

SLOVAK REPUBLIC
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The interoperability and standardization requirements continued to drive the language training machine in the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic also in 2005. The study effort was enhanced by more frequent opportunities and needs to use foreign language in various forms of international activities as well as by internal incentives. The integration of the Slovak Republic into NATO and the European Union have an important impact on the acceleration and intensification of language training within the Armed Forces and the whole Defense Department domain in the Slovak Republic. Still more and more attention is paid particularly to military aspects of ELT. The results of this acceleration and intensification quite apparent are clearly in the study effort of our military personnel and their participation in the NATO-led and other international missions. The use of interpreters in international talks and activities becomes rare. The main attention is still focused primarily on the English language, but increasing attention is paid also to the French language as the second NATO official language. As a result of intensive international cooperation the German, Russian and other languages are also taught to a limited extent.

In 2005 the Language Institute organized 55 intensive courses 17 extensive afternoon and evening courses and 21 summer complementary, refreshment and specialized courses in which more than 1000 students could improve their language skills (90 % of them were military personnel). Besides this, assistance in language training was offered to declared units in their preparation for their tasks. Moreover, the Armed Forces Academy taught about 250 military cadets and course students and almost 600 military personnel were trained in external courses run by civilian institutions in 29 intensive and 10 extensive refreshment courses. The success rate for basic (SLP 1) courses is rather high, but only about 15-20 % of the higher course participants succeed in all four skills. The + levels have been used practically from the very beginning of STANAG 6001 application in the Slovak Republic. This approach has been found very useful for evaluations of improvements, degradations or not complete prescribed skill capabilities.

The language training of professional military and civilian personnel continues to be organized by the **Language Institute** (now the LI of the GS) in Bratislava and in its detached language training centers in Trencin, Nitra, Topolcany, Zvolen, Martin and Presov. The language training of almost all cadets is the responsibility of the Academy of the Armed Forces in Liptovsky Mikulas, however, the Aviation Faculty of the Technical University in Kosice (i.e., what remained of the former AF Academy) continues training the military aviation cadets. Education and training of cadets at both above-mentioned institutions has been transferred under the roof of the National Academy of Defense. At the end of 2005, when the Department of Human Resources ceased to exist, the language training effort as a whole became the responsibility of the Staff of Personnel Management (J 1) of the Armed Forces General Staff. This move enables closer cooperation with the Armed Forces - "the main customer" representing more than 90 % of language training "clients" and flexible response to his practical needs.

The focus of our language training is shifting more and more towards practical aspects of professional military service and to the operational English language. Therefore, also in 2005 various specialized military terminology courses were organized for selected military specialties considered to be priority specialties with regard to the declared units and Force Goal Objectives. The Main Language Training Center and each of the six Detached Language Training Centers are specialized in a certain military trade area so as to achieve higher quality of our language training and consequently, better study results of the trained military personnel. Thanks to the intensified language training the whole units are becoming interoperable and getting ready to fulfill their tasks in multinational NATO and EU-led missions abroad, military exercises in the Slovak Republic, as well as fulfilling their tasks in international military structures within the Alliance. However, continued reforms of the Armed Forces, changing requirements of the Alliance and cuts in personnel numbers have led to significant losses of previously language trained personnel. Enormous proportion of new military personnel, particularly the NCOs have gotten their language training almost from the beginning. To meet all these ever increasing language training requirements, various additional supporting activities have to be organized. The most frequent forms are the intensive courses organized in cooperation with civilian language institutes. About 30 of them had to be procured last year to provide the basic language training (SLP1) in smaller garrisons and in some cases also the intermediate language training in various shorter forms for personnel that cannot be sent to intensive courses for service duty reasons. Various other forms such as individual study programs, individual consultations and group assistance were offered in special cases when standard course studies could not be applied. Self-study centers are being built in several garrisons and they are expected to help us in maintaining the already achieved language skills in units.

