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## HUNGARIAN PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS: THEIR ROLE IN THE BALKANS AND ELSEWHERE

*“If we train to common standards, procedures and doctrine and at some point put them under a Combined Joint Task Force, we have created a new NATO, and a new Europe.”<sup>1</sup>*

- General George Joulwan

### 1. Introduction

The fall of Communism in Europe, and the end of the bi-polar order put an end to the artificial and forced separation which had been keeping Hungary out of the mainstream of European development for the last 40-plus years. Once that obstacle was removed, a consensus was reached by all Hungarian political parties to become a modern European country...

...in the quickest possible way and with the least sacrifice and develop an economy and culture, social and political structure bases on solid grounds by becoming part of the European and Euro-Atlantic co-operative institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The changes that took place on the European continent also brought new challenges, risks and dangers to the surface. The threat of regional crises and spill over, the impact of such crises on neighbouring countries, (refugees, environmental disasters, etc.) international terrorism, and the prolifera-

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<sup>1</sup> General George Joulwan, quoted in *A Force for Peace: US Commander's views of the Military's Role in Peace Operations*, Peace Through Law Education Fund.

<sup>2</sup> [www.kum.hu/siwwa/online/10025040.html](http://www.kum.hu/siwwa/online/10025040.html)

tion of weapons of mass destruction all comprise new challenges for security cooperation and new types of military operations other than war (OOTW).

Hungarian foreign policy, from the start considered Europe and Euro-Atlantic organizations (OSCE, EU, NATO, Council of Europe, and OECD) as part of one and the same “united system as mutually complementing and reinforcing components of the same structure.”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, Hungary set the goal of meeting the required criteria and thus achieving full membership in all of these institutions. But along with full membership comes the responsibility to cooperate and participate in initiatives, agreements and operations set forth by these institutions. Hungary was at the forefront of the former Warsaw Pact countries to meet their objectives and has been proactive in participating in OOTW and Peace Operations mandated by the UN, NATO and the other regional security regimes. This essay will be an examination of Hungary’s move from “consumer to provider” concerning security organizations and their peacekeeping efforts.

## **2. Overview of the Hungary Defense Forces**

Beginning with an overview of the Hungarian Defense Forces (HDF), one must remember that the HDF entered a period of radical transformation after the world left behind the bi-polar opposition while Hungary went through a major overhaul of its political and economic system.

The inevitable reform of the armed forces was motivated by two factors; first the general need for democratic development and modernization, and second, the commencement of preparations in Hungary for NATO membership.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 1

In order for the Republic of Hungary to implement its security policy, it must have armed forces that can ensure reliable and adequate defence and can contribute to the common security of NATO. Their additional tasks include participation in other joint allied missions, peacekeeping, and humanitarian missions under the sponsorship of international organizations.

The HDF consists of two main components: ground and the air forces. The armed forces have three principal categories, Main Defense Forces, Reaction Forces and National Support Forces. It is the Reaction Forces who are combat ready, and provide most of the personnel for Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and have the following functions: “alert duty, participation in crisis management, the fulfilment of Hungary’s international commitment and participation in rescue operations in case of natural disasters.”<sup>5</sup>

A Peacekeeping Force Training Center was created in 1994 that had the organizational status of a regiment. To participate, a soldier would have to have completed 12 months of mandatory military service, passed aptitude, medical and physical tests and then pass an interview. Those who meet the requirements must sign a two-year contract.

The assembled Peacekeeping Company underwent a four-month-training period of refresher drills, NBC warfare protections and specific systems training. “A month is dedicated wholly to specialties encountered in peacekeeping scenarios and specific UN producers and English Language Training.”<sup>6</sup> The Center has since closed and now peacekeeping training and drilling are completed by the 88<sup>th</sup> Rapid Reaction Battalion deployed at Szolnok within the Air Force base.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ekormanyzat.hu/english?kateg=english:1258>

<sup>6</sup> Hilaire McCoubrey and Justin Morris, *Regional Peacekeeping in the Post-Cold War Era*, (The Netherlands, Kluwer Law International), 2000, p. 52.

Participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programme was the first step towards establishing interoperability of the HDF. Hungary joined NATO's PfP in 1994 and has designated units to participate in PfP operations and exercises. The HDF feels a unique responsibility for the security of the region and in accordance with the spirit of PfP, they consistently strive to promote and expand relations and cooperation with the defence forces of the neighbouring countries which will be discussed later in this paper.

