



AN ALLIANCE WITHOUT RIVAL IN THE FIELD OF DEFENSE

In December 2002, during the NATO Summit in Prague, Slovenia expects to receive an invitation to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. After that it will take another year or two before this decision will have been ratified by parliaments of all 19 member states. In addition, the 1949 Washington Treaty will have to be ratified by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. After a mutual ratification, Slovenia will become a full member of NATO and will be granted a higher level of security. From then on, Slovenia will protect its freedom, independence and territorial integrity and inviolability and in turn, national integrity, within the frame of the most successful defense coalition of free democratic countries, in accordance with the highest and the most demanding military standards. This guarantee will increase Slovenia's self-confidence in developing and implementing its security and defense policy. Through a continuous security-political dialogue and joint defense planning within NATO, Slovenia will be granted conditions for building the best defense-security system possible.

Given the size, the limited human, material and financial resources of our country, it is impossible for us to persist with the strategy of self-sufficiency, which has also been proven by history. This is particularly true of the area of defense. Slovenia could never pool sufficient resources for the establishment of an adequate defense system with such armed forces as could face any type or intensity of military threat. The only way to overcome this shortfall is by joining a suitable alliance. Since the values established within and, on a needs basis, defended by NATO, are very close to those of the Slovenian people, NATO meets this criterion.

Apart from joining the Euro-Atlantic security establishments, Slovenia has no other appropriate alternative. It will take a long time before the EU defense pillar is operational. Besides, it relies on NATO, and the countries involved will be applying the same organizational principles, the same standards and forces. Europe will never be able to support double defense forces. They will rather be composed of troops that are simultaneously NATO troops and only a small fraction of forces will be represented by non-NATO EU member defense forces.

Armed neutrality, promoted throughout history primarily by countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, Finland and Austria, is beyond our reach, speaking both from the international political and economic points of view. Should Slovenia, hypothetically speaking, be able to obtain this status, we could never meet the expenses in the area of defense. This would imply a tremendous increase of expenses related to the establishment of a self-contained defense system, which we could never pay for.

Theoretically, there is another option, which is signing a bilateral agreement on mutual defense with one of the more powerful countries. However, considering historical developments and Slovenia's geo-

graphical position, there is no motivation for such an action.

It is clear that due to its defense, economic, scientific, technological, cultural and other reasons, Slovenia has to find a new historical alliance. Therefore we opted for joining NATO and the EU as early as five years after achieving independence. In 1995 joining these two organizations was declared a strategic goal of the Republic of Slovenia by the National Assembly. Since then it has been on the agenda of the majority of parliamentary political parties and supported by the majority of the Slovenian public. In addition, this goal has been promoted and confirmed twice during parliamentary elections, through the platforms of political parties.

Becoming and being a NATO and EU member does not only mean enjoying the benefits of the Alliance. It also means taking on an appropriate part of responsibilities that pertain to membership. While the Slovenian defense system is being consolidated, i. e. the Slovenian Armed Forces are being built and developed, the financial aspect of joining NATO often tends to be oversimplified. According to such scenarios, NATO will demand a certain military contingent from Slovenia for the needs of the collective defense, which we could not afford. In addition, NATO supposedly demands an increase of defense budget allocations projected in the GDP by more than 2 % to attain the average level of member states. Therefore, one might assume that Slovenia could not pay the expenses that pertain to NATO membership or that the expenses will not pay off. This false dilemma has not only been put forward by NATO skeptics, as they call themselves, but also by individuals and groups that oppose the establishment of a credible and efficient national security system. Not to mention those who would even like to do away with the Slovenian Armed Forces. It is indisputable that Slovenia, as an international legal entity



that is establishing contacts with other countries, needs defense forces. The need to defend a nation state and its territory calls for the establishment and maintenance of an adequate military, with an increasing professional component. Given these facts, it is not NATO, it is we, who need efficient Armed Forces. The only alternative may be a huge military, based primarily on a reserve component and organized according to the territorial principle. However, maintaining such a military would be extremely costly and would jeopardize the regular functioning of the economy and public institutions on the one hand, and be of questionable efficiency on the other hand. In a modern society, such organization would appear burdensome and archaic.

I would also like to stress that neither defense systems nor militaries are built over night. This process takes a long-term perspective, plans that allow for 20 years and more, to account for the needs that may come up in the future and cannot be fully anticipated and planned for. Such was also the lesson learned with the Slovenian Territorial Defense. Slovenia was the only country in the former Yugoslavia to train and equip its territorial

defense forces so that they were able to efficiently carry out defense tasks. 23 years after its establishment the Territorial Defense was used to defend the Slovenian national territory and a democratic decision of the Slovenian nation against an adversary that had never before been anticipated.