The international cooperation and assistance plays a very important role in language training. Our system of English language training for military personnel was supported also by the partner institutions from abroad. They are particularly the Defense Language Institute in San Antonio, Texas, USA, the British Council (BC) and the Defence School of Languages at Beaconsfield in the United Kingdom, the language instructors provided by the French Armed Forces, the Canadian Forces Language School in Ottawa, Canada and valuable assistance is also provided by the German Armed Forces. Several US instructors were directly involved in the tuition process both at the Main Language Training Center in Bratislava and at the Detached Language Training Centers across Slovakia under the supervision the language-training manager – advisor, Prof. Lisa HIMA. Very valuable was the provision of ALC books, dictionaries, audio tapes, software (CDs) and equipment for self-study centers in selected garrisons. The British Council PfP English Project manager from the UK - Mr. Gavin Floater, M.A. organized in cooperation with NATO and sponsored several international courses and methodology activities for our ELT teachers and also provided valuable teaching material – particularly the Campaign 2 military English study program. The Language Institute teachers taught in some of these international activities both in Slovakia and abroad. The French Armed Forces provided two language instructors who taught the military personnel and the MOD personnel in both intensive and extensive French language courses. There is also co-operation on the military Slovak-German and German-Slovak dictionary with the Austrian Armed Forces. The changing priorities of some of these countries lead to restrictions in language training assistance in 2006. Therefore, steps had to be taken in order to achieve higher level of self-sufficiency. Employment of more ELT teachers and their further training are planned for the coming years.

Reliable testing of the achieved language skills plays an important part in our language training system. The English Language Methodology and Testing Section co-operates with both the British and the American language-training managers in the preparation of study materials and testing and oral exam materials. The expected adoption of CEF and alignment of STANAG 6001 is a real challenge that will require much closer cooperation with Slovak civilian language training institutions. In 2005 the British, American and French language advisers and instructors participated also in testing and oral exams wherever it was applicable and whenever they were available. This section provides instruction with regard to the application of modern tuition methods within our language training system and assistance to our own and hired external teachers.

As a result of the reform of the Slovak Armed Forces, new documents – particularly the Directives for ELT were implemented in 2005 and they are expected to increase the responsibility put on of every individual to increase their study effort and maintain the attained English language skills and abilities for use in their profession. Continued structural changes, however, request their further modification with regard to the new legislature.

Military personnel of the Slovak Armed Forces and civilian Defense Department employees, including teachers were trained in foreign languages and necessary professional skills in international military schools and language institutes abroad. Selected candidates were sent to courses abroad in accordance with the possibilities and offers of the foreign partners - mostly the USA, the UK, Canada, France, and Germany. However, these possibilities have been significantly reduced recently. Specialized military courses became our priority as a result of the fact that levels SLP 2222 up to SLP 3333 can be reached in educational facilities in the Slovak Republic. Where possible, shorter language courses abroad are used before starting professional studies in international institutions. These language courses are preferably given to military professionals who are under preparation for peace support operations, those who participate in Partnership for Peace programs and to the personnel of units requested to reach a prescribed level of interoperability with the NATO forces within the frame of the Force Goal Objectives.

The needs of the modern armed forces are reflected in both their education and training. Therefore, further development of the English language training within the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic is increasingly focused on enhancing their interoperability with the Armed Forces of other NATO and EU countries. The requirements for troops capable of participating in multinational NATO-led and EU-led operations resulted in significantly increased attention paid to developing the necessary English language skills of the NCOs and Warrant Officers. Closer multinational co-operation and more intensive communication between allied partner units is a real challenge. Training of these groups of ranks slightly differs from that applied when training officers. New forms are necessary in order to achieve better coordination and understanding within units operating in a foreign environment and using the English language to communicate. All this puts enormous load and demand particularly on the new younger teachers who are starting to teach in the military environment. Many of their students have extensive experience gained in international missions and mastered a lot of terms completely unknown in the civilian world. Moreover, the number of military personnel and units operating in international NATO-led, EU-led and UN-led missions is very high and it is not easy to keep up the pace with all the requirements for rotation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the assessments done by BILC assessment teams that visited the Slovak Republic in the past and based on the exchange of information among partners, it is possible to say that the language training system in the Slovak Republic is working well. The level of language skills of our military personnel is visibly increasing. The proportion of military personnel capable to communicate in foreign languages has steadily increased every year. Even though it is necessary to admit that the permanent reforms of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and the changing NATO requirements have led to significant losses of the previously trained personnel, our language training system seems to be flexible enough to cope with the requirements of the near future and our teachers are eager to fulfill their tasks. Steps are being taken to increase our self-sufficiency by stabilizing the existing cadre of already trained teachers, recruiting new teachers and providing them with further training. Maintaining the international cooperation should enable us to meet international standards and continue to develop the whole system of language training in our Armed Forces.