

**SLOVAK REPUBLIC**  
**NATIONAL REPORT**  
**Language Training – BILC Conference 2005**

The integration of the Slovak Republic into NATO and the European Union was an important stimulus in acceleration and enhancement of language training within the Armed Forces and the whole Defense Department domain in the Slovak Republic. The results of this training are clearly visible in the study effort of our military personnel and its ability to be involved in NATO issues independently - without interpreters. Our attention has been focused primarily on the English language, but attention is paid also to the French language as the second NATO official language. German, Russian and other languages are also taught in a limited extent.

In 2004 we organized 124 language courses in which almost 1 487 persons were trained, out of this 1 382 military personnel and 105 civilians. Moreover, the Military Academy and the Air Force Academy trained another 224 military cadets, out of which 105 achieved level 1 (SLP 1111 as a minimum) or 1+, 103 achieved level 2 or 2+ and 9 of them succeeded in achieving level 3 in accordance with STANAG 6001. The number of those who failed in reaching at least level 1 was smaller this year (only 7). To provide a more detailed picture, it is necessary to say, that among those who reached level 2 (SLP 2222 as a minimum) or 2+ are 35 cadets who reached level 3 in one or two skills.

The language training in the courses for professional military and civilian personnel is organized by the Language Institute of the MOD in Bratislava and in its detached language training centers in Trencin, Nitra, Topolcany, Zvolen, Martin and Presov.

After the reorganization of military education in the summer of 2004 the Academy of the Armed Forces in Liptovsky Mikulas became responsible for training of all cadets – including the language training. The Air Force Academy in Kosice has been reduced to Aviation Faculty of the Technical University in Kosice, but the Faculty continues in training of military aviation personnel and retained its local language-training center. Education and training of cadets at both above-mentioned institutions was transferred under the roof of the National Academy of Defense.

The focus of our language training is shifting more and more to practical aspects of professional military service and to the operational English language. For this reason various specialized military terminology courses are organized for selected military specialties considered to be priority specialties with regard to the declared units and Force Goals objectives. Each of the Detached Language Training Centers is 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. The fruits of this effort are visible in organization and running of the multinational military exercises in the Slovak Republic, as well as in participation of our military personnel in exercises and their involvement in international military structures within the Alliance.

To keep pace with the increasing language training requirements, additional supporting activities are organized. The most frequent forms are the intensive courses organized in civilian language institutes. Most of them provide the basic language training in smaller garrisons and intermediate language training in various shorter forms for personnel that cannot be sent to intensive courses for service duty reasons. Also some other forms such as individual consultations and group assistance are used.

The system of the English language training is supported also by the partner institutions from abroad and 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 Canada and the assistance is also provided by the German Armed Forces. At present we enjoy the assistance of one language-training manager - advisor (prof. Lisa HIMA) and three language instructors from the USA, one BC PfP English Project manager from the UK (Mr. Gavin Floater, M.A.) and two French language instructors from France. Besides the instructors, the USA provided us for the purposes of military English language training with tuition and study material in the form of books, dictionaries, audio tapes, software (CDs), language laboratories, PCs and specialized trade courses for the selected personnel. The British Council provided short-term international Teacher Training Seminars organized abroad, some of them were organized in cooperation with the Language Institute of the MOD also in the Slovak Republic. The BC also provided books, tapes, Campaign 2 military English study program, material for 2 Self-Access Centres and sponsored the methodology seminars for the military English language teachers. The French Armed Forces provided 2 language instructors who taught in our intensive and extensive French language courses. We also co-operate on the military Slovak-German and German-Slovak dictionary with the Austrian Armed Forces. All this assistance and co-operation is appreciated by our Armed Forces very much.

The English Language Methodology and Testing Section co-operates with both the British and the American language-training managers in preparation of study materials and testing and oral exam materials. The British, American and French language advisers and instructors also participate in testing and oral exams when they are available. This section also provides instruction with regard to application of modern tuition methods within our language training system.

New Directives for ELT have been approved at the MOD level and it is expected that higher responsibility of every individual will be achieved in regard of study effort and maintaining the reached English language skills and abilities for use in their profession.

More than 40 of military personnel and civilian Defense Department employees, including teachers, have been educated in foreign languages and professional skills in international military schools and language institutes abroad. Selected candidates are sent to courses abroad in accordance with the possibilities and offers of the foreign partners - mostly the USA, the UK, Canada, France and Germany. Specialized military courses became our priority as a result of the fact that levels SLP 2222 and often also SLP 3333 can be reached in educational facilities in the Slovak Republic. When necessary, 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 Goals objectives.

Further development of the English language training within the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic is focused on increasing their interoperability with the Armed Forces of other NATO countries. Therefore, as a contrary to the past, more and more attention is also paid to the English language skills of the NCOs and Warrant Officers. Their involvement in communication and co-operation with allied partner units is steadily increasing. The approach to these groups of ranks slightly differs from that applied when training officers. As a result of that, loading of and demands on our language teachers continue rising. Moreover, also 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 pace with all the requirements for rotation.

**Concluding this report**, it is possible to say that the language training system in the Slovak Republic is working well. The number of military personnel with the required language capabilities is steadily increasing. However, it is also necessary to say that the permanent reforms of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and the changing NATO requirements have led to significant losses of the already trained personnel that does not fit to the newly organized structures. Notwithstanding, 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.