

Contributor Profile: Czech Republic

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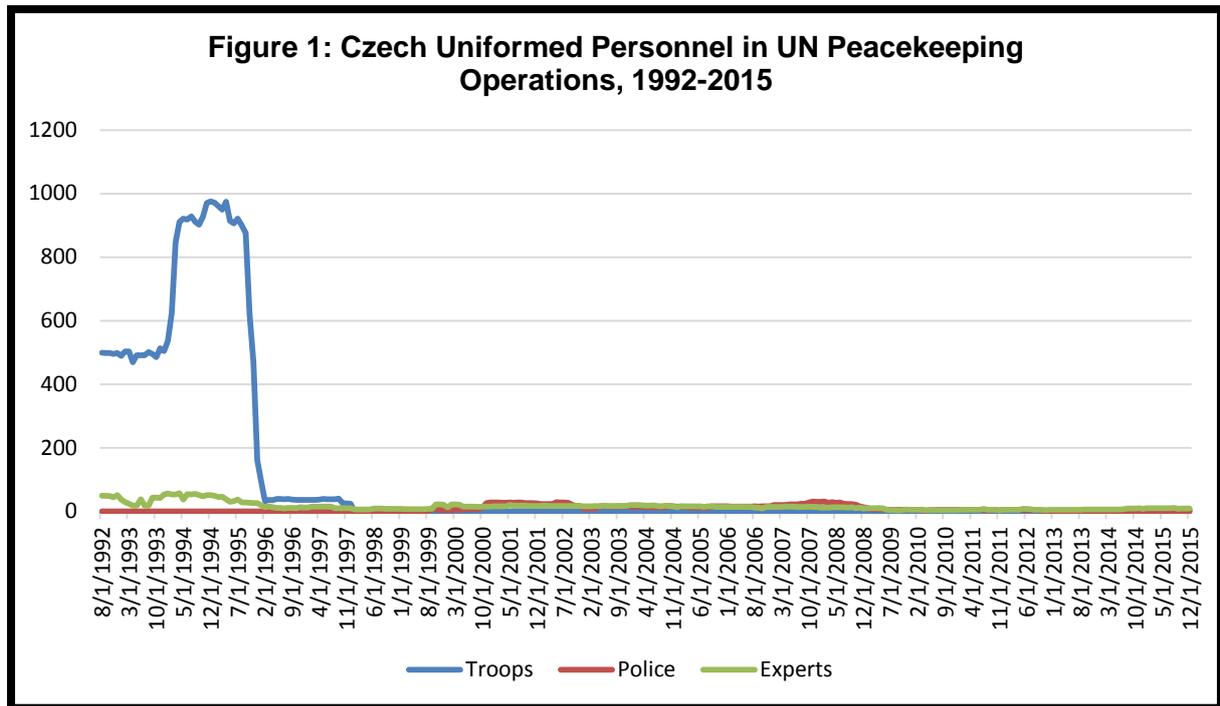
Active armed forces ¹	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
Active (2015): 21,000 World Ranking (size): 91st Army: 12,200 Air: 5,100 Other: 3,700 Paramilitary: 3,100	17 Attack helicopters 39 Attack aircrafts	2015: est. \$2.2bn (1.04% GDP) 2014: \$2.09bn (1.01% GDP) 2013: \$2.15bn (1.06% GDP)	13 (2 women) (31 Dec. 2015) Ranking: 95th (24 th largest NATO contributor)	MONUSCO: 3 troops MINUSCA: 3 experts MINUSMA: 1 troop UNMIK: 2 experts UNAMA: 2 experts UNDOF: 3 troops	Afghanistan (ISAF): 227 Kosovo (KFOR): 9 EUFOR (Op. Althea): 2 EUTM Mali: 38 OSCE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minsk: 1 • Bosnia-Herzegovina: 1 • Moldova: 1 • Kosovo: 1 • Ukraine: 9
Defense Spending/Troop: US\$80,727 compared to global average of approximately US\$79,396 and a regional average of approximately US\$115,767)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Historically, the former Czechoslovakia was not a significant provider of UN peacekeepers. Due to geopolitical realities of the Cold War and Czechoslovakia's membership in the Warsaw Pact, its contribution to peacekeeping missions during the Cold War was limited. Between 1953 and 1993 Czechoslovakia's involvement was restricted to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) on the Korean peninsula.² However, with the end of the Cold War and a new foreign-policy direction, Czechoslovakia enhanced its army's involvement in UN missions. Since 1989, the Czechoslovak troops were sent both to Africa (UNAVEM I, UNAVEM II, UNOSOM, UNTAG) and to the Middle East (UNSCOM). In Europe the immediate focus was on the resolution of the Yugoslav crisis. In 1992, the Czechoslovak forces were therefore sent to UNPROFOR. In the early 1990s, the active involvement of Czechoslovak troops in UN peacekeeping operations reflected not only the break-down of the bi-polar order but also a shift in the country's priorities: the integration in political, economic, security and military structures of the West and international society.