Hungary is represented by its NATO Mission in Brussels. Hungarian officers also serve PfP coordination cells at Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Europe.<sup>7</sup>

This Coordination Center was established in 1995 to provide briefing and planning facilities for all non-NATO troop-contributing countries who are participating in Balkan peace-support operations. Hungary falls under the leadership of Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH) located in Naples.

### **3. Hungary in Co-operative Security Institutions**

At the Rome Summit in November on 1989, Heads of State and Governments of NATO member countries established the framework for the co-operation to be developed with countries of Central and Eastern Europe by creating the North Atlantic Co-Operation Council (NACC).<sup>8</sup>

It is a forum for dialogue for NATO and new democracies over issues of security, cooperation, transparency and mutual confidence.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ekormanyzat.hu/english?kateg=english:1258>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The multi-fold, dynamic and continuous development of relations between Hungary and NATO can basically be traced to three different but interlinked groups. The first is the system of bi-lateral relations between Hungary and NATO. “The establishment of official relations between Hungary and the Alliance is considered as dating from June 29, 1990 when the Hungarian Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs, Géza Jeszenszky visited NATO HQ in Brussels.”<sup>9</sup> Many subsequent meetings between Governmental leaders and NATO high level officials took place in the following six years.

This was taken to the next level with the creation of the PfP in June of 1994. Within this program new opportunities for cooperation and joint endeavours were created. Hungary was eager not just to be a participant in PfP, but a provider as well. Hungary hosted two exercises early on. In 1995 the Hungarian-German-British led staff participated in Exercise Co-Operative Light 95 in Hungary. Also, Szolnok hosted exercise Cooperative Chance in 1997. Later that year Hungarians came to train in American for the first time in history in Exercise Cooperative Nugget.

Second is Hungary’s participation in the activities of the NACC have also kept it engaged and informed on issues of security for Europe. Hungary is one of the founding members of the organization.

Last is Hungary’s membership to the OSCE, (formerly known as CSCE). In December of 1994 the OSCE Summit was held in Budapest. The central mission of the OSCE is to build a stable and secure community and prevent new conflicts or the revival of old ones in the CSCE region.

It is meant to be a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management using *inter alia*, its peacekeeping operations and missions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs online:  
<http://kum.hu/siwwwwa/online/100204090.html>

<sup>10</sup> Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe 1994 online:  
<http://www.osce.org/docs/english/1990-1999.htm>

In order to strengthen the OSCE for peacekeeping operations, functions to strengthen the OSCE's capacity and activity in preventative diplomacy, enhance security and stability through arms control, disarmament and confidence and security building throughout regional levels were established. Within the Code of Conduct on Political-Military Aspects of Security, the following objectives concerning Peacekeeping Operations were iterated in §6:

- The participating States stress the importance both of early identification of potential conflicts and of their joint efforts in the field of conflict prevention, crisis management and peaceful settlement of disputes.
- In the event of armed conflict, they will seek to facilitate the effective cessation of hostilities and seek to create conditions favourable to the political solution of the conflict. They will cooperate in support of humanitarian assistance to alleviate suffering among the civilian population, including facilitating the movement of personnel and resources dedicated to such tasks.<sup>11</sup>

In 1995, the U.S. Embassy assessed Hungary's progress toward interoperability and participation in multinational PKOs and MOOTW. Some of the highlights regarding PKOs are as follows:

- Went from minimal to maximal PfP participation, hosting a bilateral search and rescue exercise with the U.S. taking part in "Cooperative Nugget", hosting "Cooperative Light", and participating in all but two other PfP exercises.
- Strongly supported AWACS flights in Hungarian airspace and offered the use of Hungarian airfields and facilities in the event of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

- Sent Peacekeepers – trained at Hungary’s new Peacekeeping Training Center – to the MFO force in the Sinai and the UNFICYP in Cyprus.
- Outlined with Romania a 15-point program of military cooperation – including the first ever joint exercises – direct links between border guards, and establishment of a “hot-line” between the two militaries.
- Signed a Memorandum on Military Cooperation with the U.S. and agreements on security of military information (GSOMIA) and exchange of military data.
- Hosted the first planning meeting and pledge to co-sponsor a U.S.-U.K. proposal for an Anti-Personnel Landmine control regime.<sup>12</sup>

