions comprising the main scenario involved a number of tasks for all participants to accomplish using a wide range of procedures, such as data encryption and exfiltration, compromise of an air defence system, a suspect UAV, an attack on phone networks, analysis of operational systems and malware, computer and network forensics and so on, all in response to incidents assigned directly from NATO's Cyber Range in Estonia. Covering a wide area and range of tasks for each participant, the Exercise made extensive use of computer and network forensics, analysed operational systems and malware, viruses, codes, machine instructions for radar systems, orders and legislation. Each simulated incident provoked by the "enemy" emanated exclusively from the

Exercise Range in Estonia, with no information disclosed prior to the commencement of the Exercise.

Faced with challenges from a multitude of state of the art cyber threats, Cyber Coalition's Croatian element was able to demonstrate a high level of operational readiness and competence in resolving all of the different attack scenarios and thereby successfully demonstrated the overall cyber defence capabilities of the Republic of Croatia working effectively in partnership with its national agencies.

Dependence upon electronic information and communications systems creates vulnerabilities to targeting by hostile attack - be it individuals, hacker groups, criminal organisations or terrorists, whose technical resources and motivation may vary but who share their interest in government bodies and critical national infrastructure.

CYBER

The cyber battlefield comprises interconnected communications-information systems. With only limited effort, attackers can inflict serious damage to the infrastructure or economy of a targetted country, particularly the extensive computerised systems used to support the business of government departments.



Cyber criminals can have various objectives: to manipulate information, spread panic, damage or destroy key infrastructure (such as power plants, communication systems, railway and road systems, banking, etc) and attacks can also be used to collect information.

Author: Marija TROGLIĆ, Photos by: Josip KOPI

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In a scenario of increasing cyber threat, in particular Advanced Persistent Threats, successful integration by well-trained experts of all the country's stakeholders in cyber safety is key to effective cyber defence and to achieving national security.



SHIELD 2018

"CYBER SHIELD 2018" WAS A SIMULATION EXERCISE FEATURING A CYBER ATTACK SCENARIO, AFFORDING NATIONAL DECISION MAKERS GATHERED AT CROATIA'S HOMETLAND SECURITY SYSTEM BOARD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TEST THE NATION'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS...

"Cyber Shield 2018" was a simulation exercise featuring a cyber attack scenario, affording national decision makers gathered at Croatia's Homeland Security System Board the opportunity to test the nation's crisis management functions. The Exercise was conducted at the Croatian Ministry of Defence on 15 March 2018 and featured co-ordination among a range of agencies and institutions.

"New security threats necessitate a timely response and Exercise "Cyber Shield 18" was an excellent opportunity for knowledge and awareness of existing procedures and legislation to be tested at a strategic level. Bearing in mind recent events, synergy between all parts of the Homeland Security's Systems, the Croatian Armed Forces and local communities is essential to help our population cope with natural disasters", said Defence Minister Damir Krstičević. Led by the Croatian Ministry of Defence's CIS team, headed by Colonel Bruno Bešker who also Directed the Exercise, "Cyber Shield" was managed by the Main Planning Group composed of representatives of the Office of the President of the Republic, the Office of the Prime Minister, Office of the National Security Council, both civilian and military Security and Intelligence Agencies, the Ministry of the In-



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ŠTIT 2018

terior's Information Systems Security Bureau, Zagreb University's Faculty of Electronic Engineering and Computing, the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Armed Forces. "Cyber Shield 2018" is a national exercise testing responses to cyber threats by elements of the Homeland Security System. The objective is to raise awareness of cyber threats and highlight the role of the Homeland Security System Board, underlining the importance of strategic communication in crisis situations, and co-operation across the public, academic and business sectors. It also aims to generate discussion on strategic operating guidance and highlight potential challenges in a cyber crisis," explained Colonel Bešker.

"Cyber Shield" was undertaken as a table-top exercise. Exercise participants analysed several potentially harmful activities under a fictitious scenario and made appropriate decisions to minimise potential damage, followed by discussion and diagnosis. Both observers and participants praised the organisation and conduct of the exercise as "a first step towards the overall goal of a fully integrated Homeland Security System."