Since 1993, the Czech Republic has continued to pursue the goals set out in its national [White Paper on Defense](#). The Czech armed forces have participated in [UN peacekeeping missions](#) in Africa (ONUMOZ, UNOMIL, UNAMSIL, MONUC, UNMEE, UNMIL, and MONUSCO), the Middle East (UNSCOM) and Europe (UNOMIG, UNCRO, UNPREDEP, UNTAES, UNMOP, UNMOT, UNMIK). In the twenty-first century the Czech Republic has deployed only a limited number of mostly observers to UN missions (MONUSCO,

MINUSCA, UNMIK, UNAMA, UNDOF). But between 1990 and 1995 it deployed up to nearly 1,000 peacekeepers, mainly in UNPROFOR.



Until 1995, UN peacekeeping missions were a way to fulfill Czech security and political priorities. They created opportunities for a newly transforming and democratizing country, such as the Czech Republic, to show will to actively participate in the international community and contribute to efforts to maintain peace and security in the world. However, the prospects of NATO accession and the possibility to enhance national and regional security through the Alliance have led to limited participation of the Czech Republic in UN peacekeeping missions. The extensive deployment of Czech troops to IFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995 (around 800 soldiers) and in NATO missions (KFOR, SFOR, ISAF, Training Mission in Iraq, Resolute Support Mission and Joint Enterprise), multinational forces in Iraq, and subsequently also EU missions (Concordia, Althea, NAVFOR-ATALANTA, EUNAVFOR-MED, EUTM-Mali), shows the country's reorientation towards its more prominent regional partners. The intensity of Czech participation in missions of the Alliance or the EU diminished the capacity of personnel that could be provided for deployments of the UN.

Deployments to UN missions therefore had to be limited to few military observers or experts due to the focus on NATO or EU operations. However, in the past two years, there has been a growing interest in returning to UN peacekeeping operations as the Czech Republic gradually withdraws its soldiers from the NATO's ISAF in Afghanistan and it is thus able to deploy them elsewhere. The Czech Republic has not only stationed officers to UNDOF's command structure in the Golan Heights but it has also deployed members of its special forces to MINUSMA in Mali. After the end of the deployment in Afghanistan, the Czech Republic will acquire additional trained staff, which can be utilized in UN missions in the future. At the World Leaders Summit on Peacekeeping, which took place on September 28, 2015, the [Czech Republic pledged](#) to contribute Special Forces for the MINUSMA, as well as indicated that it is ready to provide specialized police forces and medical care services.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

The process of how defense of the Czech Republic is to be ensured is specified and codified in several laws including: the Constitution of the Czech Republic; Constitutional Act 110/1998, *On Security of the Czech Republic*; Act 219/1999, *On the armed forces of the Czech Republic*; Act 221/1999, *On Professional Soldiers*; Act 222/1999, *On Arrangements for Defense of the Czech Republic*; and Act 585/2004, *On Conscription and its Ensuring* ([Conscription Act](#)).

The deployment of Czech troops abroad is regulated in Articles 39 and 43 of the codified [Constitution](#) (No. 1/1993 Coll.) and in Article 10 of the Act 219/1999, [On the armed forces of the Czech Republic](#). According to Article 10: “the Czech armed forces participate in the activities of international organizations that ensure peace by participating in peacekeeping operations and rescue and humanitarian missions; individual professional soldiers can be deployed to these operations.” While Act 219/1999 acknowledges the commitment of the armed forces for foreign missions, Articles 39 and 43 of the Constitution lay out the decision-making process for deployment of troops abroad.

