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**THE STRATEGIC DEFENCE REVIEW
PROCESS AS A TOOL FOR
CONCEPUALIZING DEFENCE DOCTRINE
AND STRUCTURE REFORMS IN THE
BULGARIAN MILITARY - THE BULGARIAN
EXPERIENCE AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The Bulgarian Strategic Defence Review (SDR) was designed as an essential element of the overall defence transformation process. It served as a tool for tailoring our response to the new defence requirements and security commitments as a result from our NATO membership and active engagement in and contribution to international efforts to fight terrorism and bring peace and stability to conflict regions and countries.

As a result of the SDR we produced a Long-term Vision for Development of Troops and Forces – 2015. This Vision provides the basic parameters of the manpower, structure, armaments and equipment of the Armed Forces and serves as a foundation of the Plan for Organizational Build-up and Modernization of Forces till 2015 that we have just drafted.

Another follow-up of the SDR was the drafting of new Security Strategy as well as a concept for participation of the Republic of Bulgaria in military operations abroad while the principles and approaches to force build-up and employment shall be determined in a new National Military Strategy.

The new requirements and responsibilities set a new security agenda for the Republic of Bulgaria. I shall not elaborate on the relevance of defence reforms to this new agenda. Defence transformation is a must in the present security reality. And yet, we should aim to make our forces

not just respond but correspond to the security needs. Building modern capabilities through transformation, modernization and professionalisation is a general objective that can be achieved only by precisely targeted and prioritised actions. That was the very intent of the SDR – to identify where we are now, where we want to go in the future and how best to do it.

The SDR was meant to provide alternatives to align our forces and capabilities to our defence strategy. And the very core of this strategy has changed. It is now based on non-traditional, preventive and pre-emptive approaches and solutions, on complementing and coordinated efforts to employ political, economic, technological, information, military and civil resources. This strategy builds on the indivisible nature of security and the collective environment in which it is guaranteed. Membership in NATO gives new opportunities to achieve the national security objectives but also allocates new responsibilities. It implies a collective guarantee for the national security as well as a collective setting for joint decision-making, planning and employment of capabilities and forces.

And intentionally we picked up the time to conduct the SDR – following the successful implementation of Plan 2004 and right on the doorstep to NATO membership, the first one providing a solid foundation for further development of new and better capabilities and the latter outlining the future collective defence setting.

Building on the threat assessment, we have identified what capabilities our forces should have so that we could respond and perform effectively. The defence capabilities are our potential to execute defence missions and tasks to support national security policy. They integrate doctrine, education and training, organization, manning, equipment, technologies, infrastructure, combat readiness and logistics. Thus, defence transformation should entail all those elements so as to make our forces modern, usable and effective.

Our major task is to continuously develop and improve our capabilities. Its successful implementation does not simply mean more troops and

assets. It means forces that are more usable though less in number. It means concentration of efforts on the development of expeditionary forces that could deploy quickly and effectively.

The SDR concluded that our forces must comprise combat capable, multifunctional, mobile, manoeuvrable and modular units with high combat effectiveness. They should be useable across the full spectrum of missions and deployable for operations in the NATO area of responsibility. They should also be kept at an appropriate level of graduated combat readiness and be interoperable with the forces of our allies.

One of the essential conclusions of the SDR was that fewer units but interoperable, better manned, equipped, and trained shall generate better and more effective combat capabilities. At present, the majority of our in-place forces are outdated and non-interoperable. We still need to decide what in-place forces we need to retain, both for training purposes and for NATO Article 3 demands, and how best to plan their modernisation.

A key message of the SDR has been that interoperability, deployability and usability are the major requirements to our forces. They should be ready to participate in NATO-, EU- or UN-led peace support and stabilization operations in the immediate vicinity or in geographically distant regions and have more than the traditional combat capabilities. They will be increasingly interacting with local authorities and populations and involved in post-conflict reconstruction that require enhanced skills and capabilities.

The Republic of Bulgaria's accession to NATO and our strong determination to be an effective and efficient member require that national policy, planning and procedures are aligned with those of the Alliance. Bulgaria is determined to ensure that national decisions for deployment of forces are taken timely; that force planning is designed in a way that would enhance the effective fulfilment of the Alliance missions as well as its successful transformation.