Author: Domagoj VLAHOVIĆ, Photos by: Tomislav BRANDT

THE TRAINING OF EIGHT STUDENTS AND ONE FLYING INSTRUCTOR (AS LIAISON OFFICER AND TRAINING CO-ORDINATOR) LASTED FROM MARCH UNTIL DECEMBER 2017 AND WAS CONDUCTED USING PILATUS PC-9M AIRCRAFT. THE TRAINING COURSE COMPRISED BASIC FLYING, FORMATION AND AEROBATICS, NIGHT FLYING AND INSTRUMENT/VISUAL FLIGHT RULES (IFR/VFR). THE PILOT TRAINING PROGRAMME IS A BILATERAL COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE BETWEEN CROATIA AND OMAN.



FOURTH GENERATION OF OMANI PILOTS COMPLETES FLIGHT TRAINING AT ZEMUNIK

A graduation ceremony for the fourth generation of Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) students from Croatian Air Force pilot training programme was held in the Hall of the Rector's Palace at Dubrovnik on 19 December 2017. Omani pilots have been training at Croatia's 93rd Air Base, Zemunik since 2014.

The ceremony was attended by instructors and personnel of the 93rd Air Base and the Croatian Air Force's Flying Training School, representatives of the RAFO, the Commander of the Croatian Air and Air Defence Forces Brigadier General Mato Mikić, Colonel Said Al-Bimani on behalf of the RAFO Commander, the Flying Training School's Commander Colonel Goran Huljev and Commander of the 93rd Air Base, Lieutenant-Colonel Mario Pleša.

The ceremony featured the presentation of diplomas to each of the graduates, who completed the flying training course that began in March 2017 - eight pilots and one flying instructor acting as liaison officer and training co-or-

"We are most satisfied with the quality of training provided by the Croatian Air Force, its instructors and the training syllabus, as we have seen from our first day here".

Colonel Said Al-Bimani

dinator. Training was conducted on Pilatus PC-9M aircraft, which comprised basic flying, formation and aerobatics, night flying and IFR/VFR. Highest performing student, 2nd Lieutenant Omar Yasser Al-Maqbali was presented with a Ministry of Defence award. Representatives of the RAFO presented their own country's awards to the instructors of the Croatian Air Force's Fixed-wing Squadron, members of the 93rd Air Base and the Flying Training School who facilitated the Omani pilots' training.

"The training programme is an Omani-Croatian initiative, with both sides investing substantial resources, hard work and professionalism. The close partnership working approach has yielded success without any issues. May I take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to the pilots, instructors, flight technicians and others engaged in training, and to the Omani students who have successfully completed their training and justified both their instructors' and their homeland's faith in them", said Brig. Gen. Mikić.

Colonel Said Al-Bimani said he saw the graduates as future commanders and decision makers, praising the quality of the flying training course. "We are most satisfied with the quality of training provided by the Croatian Air Force, its instructors and the training syllabus, as we have seen from our first day here".

The Commander of the Croatian Air Force's "Rudolf Perešin" Flying Training School, Colonel Branko Plazačić commended both the students and instructors' hard work throughout the training course.

On behalf of the Omani students, 1st Lieutenant Abdullah Abdulrahim Al-Farsi addressed the assembled audience, expressing their appreciation to the staff engaged in the training and in particular the instructors for their advice, support and encouragement.



Our video products



MAIDEN PARACHUTE JUMPS BY CADET PILOTS

The cadets of the 24th generation of military pilot programme and the 5th generation of flight training candidates (outside the Cadet Programme) of the Croatian Air Force and Air Defence's Pilot School on 7 March 2018 performed their maiden parachute jumps in the Airport "Lučko".



CADET WINTER CAMP

The cadets of the 12th and the 13th generations took the Winter Camp at Udbina during February 2018. The objective of the Camp was to train the cadets to become officers with sufficient self-confidence and assuredness to make decisions autonomously and to survive the winter conditions.



A JOINT AIR AND LAND FORCES OPERATION EXERCISE

January 2018 saw a demonstration exercise of joint air and land forces operation in the Training Range at Gašinci; the exercise engaged the members of the Guards Armoured Mechanised Brigade and of the Croatian Air Force and Air Defence.



THE TRAINING OF THE SPECIAL MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

The members of the Special Military Police Company underwent a test that has confirmed their level of trainedness. One of the hardest assignment is to perform forcible entry and mopping drill aimed at resolving a high-risk situation by the minimum use of force.



JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE "HARPUN 17"

The exercise of the Croatian Navy "Harpun 17", conducted in the Barracks "Zečevo" and in the central Adriatic aquatory (in the naval training range of the island Žirje from 18 -22 October 2017. The objective of the Exercise was to demonstrate trainedness and capabilities of the participating forces to prepare and conduct combat actions through co-ordinated inter-branch and inter-service operation.



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