The Constitution identifies the Government and the Parliament of the Czech Republic as the main decision-makers that decide on external deployments. These bodies can make decisions about the provisions of defense, participation in multinational operations abroad, and other security measures. The government of the Czech Republic can respond to the requests for involvement in the specific mission and decide whether the Czech Republic will provide troops. The Ministry of Defense together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinate the practical aspects of any deployments. For UN missions, the negotiations also go through the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the UN in New York. The Permanent Mission is involved in the entire membership of bodies that are concerned with planning, organization and implementation of peacekeeping operations (UN Secretariat, DPKO, DFS).

The decision to deploy troops requires approval by the Parliament, which also decides on a two-year plan of foreign deployments proposed by the government. In urgent cases, the government can decide on external deployment for up to 60 days with the aim of fulfilling international treaty obligations concerning collective defense without the Parliament’s approval.

Before making its decision on a particular deployment, the Parliament consults the Ministry of Defense, which evaluates whether the army has the capacity to meet the mission requirements. The Ministry of Defense mainly assesses the availability of personnel and financial resources for the mission. In practice, there are further consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and potentially other relevant ministries (such as the Ministry of Interior if police forces are to be involved) before the potential deployment of troops is presented to the Government and Parliament. If the contribution to a mission is approved, part of the army is pulled out of the General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces and comes under the command of UN force commander.

The UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (UNPCRS), which requires all the national pledges to be submitted online in this system, has been used by the Czech Republic since 2016.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

The deployment of Czech troops in the peacekeeping operations is also mentioned in several security and foreign-policy documents such as [The Security Strategy of the Czech Republic](#), the [Military Strategy of the Czech Republic](#) and the [Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy](#). According to these strategic documents and the interviews made for this study, the main rationale for Czech participation in the peacekeeping and crisis management operations is the belief that the country should be an active member of relevant international organizations and should contribute to the stabilization of conflicts beyond its borders. This active involvement is meant to safeguard security interests and mitigate the impact of unfolding crises.

Political and Security Rationales: During the first half of 1990s, participation in UN peacekeeping missions was aimed to support the “return” of Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic to the international community and to the West. By sending its peacekeepers abroad, the Czech Republic wanted to highlight the readiness of its troops for integration to NATO and its support for liberal values. Since the mid-1990s, political preference has been given to operations conducted within NATO or the EU’s Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) frameworks. This was because membership in these organizations is regarded as the key pillar of Czech security and foreign policy. UN peacekeeping was assigned a lower priority and contributions were limited to symbolic deployments of military observers as the military capacities for foreign operations were fully used in the NATO missions. Despite these limited contributions, participation in UN peacekeeping operations is perceived as a way to strengthen the Czech position in the UN and among its allies.

Czech strategic documents prioritize the deployments of its forces in areas that are relevant for national security and the European Union’s stability. The main focus is hence on Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, the greater Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel. This regional security rationale can be detected also in the recent decision on contributing to MINUSMA, which is thought to support the stabilization of the wider southern European neighborhood.

Some important political figures in the Czech Republic, such as the current president Miloš Zeman, particularly endorse the peacekeeping missions that are deployed on the borders of Israel (UNDOF, UNTSO, MFO and UNIFIL) and argue for the enhancement of Czech involvement in these missions. Even though the Minister of Defense has mentioned these arguments in justifying Czech involvement in UNDOF as well, the conviction that Czech forces should be primarily stationed on Israel’s borders is not shared as strongly among other relevant political actors.

Economic Rationales: The Czech Republic does not make money from UN peacekeeping operations. Currently, economic issues do not play a significant role in decisions made about providing UN peacekeepers. Individual economic motivations were relevant in the 1990s when some military personnel saw service in UNPROFOR as a source of higher income.

Institutional Rationales: Although it is not the key rationale for providing UN peacekeepers and it has arguably a lesser importance than it used to, interviewees from Ministry of Defense view expeditionary missions as an opportunity to develop and further enhance its operational experience, military skills and share the experiences with other national forces. This is also one of the reasons why the traditional peacekeeping operations (such as UNFICYP) are not particularly popular in the Army. Preference for larger deployments is

given to foreign missions capable of using force, including so-called robust peacekeeping operations (such as MINUSMA).