Recent brutal terrorist attacks on the United States also remind us of this fact. Although terrorism has long been a theoretical source of threat to security, it is now a fact. Its scope and devastating effects triggered a series of destabilizing phenomena and consequential threats not only to the United States, but also globally. The tragic events are an additional in-

Slovenia is conducting preparations for NATO membership by utilizing the tools and mechanisms provided for by the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP Program). Initially conceived as the Individual Partnership Program, the purpose of which was training, group seminars and collective military exercises, the PfP Program was then followed by the Planning and Review Process, which enabled the country to select specific interoperability goals. NATO provides assistance in establishing a compatible defense planning system and, especially, force planning. Following the NATO Washington Summit in 1999, Slovenia began to participate in the implementation of the Membership Action Plan.

bership Action Plan, NATO has been very supportive and aware of the fact that this is done for its own interest to make sure that the aspirants, upon their entry, attain as high a level of interoperability as possible with the existing member states.

Slovenia is still working on the establishment of a comprehensive national-security system which will, taking into consideration the Euro-Atlantic political and defense integration, ensure a higher level of security for all of its citizens. In the area of defense, we are establishing the links between the various elements of the defense system into a consistent, rational, efficient and cost-effective institutional framework. The strategic objectives of the Ministry of Defense for the period up to 2004 envisage: improving the structure, operation and readiness of the defense system, especially of the Slovenian Armed Forces; further improving the readiness and operation of the system of protection against natural and other disasters; ensuring economic and transparent allocation of budgetary means in conformance with priority tasks; and, in the military-defense area, improving the readiness of Slovenia for integration into NATO.

The planning process for the reorganization of organizational and operational principles of the entire defense system and the provision of conditions for their further development are based on a thorough analysis of Slovenia's needs and capabilities. We are, therefore, realistic and try to redirect the system from quantity to quality. After ten years, the time has come to move from growth to development. This will demand not only the restructuring of the Slovenian Armed Forces, but also the adaptation of the organizational and personnel structure of the Ministry as a whole. The Ministry will then be in a position to support effectively the operations of the Slovenian Armed Forces and the system of protection against natural and other disasters as one of its basic purposes within the set rational limits.

With reference to specific internal and international factors which shape Slovenian national security, we can say that Slovenia has attained an adequate level of internal stability and security and has been recognized as a competent partner state in the international community. During its ten years of independence, Slovenia has undergone tremendous development changes which are vital for transition from the authoritarian to the democratic political system. Owing to a successful transition to democracy, significant progress in cooperation with western institutions, a clear and consistent concept of further development of the Slovenian Armed Forces and the entire defense system and its practical utilization, we have the right to expect that NATO will invite Slovenia as the next opportunity allows to become a full member of this political and military association. ■



Photo: Marko Pišlar

centive for Slovenia to continue with the implementation of its defense and security plans and the process of joining NATO and the EU. At the same time, Slovenia has demonstrated its readiness to act as an ally and to show humane concern in face of a tragedy.

Today it would be irresponsible of the state to transfer the burden of establishing the modern defense system to future generations. The resources are indeed very limited, as Slovenia is confronted with a variety of tasks which could not be accomplished in the previous ten years due to its transition to a modern state. In parallel with the development of the entire society, the defense system, and especially the Slovenian Armed Forces, should be developed. Our country requires a defense system not only for NATO and the EU, but above all for itself. Being aware of this fact, the integration into the Alliance would help improve our own security and classify Slovenia among those countries in the international community which are less at risk or at an acceptable level of risk.

In the area of the military and defense,

Based on bilateral contacts between NATO and the candidates, this plan opens up nearly all of the possibilities for the development of the defense system provided that Slovenia is accepted as a future member of the North-Atlantic Alliance.

Consistent compliance with the criteria set out by NATO in the Membership Action Plan has grown in importance in the course of the accession process. Lessons learned in two cycles of implementing the aforementioned plan, and the development of the 3rd annual program concerning its implementation in the next period, are highly positive and useful. Slovenia will meet all of the requirements irrespective of NATO's decision to accept or deny Slovenia as a future member. We believe that the Alliance criteria are appropriate and can only benefit Slovenia in setting up its system. By being rational, proven in the conditions of parliamentary democracy and aimed at more efficient exploitation of available resources, these criteria actually ensure that the money of taxpayers will be used in a rational and transparent manner. In the course of implementing the Mem-