During the accession talks Hungary declared its full agreement with the goals laid out in NATO’s Strategic Concept and its readiness to assume all the obligations stemming from the Washington Treaty and “that it wanted to participate in NATO’s integrated military structure as well as its defence planning process.”<sup>13</sup>

Hungary’s position was that they did not want to be only a consumer but a provider of security as well, which was taken seriously by NATO. According to Hungary’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they were able to provide a “particular Hungarian ‘surplus’ in the case of problems where they have accumulated substantial experience due to their history, set of relations and geographical proximity.”<sup>14</sup>

NATO also looked to Hungary as the state most closely situated to the crisis in the Balkans. Keeping the goal of enhancing regional stability in sight, Hungary has established the afore mentioned Joint Hungarian-Romanian

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<sup>12</sup> Newsletter #2 (08/02/86) Hungary and NATO, online:  
<http://mkogy.hu/naato/anews2.htm>

<sup>13</sup> <http://kum.hu/siwwa/online/10025040.html>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Peacekeeping Battalion and the Hungarian-Slovenian-Italian Brigade ready to commit troops to various PKOs in the region.

During the Kosovo crisis it became evident that Hungarian membership to NATO allowed for a level of security that they could not otherwise achieve, and that they have a tangible say in issues related to European Security Policy.<sup>15</sup>

The Kosovo campaign and the following Peacekeeping operations were the first post-Cold War fulfilment of Article 4 mandate which combined both peacemaking and peacekeeping.

#### **4. Hungary's Participation in Bosnia**

The cooperation pursued in the framework of the IFOR/SFOR operations in order to bring about a settlement of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia is a particular and extremely important aspect of relations between Hungary and NATO. Following the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement Hungary reacted positively to the request of the Alliance to provide bases and logistic support on Hungarian soil to the U.S. forces taking part in the IFOR operation and the multinational Nordic Brigade. It also enabled the international forces participating in Operation Joint Endeavour to transit through Hungarian territory as well as take part in the efforts aiming at the settlement of the crisis in Bosnia with an engineering battalion.

Concerning Hungary's participation, H.E. Javier Solana, Secretary General of NATO in 1998 made the following remarks at a speech delivered to the Hungarian Parliament:

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<sup>15</sup> Michta, Andrew, *NATO After the Kosovo Campaign and the KFOR Peacekeeping Operations: What has Changed?*, online:  
[http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.publications&topic\\_id=1422&group\\_id.html](http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=topics.publications&topic_id=1422&group_id.html)

From the earliest days of the UN Protection Force, and later the Implementation and Stabilization Forces, Hungary has been a stalwart friend. The Hungarian Government and people have shown their support, cooperation and hospitality to the multinational endeavours to bring peace and democracy to the Balkans. When NATO asked for bases in Hungary, the request was quickly granted. Mounting successfully these large multinational peacekeeping operations could never have been accomplished so effectively without Hungarian support...<sup>16</sup>

The peace implementation/peacekeeping mission on Bosnia-Herzegovina was approved by resolution 1031 of the UN Security Council that set forth a NATO-led multinational peace implementation force (IFOR) to provide for a peaceful settlement of the Bosnian crisis. After the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord NATO and PfP countries contributed to the 60,000 strong IFOR unit.

The Republic of Hungary joined the IFOR mission on December 2nd 1995 based on the following resolutions adopted by the Hungarian National Assembly:

112/1995(XII.2) on the transit and the temporary basing of IFOR troops in Hungary and 114/1995(XII.12) on the deployment of a Hungarian Engineer Contingent deployed to Okucani by January 31 1996. The engineers were assessed to be fully mission capable from February 3rd of the same year.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Javier Solana, then-Secretary General of NATO at the session of Foreign Affairs and Defense Committees of the Hungarian Parliament Budapest, 26 February 1998 <http://www.kum.hu/siwwwwa/online/10025011.html>

<sup>17</sup> Peacekeeping Operations, online, [http://193.6.238.68/mod/Bkennt\\_e.html](http://193.6.238.68/mod/Bkennt_e.html)

Noting the fact that some of the situation had stabilized, the UN Security Council approved resolution 1088 in December of 1996 to establish the stabilization force (SFOR). Hungarian participation in SFOR happened on the basis of resolutions passed by the National Assembly: “109/1996 (XII.17) on Hungary’s participation. Resolution 61/1998(IX.30) decided the assistance to be provided for troops relieving SFOR units and they are still participating under the same resolution until December 2003.”<sup>18</sup>