Normative Rationales: For UN missions, normative factors were most prominent in the early 1990s. Participation in UN missions in this period reflected regional security interests but also the Czech desire to “return to Europe” and develop a more idealist foreign policy. Since then, rationales based on security and political interests have prevailed, even though the normative and values-based rationales never completely disappeared from Czech foreign policy discourse. In this regard, the discourse primarily stresses the humanitarian dimension of the foreign missions. In general, the Czech public supports the UN. In the opinion polls, the UN is perceived as a [slightly more trustworthy organization](#) than NATO and the EU. However, in the current public discourse there is no debate on the Czech contribution to various UN activities, including peacekeeping.

Given the long absence of the Czech Republic from UN peacekeeping operations, no particular peacekeeping habit has developed. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus among the political elites that foreign operations are one of the important tasks of the Czech Armed Forces and that the Czech Republic should contribute to peace, security and stability beyond its borders. The same could be said about the Army, which is trained for foreign deployments and whose members accept their duty to serve abroad.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: The political preferences given to NATO and EU operations have been the main barrier to greater Czech involvement in UN peacekeeping. The Czech Armed Forces have not had sufficient capacities to deploy more than a few larger contingents abroad, which the Czech Republic usually chose to concentrate in a limited number of missions. With deployments in NATO and EU missions in Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Afghanistan and the domestic or European commitments, interviewed military analysts have spoken of “overstretch” of a chronically understaffed Czech Army. Other, larger foreign operations are thus ruled out.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: As noted above, the Czech Republic prioritizes NATO and EU commitments over UN peacekeeping. Some parts of the right-wing political elites strongly prefer either NATO or bilateral relations with the USA as the main strategic priority of the Czech Republic and do not think highly of the UN peacekeeping missions. According to the interviewees and authors' own experience from various public discussions, this could be partly explained by the memories of UN the peacekeeping failures of 1990s in Rwanda or Bosnia and perceived ineffectiveness of many past missions. Furthermore, Czech strategic priorities lie mainly in the European neighborhood (and to a certain degree also in Sahel in the context of migration crisis and need to contain the spread of terrorism in the region). Therefore, the Czech Republic has not been keen to provide larger contingents beyond these areas. Recently, the crisis in Eastern Ukraine has renewed the debate on the national security capabilities of the Czech Army, but so far it has not had a significant impact on the decisions to contribute to military missions stationed abroad.

Financial costs: These do not play a significant role in the decision to provide peacekeepers if there is a preexisting political consensus that the Czech Republic should support a given operation. The financial concerns matter rather in relation to the overall budget provided for the Czech military and development of its capabilities.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda and resistance in the military: There is no critical debate on the current expanded peacekeeping agenda. As noted above, the military and military analysts favor contemporary robust missions over more traditional peacekeeping. At the same time, interviewees from the Ministry of Defense suggested that they prefer Czech troops to be deployed in operations where peacekeepers from other NATO armies take part, because they have already developed a level of inter-operability with them. While it cannot be said that there is resistance towards the UN as such among Army personnel, NATO and its operations are certainly held in higher regard than the UN.

Absence of pressure to contribute: The absence of pressure from the UN is not among the most important barriers, even though it may play some role when compared to the importance assigned to NATO and EU commitments. However, relations with UN institutions might hinder the will to contribute. Interviewees, both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense mentioned that difficult communication with UN DPKO regarding its requirements and lack of Czech experience with DPKO's internal practices and procedures have complicated and delayed, for instance, the recent Czech contribution to MINUSMA.

Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines: The current Czech legislative procedure used for authorizing foreign operations (described above) is regarded as quite lengthy, rigid and to certain degree unfit for purpose. While it does not pose a barrier to providing UN peacekeepers, it is perceived by the relevant ministries to be a potential complication that might delay some deployments. Every foreign operation longer than 60 days must be approved both by the Government and the Parliament, which impedes the swiftness and flexibility of the reaction to UN requests.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The current Czech government [has declared its willingness](#) to make larger contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek, are regarded as two of the main supporters of UN peacekeeping. However, in general, the priority of NATO and EU commitments is undisputed and this is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. The Czech Republic will thus be able to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations only when it has spare capabilities after fulfilling its other domestic and international obligations.