The deployable forces are a priority in the Armed Forces' development. Their combat and expeditionary capabilities shall allow them to fulfil most missions and tasks that are currently assigned to in-place forces. Major efforts shall be focused also on multifunctionality in order to increase operational effect and reduce cost of personnel, infrastructure, combat equipment and training.

Planning shall be transformed from a threat-based to a capabilities-based one and be aligned with NATO Force Goals Package. Attention shall be focused on building new structures of the Armed Forces that have the necessary defence capabilities and reach better operational results.

The Armed Forces need to be structured so as to perform effectively the missions and tasks assigned to them. The force structure has been determined based on the operational visions and scenarios that have been developed for the services as well as based on the forces and assets required for the completion of their basic tasks.

Functionally, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria shall consist of active forces and support elements and forces of lower readiness. The Active Forces shall comprise a package of modularly structured deployable forces that could be used across the full spectrum of NATO-led operations and a small package of highly capable forces that generate immediate reaction forces to contribute to national security in peacetime and counter potential asymmetric threats in particular. The support elements and forces of lower readiness shall include in-place forces for logistic and maintenance support, bases, depots, etc.

The new structures and capabilities of the Armed Forces shall be effectively managed by a three-level command structure, comprising strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

In the SDR process we identified the need to improve the leadership and management of forces on the strategic and operational level. As a result, we made a comprehensive review of the existing administrative and management practices in the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff. Its objective was to help ensure effective and efficient management of

forces by abolishing duplicating structures and functions and optimizing the human resources.

In order to maintain effective operational command and control we established a Joint Operational Command (JOC) as an instrument for implementation of the principle of jointness. The JOC shall execute the planning and the operational management of units from the Bulgarian Armed Forces during their participation in operations both inside the country and abroad while the Services HQ shall be responsible for recruitment, manning, training and providing units and sub-units to JOC for both joint training and participation in operations.

In order to achieve an optimal balance between capabilities and resources we have established a Force Development Management System that ensures the development of capabilities to perform security and defence tasks. The system integrates 3 complex subsystems: the Required Operational Capabilities Subsystem, the Integrated Defence Resource Management Subsystem and the Acquisition Subsystem. We have been working on an Integrated Professional Development and Personnel Management Subsystem that will be an integral part of the Force Development System.

The need to develop usable and effective forces has been one of the incentives to start the process of full professionalization. We believe professional forces are more effective than conscript ones. According to our plans the Air Force and the Navy shall be fully professional by the end of 2006, and the Land Forces – by the end of 2010. Despite the tendency to build fully professional Armed Forces, recruitment of conscripts shall continue till 2010. Modernization of forces, in accordance with the projected manpower, armaments and equipment, is an essential element of the process of their comprehensive transformation. It is a major tool for building the required operational capabilities and our intention is to plan it so as to ensure development of priority capabilities. To that end, in May 2004 the Government approved 11 priority modernization projects.

Modernization shall require considerable funding that amount up to 20-25% of the annual defence expenditure in the next 10 years. And following the Parliament's decision to fund operations abroad separately from the defence budget, I believe we would be able to allocate more resources for R&D and modernization. The long-term force planning requires stable defence resources. The main principles in the resource allocation and spending are the maintenance of a balance between the defence requirements and the national potential, the efficiency and effectiveness as well as the prioritization of capabilities of forces.

The defence resource management is carried out using the Integrated Defence Resource Management System based on the programme approach. The Bulgarian Government has declared its commitment to maintain the annual defence expenditures within 2,6% of the GDP for the period 2005-2007. For 2007-2015 the forecast relative share of these expenditures shall be the same so that we can allocate the appropriate resources for implementation of the Plan for Organizational Build-up and Modernization of Forces till 2015. A major task of the Ministry of Defence in the next decade shall be to reduce the operational and maintenance costs and increase the capital investment.

Effective membership in NATO and defence management call for prompt solution of a few other issues, such as the alignment of defence related legislation, targeted investment in human resources and mainly in education and training, guarantee of security in all its aspects, adoption and implementation of NATO standardization agreements, etc.

I would like to conclude by saying that the comprehensive transformation requires a new security philosophy, strategy and culture. Such transformation shall allow us to develop our forces and procedures so as to be able to perform effectively the assigned tasks both at home and in Alliance or coalition environment.

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