The Republic of Hungary has a threefold role in the IFOR/SFOR mission:

- Host Nation support – this encompasses the permission to allow the use of facilities, training ground, assets and materials, air space, frequencies as well as the coordination of traffic and a rapid settlement of arising problems.
- Transit – Hungary grants permission for uninterrupted transit on road, rail or by air through the country. In numbers this means more than 22 000 air assets, 3500 trains, 320 thousand ground vehicles and 740 persons transited through Hungary.
- Troop contribution – Hungarian Engineer Contingent performed the significant tasks of road and rail repair (Tuzla, Zvornik), bridge construction (the Old Bridge at Mostar) communal reconstruction (Okucani, Novi) and other technical projects.<sup>19</sup>

Originally the Engineers were numbered at 416, but have been reduced to around 200 persons. The Hungarian Engineer Contingent (HEC) was and is fundamentally active in bridge building, construction and repair, road and rail reconstruction, snow clearance and de-icing as well as terrain reconstruction works.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Keszte, Gabor, ed., *National Defense 2001*, Armedia Publications, 2002, p. 17.

The positive changes in the stabilization of the military situation contributed to fundamental changes in the tasks of SFOR. “Classical Peacekeeping” tasks were supplemented by reconstruction and tasks to assist in normalizing the life of the civilian population, and a considerable amount of work they have done:

Over 360 projects carried out in all, including 88 projects during IFOR. 30 bridges with a total length of 2100 meters have been launched. Seven bridges have been de-launched. 32.4 kilometres road have been built and repaired, while 65 kilometres railway have been mended. The Engineers have mine-cleared more than 200 000 square meters and conducted 2210 diving operations. Among other construction works are 1800 square meters of parking lots, 27 helicopter landing sites, clearance of 2600 square meters of riverbeds, and 250 meters of sewage system.<sup>20</sup>

To mark their accomplishments during the past five years the HEC invited Hungary's Ambassadors in BiH and Croatia Mr. Kálmán Kocsis and Mr. György Csóti to commemorate their achievements. Also included were Chief of the Hungarian Joint General Staff General Lajos Fodor, Chief of the Hungarian Army Staff Maj. General Ferenc Győrössy, SFOR Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS) Support Brig. General Claudio Sampaolo, all previous HEC commanders, and other distinguished guests from SFOR and Hungary. General Fodor made the following remarks:

The forces of the Contingent have been making a name and prestige for themselves over the last five years. It's shown activity in the peacekeeping mission has been instrumental in forming a positive image about Hungarian Defense Forces, Hungarian soldiers abroad, and proved that the Hungarian Defense Forces are ready and have the ability to participate

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<sup>20</sup> [www.nato.int/fyrom.htm](http://www.nato.int/fyrom.htm)

in international operations. Since Hungary joined NATO in 1999, this country therefore served in SFOR first as a Partnership for Peace (PfP) country, and then as a full NATO member.<sup>21</sup>

Brig. General Sampaolo commented that the Hungarian Engineers should be proud of their accomplishments.

COMSFOR and I are fully aware of the contributions you make towards the success of the SFOR mission. Contributions and commitments you have been performing in such an outstanding fashion for five years.<sup>22</sup>

The initial oversized structures of the IFOR/SFOR served the purpose of military deterrence but NATO has realized that it has to create a more flexible and efficient force using smaller numbers to meet the many challenges of PKOs. Besides the reduction in force numbers there are continuous changes in the composition of SFOR troops.

The HDF experienced some frustration that is not uncommon to all peacekeepers. They found that there must be an intrinsic motivation coming from the local population and leadership to truly make any PKO successful.

Implementation of the Dayton-process is hampered by the slow progress of the civilian implementation, which can mainly be attributed to the lack of willingness to cooperate on all sides of the parties.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hungarian Defence Mirror, online: <http://honvedelem.hu>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Keszte, Gábor, ed., *National Defense 2001*, Armedia Publications, 2002, p. 15.

## 5. KFOR

Acting upon the request of NATO, the Hungarian government, on June 15th 1999 proposed to the National Assembly the sending of a Hungarian Battalion with a maximum of 350 soldiers to the Balkans [Kosovo]. The bulk of the HDF Guard and Security Contingent came from the 62<sup>nd</sup> Bercsényi Miklós and the 5th Bocskai István Mechanized Infantry Brigade from Hódmezővásárhely and Debrecen.<sup>24</sup>

There was a four week-long training period before the actual deployment. This training consisted of guard and security tasks, theory, self-defence, fire training and car and combat vehicle training.

In June of 1999 troops left for Pristina and then came under the command of the KFOR HQs. For the following year the soldiers would conduct Security and Guard duties. On the 15th of June 2000, the Klapka György Mechanized Infantry Brigade handed over the responsibility for guarding Mount Gole to soldiers of the Multinational Brigade Center (MNBC).

The Commander of the HDF and Chief of Staff issued an order that same year to supplement the battalion with a 14 person-strong HDF preventative Medical Laboratory to provide care to the full ranks of KFOR.

The main mission of the HDF Guard and Security Battalion (338 person strong) is to provide immediate security of KFOR main HQs and to maintain a constant watch in the ranks of the immediate reaction units, which can be ordered to carry out the tasks in the area of responsibility of the multinational brigade command (MNBC).

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<sup>24</sup> Kosovo Force, KFOR Contingent: Hungary, online: <http://www.nato.int/kfor/kfor/nations/hungary.htm>

The personnel of the battalion are solely volunteers, through competition-who serve as professional and contract soldiers (officers NCOs and warrant officers). These are the candidates who must pass the tests to become members of this battalion. It is the Minister of Defense who orders the soldiers for service abroad on the basis of a recommendation by the Chief of the Land Force Staff.<sup>25</sup>

Hungary's participation in KFOR was given a favourable review from the MLF staff for its role in the KFOR Multinational Brigade South-West Command. Regarding the enlargement of MLF, it is the high time to open discussions with Austria and Croatia about the capabilities the two observers are willing to offer for MLF, and of course to decide the needs of the battalion.

## **6. Peacekeeping Operations Elsewhere**

The Republic of Hungary has been taking an active part in multinational peacekeeping operations of the United Nations and OSCE since as early as August 1988.<sup>26</sup> Since then, nearly 500 Hungarian officers, NCOs and enlisted soldiers have performed observation service in 16 UN, OSCE and other multinational PKOs in crisis zones around the world.

One the most significant early multinational mission that the HDF participated in was the Multinational Force and Observers mission that controlled the implementation of the Camp David Agreement signed by the U.S., Israel and Egypt in the late 1970s. The HDF sent a mixed military police team to the Sinai-peninsula in 1995. Currently there are 26 soldiers and 15 police officers still serving this mission carrying out the following tasks:

- formulate proposals to the force commander about military policing issues

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<sup>25</sup> Keszte, Gábor, ed., *National Defence 2001*, Armedia Publications, 2002, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Hungarian Defence Forces*, online: <http://kum.hu/siwwwa/online/10020493.html>, p. 7.

- liaison with police authorities of the host countries providing investigative work, physical control and crime prevention, and traffic regulation.
- patrol duty
- escort contingent.<sup>27</sup>

Hungary has also served in the UNFICYP mission in Cyprus. The HDF began with 4 military observers in August of 1993 and by 1995 had increased its participation to 114 persons. They serve as part of the Austrian-Slovenian-Hungarian multinational battalion.

The performance of the Hungarian unit demonstrated even in high intensity conflict situations, has been appreciated by both the Austrian and UNFICYP Commands. The first commander of the Hungarian Contingent was awarded the Service Medal for Excellence by the President of Austria.<sup>28</sup>

After signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Austrian party, the United Nations approved an increased Hungarian participation to comprise a unit subordinate to Austrian command. At the present, the representatives of the Hungarian contingent are “functioning as Head of the Personnel Department of UNFICYP HQs and Chief Duty Officer. The Deputy Commander of the joint force is a Hungarian officer as well.”<sup>29</sup> The increased participation is reflected in the force structure as an independent Hungarian company. Medical, communication and administrative support of the company is comprised of 10 female soldiers.

One of the largest and most common obstacles for the HDF when participating in joint or coalition task forces is the language barrier. Comprehensive English skills remain a challenge to be met.

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<sup>27</sup> Keszte, p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Peacekeeping Operations online: [http://193.6.238.68/mod/bkefennt\\_e.htm](http://193.6.238.68/mod/bkefennt_e.htm)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## **7. Hungarian Defense Policy Concerning the Balkans**

One of the main goals of the Hungarian Republic's security and defence policy is to promote the sustainable international peace and to strengthen the security and stabilization of Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area.

The centre of interest of the international community (NATO, EU) has moved from the so-called traditional crisis areas towards new regions such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Hungary is fully committed to participate in these engagements and to contribute to the efforts of the international community. In addition to this, Hungary has a permanent interest in continuing efforts to enhance stability in the Balkan region as well as in the economic rebuilding and the establishment of normalcy there.

In co-ordination with its security and defence policy principles, Hungary has about 1050 military personnel in crisis management and peace support operations in different parts of the world sharing the burden of the war against terrorism.

Hungary is currently fighting the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan (ISAF). In the ISAF operation there is a small medical contingent that consists of 6 personnel who will remain in service till the end of 2004. UN Security Council Resolution 1510 has extended the mandate of the ISAF to areas beyond Kabul. The Hungarian National Assembly, with its resolution passed on 10 Oct 2003 allows a maximum of 50 military personnel to serve at a time in ISAF, or its follow on mission led by NATO in individual positions. The 50 allowed positions can be filled with staff officers from NATO HQ, experts in the German led Kunduz Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and as engineers or road builders, specialists or as military observers. The concrete details are continuously being worked out.

In order to assist Coalition Forces in rebuilding Iraq and instituting a democratic Self Government, National Assembly Resolution 65/2003 (03 June), has approved the participation of a 300 person Hungarian contingent

to serve in the Stabilization Force in Iraq (SFIR). The transport battalion and some staff officers are part of the Polish-led Multinational Division having its HQ in Babylon (South Center Sector). The battalion carries out transportation and escort tasks in the interest of the division, but occasionally it takes part in the transportation of humanitarian materials. The battalion has equipment from Hungary as well as some provided by the US. The National Assembly has extended the service time of the contingent until 31 December 2004.

Participation in international crisis management and peace support operations is a priority and a crucial task for the Hungarian Army. Therefore, in the future, it plans to have a maximum of 1600 men at any given time to participate in these missions.

### **Conclusion: Prospects for South East Europe**

Hungary is pleased to note the improvement of the overall security situation, and the political and economic progress in the Southeast European region. However, despite favourable tendencies, several fundamental problems remain and challenge the reform process. Soft security challenges (especially organized crime, corruption, illegal trafficking of weapons, drugs and human beings) undermine the democratization and reform process, and hamper prospects of Euro-Atlantic integration for the region.

In order to further enhance these favourable trends, international assistance remains inevitable. The presence of NATO forces and the increasing role of the EU in the region contribute to this endeavour. Undoubtedly, the currently improving security situation is due to NATO forces. Therefore we deem it highly important to uphold NATO's role in the region until self-sustainable security and stability become irreversible.

Parallel to streamlining and downsizing of SFOR and KFOR – as outlined in the Periodic Mission Review – we need to follow closely progress and developments in the process of stabilization and democratization of the re-

gion. We need to further the gradual shift of responsibility of tasks to local institutions and civil organizations, but this should be based on a realistic timetable and tangible goals.

Since the Balkans are literally in the backyard of Hungary, the latter is uniquely suited and fundamentally interested to take an active part in international efforts aimed at promoting regional stability and development. It has therefore maintained a consistent level of deployment in SFOR and KFOR, as well as the EU-led mission in Macedonia<sup>30</sup> (145, 344 and 41 personnel respectively).

Furthermore, it aims at promoting Euro-Atlantic values in the region through its high level contacts and by organizing seminars on the issues such as Partnership for Peace and the Global War on Terror. Together with our UK colleagues, Hungary has recently launched an initiative to enhance border security and border management in the Balkans.

Hungary notes with satisfaction the steps that have been taken by Serbia and Montenegro in order to enhance reforms and to meet the requirements of Euro-Atlantic integration. We keep on encouraging Serbia and Montenegro to focus its efforts on further democratization, defence reform and cooperation with the ICTY.

Hungary strongly encourages the restructuring of the defence sector in Bosnia-Herzegovina, emphasizes the need to establish civil control over a single military authority and to cooperate with the ICTY.

Finally, Hungary supports the continuation of a coordinated NATO-EU strategy for the Western Balkans. In this regard, the identification of specific joint objectives and assets to achieve them is highly preferable. A reasonable division of tasks is necessary. Both NATO and the EU – along with other international actors in theatre – should aim at taking the lead-role in

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<sup>30</sup> Turkey recognizes Macedonia under its constitutional name.

areas that best suits that organization. Meanwhile continuous exchange of information and coordination is essential.

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