In general, the key political actors in relevant ministries agree with the current direction of UN peacekeeping and prefer it to traditional peacekeeping missions. The gradual withdrawal from Afghanistan might provide the Czech Republic with experienced military forces and specialized personnel that could be used in future for contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. According to interviews conducted for this study, one of the important challenges for the Czech Republic is its lack of experience with the practices and procedures of contemporary UN peacekeeping. The deployment in MINUSMA will help to identify and evaluate Czech capabilities and shortcomings in this regard and to draw recommendations for future contributions.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Given the lack of Czech involvement in UN peacekeeping operations, this issue is largely absent from the Czech public debate. The strongest vocal champion of the UN peacekeeping operations in the public discourse is arguably the current president Miloš Zeman, who has repeatedly made public statements in favor of higher Czech participation in current Middle

Eastern peacekeeping missions. Apart from him, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lubomír Zaorálek, the Minister of Defense, Martin Stropnický, and the Prime Minister, Bohuslav Sobotka, could be counted among UN peacekeeping supporters in the current government.

Similarly, given the lacking public debate on the issue, there are not many strong opponents of UN peacekeeping. Still, support for traditional peacekeeping missions among the Army elites and military analysts is rather lukewarm as they are not perceived to be particularly effective and capable of solving the issues that they are supposed to tackle. Similar arguments are used by some parts of the liberal conservative political elites (e.g. those aligned with the Civic Democratic Party and its think-tanks), who rhetorically prefer closer bilateral cooperation with the USA, and NATO over the UN. However, these alternative preferences, have so far never translated to significant political opposition towards a deployment of Czech personnel in a UN peacekeeping mission.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The type of forces and equipment that the Czech Republic is able to provide to UN peacekeeping operations largely depends on the mandate of the mission in question, as well as requirements and agreements made at the domestic and international political level. In the 1990s, the Czech Republic was inclined to send whole units (brigades, regiments, battle groups etc.) to UN missions but until recently the emphasis was mainly on providing military observers.

In general, the Czech Army possesses a variety of specialized units, staff and equipment that can be deployed abroad. So far, the Special Forces, chemical units, engineer units, mechanized units, military police units, and medical units have been deployed abroad. As for civilian experts, the Czech Republic has contributed to various past and current missions with legal and police experts and specialized civilian staff that took part in CIMIC, development and peacebuilding projects within the Provincial Reconstruction Teams stationed in Afghanistan. Apart from that, the Czech Army has declared that it will make up to 50 soldiers with special UN training available to the UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System in 2016.

Most of the time, when deploying larger forces (such as in Afghanistan or Kosovo), the Czech Republic sends a combined arms task force as each and every deployed unit is always supported by other specialized military staff. With regard to equipment, the Czech Republic has experience with providing, among other things, helicopters, air transport and field hospitals. However, linguistic capabilities remain a challenge. It would be problematic to contribute francophone staff to UN operations, because Army and police training focus on developing proficiency in English. Finally, only a limited number of women are deployed as UN peacekeepers, though female personnel regularly take part in other foreign missions.

Part 8: Further Reading

Armáda České republiky : symbol demokracie a státní suverenity : 1993-2012. Praha:

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Marek, Jindřich. *Krvavé mise OSN : Modré Barety v Pasti Mezinárodní Politiky.* Praha: XYZ, 2010.

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Urbanovská, Jana. *Participace států v operacích OSN na udržení míru. Příklad České republiky, Slovenska a Rakouska*. Dissertation. Masaryk University. 2012.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2015* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2015).

² The mechanism of the Korean Armistice Agreement of July 27, 1953, carrying out inspections and investigations to ensure its implementation.

List of interviewees

Oldřich Bureš, Metropolitan University Prague

Jan Eichler, Institute of International Relations, Prague

Miroslav Tůma, Institute of International Relations, Prague

Jana Urbanovská, Masaryk University, Brno

Bohuslav Pernica, University of Pardubice

Jaromír Zůna, Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic

Jan Jireš, Ministry of Defense of the Czech Republic

František Šulc, freelance military analyst, advisor Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic

Veronika Stromšíková, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Jiří Luhan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic