



# The Czech Republic's Twenty Years in NATO

“As ambassador to Brussels, my colleagues and I spent two years commenting on, and sometimes even contributing to, our accession negotiations with representatives of the Alliance. Later, as Foreign Minister, in December 1997, I took part in the North Atlantic Council meeting at which sixteen Foreign Ministers of the member states signed three protocols admitting the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization under the condition that this act be ratified by the parliaments of the member states. For me, the most memorable moment was when the US Secretary of State signed the document. She said to me quietly in Czech: ‚I’ve signed myself as Korbelová again, after a long time‘. She signed herself Madeleine Korbel Albright.”

**Jaroslav Šedivý**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
1997 – 1998

“I am pleased that the Czech Republic joined NATO during my time as Prime Minister. Even back then I said that our membership in the Alliance was necessary, since it would prevent foreign tourists from entering the country in tanks rather than in buses. The world has changed since 1998. The North Atlantic Alliance remains, however, a guarantee of peace in Europe, an anchor of our security, and a place we naturally belong to.”

**Miloš Zeman**  
President of the  
Czech Republic  
and Prime Minister  
1998 – 2002

“I signed the Czech Republic’s accession to NATO as Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic along with my colleagues János Martonyi and Bronisław Geremek from Hungary and Poland on 12 March 1999, in the Harry Truman Library in Kansas City, where we handed over our instruments of ratification to Madeleine Albright. I considered my signature as a first step in reaching our post Velvet Revolution foreign affairs goals: memberships in NATO and in the European Union, organizations which would ensure our safety and prosperity. I was convinced that, thanks to NATO, the Czech Republic would not become the victim of military aggression but I also added that I considered it, desirable for possible NATO-led security missions to be mandated by the UN Security Council or by the OBSE. The term ‚desirable‘ does not mean ‚necessary‘ and does not put into question our obligations in the Alliance.”

**Jan Kavan**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
1998 – 2002



# The Czech Republic's Twenty Years in NATO

“The accession of the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Alliance was a very important political decision, one that will continue to influence the lives of future generations as the historically first assurance of our country’s security, freedom, and democracy. It was one of the most important days of my life.”

**Vladimír Vetchý**  
Minister of Defence

1998 – 2001

“We are fully capable of managing our role in NATO. There is no alternative to the Alliance. Today, there cannot be any alternative.”

**Cyril Svoboda**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

2002 – 2006

„The admission of the Czech Republic to NATO is, in my opinion, our country’s greatest diplomatic and foreign policy success in the last 99 years. The only event that overshadows it is T. G. Masaryk’s and E. Beneš’s success when, 100 years ago, they were able to gain the international recognition for our newly created state. NATO gave us a better guarantee of security than the alliances on which our pre-war republic relied. It is for that reason, among others, that we continue to enjoy a life of peace, freedom, and prosperity even twenty years after our entry. I think, however, that we do not appreciate this enough. Neither NATO nor our security should be taken for granted. We may lose them if we do not continue to cultivate them with appropriate determination and due care.“

**Alexandr Vondra**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

2006 – 2007

Minister of Defence

2010 – 2012

“It was truly a great success when, 20 years ago, we joined the North Atlantic Alliance which guarantees our security. It was the excellent work of our diplomats and the Foreign Minister, but the authority of Václav Havel also played a role here. I remember with gratitude the helping hand of the then US Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, which proved truly notable and memorable. Besides the questions of security, often mentioned by experts, I would like to remind us of something else: the sharp rise of investments in the Czech Republic. Money is the world’s greatest coward. It disappears when the situation is not safe. The moment when, as members of NATO, we were seen as a safe country, investments sharply rose. Therefore, we may thank NATO for the extraordinary economic growth we have seen in the last 20 years.”

**Karel Schwarzenberg**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

2007 – 2009

2010 – 2013





# The Czech Republic Joins NATO in 1999

001

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, one of the main goals of Czech foreign policy was to become part of Euro-Atlantic security structures, especially to become a full-fledged member of NATO. On its way to becoming a member, the Czech Republic went through an Alliance programme called Partnership for Peace and, on 12 March 1999, it became one of the first countries of the former Eastern Bloc to join NATO, alongside Poland and Hungary. For the first time in history, Central Europe became part of the transatlantic security system which safeguards peace, prosperity, and stability.



002

The main reason for the Czech Republic's accession to NATO was to ensure our external security and to firmly anchor our country in the system of values of the democratic world. As a member of NATO, the Czech Republic became a firm part of the strongest political and military organization in the world. Without a doubt, the membership of the Czech Republic in NATO can be ranked among the first successes of Czech foreign policy after the year 1989.



003

- 001 - On 26 February 1999, President Václav Havel signs the Czech Republic's instrument of accession to NATO
- 002 - In March 1994, Prime Minister Václav Klaus signs the Czech Republic's accession to the Partnership for Peace programme
- 003 - In 1999, the Czech Republic participates in the NATO Summit in Washington for the first time as a full member







# The 2002 NATO Summit in Prague

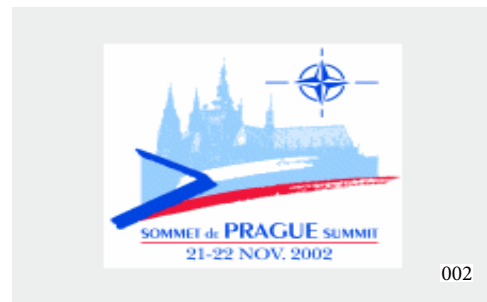
001

The NATO summit is a top-level meeting of the heads of state and government of the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance. During the summits, the allies adopt political and security-related decisions and approve crucial documents setting the course for NATO in the coming years. Decision-making within NATO is based on unanimous agreement - full consensus.

In November 2002, the NATO summit took place in Prague, the first time in a new member state. The Prague summit launched NATO's overall post-9/11 transformation. It reaffirmed and deepened the role of NATO in the fight against terrorism and initiated the process of adaptation to the new security situation with a particular emphasis on strengthening the military capabilities of the Alliance.

One of the significant achievements of the Prague summit was that it strengthened the ties with the Alliance's partners and confirmed that NATO would continue to enlarge: another seven Central European countries

received an invitation to join (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.) The summit thus helped integrate the former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO structures, prevented the emergence of a power vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe, and contributed to the political stability and security of this region.



002



003

- 001 - NATO decisions are unanimous
- 002 - NATO Prague Summit logo
- 003 - The summit of heads of state and government of NATO countries in Prague





# The Czech Republic's Contribution to NATO Missions and Operations

001

Today's security threats arise outside the borders of NATO but can quickly spread to its territory. This applies to terrorism, for example, or to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. For this reason, NATO operates beyond the borders of its member states. After the end of the Cold War, the vital question for NATO was to "go out of area or out of business."

Since its entry in NATO, the Czech Republic has participated in many Alliance projects, including military operations and missions ensuring security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond. The first mission abroad to which the Czech Republic contributed as a NATO member was the KFOR peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. The Czech Republic has since participated, and continues to participate, in a number of Alliance missions and operations. Our soldiers and civilian workers serve in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Baltic states, and in the Mediterranean region.



002



003

- 001 - Czech soldiers on a mission in Afghanistan
- 002 - Czech pilots patrolling airspace over Iceland
- 003 - Czech soldiers on a mission in Afghanistan







# Alliance Membership 001

The basic tasks of NATO are collective defence, cooperative security, and crisis management. The Czech Republic's membership in NATO brings with it many advantages as well as many responsibilities. According to the key Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, an attack against any member state of NATO is considered an attack against all its member states. The Alliance's ability to provide every member state with a guarantee of collective and credible defence against any kind of attack is the fundamental advantage of NATO membership.



Other advantages of NATO membership include, for example, participation in an air defence system, consultations among allies, information sharing (including intelligence sharing), participation in defence planning, joint decision-making based on a consensus on key security questions, and the possibility to specialize in a particular defence capability. The Czech Republic, for instance, specializes in defence against chemical and biological weapons, and in aviation and medicine.



- 001 - Czech soldiers on the KFOR mission in Kosovo
- 002 - Military field hospital
- 003 - Czech soldiers on the KFOR mission in Kosovo







# NATO Days in Ostrava & Czech Air Force Days

001

NATO Days in Ostrava and Czech Air Force Days is the biggest security show in Europe. The motto of the event is “Our security cannot be taken for granted and there is no prosperity without security”. The main objective is to present to the public the wide spectrum of security capabilities available to the Czech Republic and its allies. NATO Days in Ostrava belongs to a “club of prestigious European shows”. Admission to the event is (and will remain) free.

The core part of the programme, taking place at Leoš Janáček Airport in Ostrava, are displays of heavy military hardware, police and rescue equipment, dynamic demonstrations of special forces training, and flight displays, and presentations of the equipment used by individual forces and units.

NATO Days in Ostrava and Czech Air Force Days is the only event that brings to one location the latest technology used by soldiers, firefighters, police and customs officers, prison service

personnel, municipal police forces, and elite units -- the organisers aim to offer something special each year. There is also enough space for meetings, presentations, workshops and seminars. NATO Days in Ostrava is the most-visited two-day family event in the Czech Republic. However, this event is not only about attractive displays: it is also an important platform for explaining important security issues and a unique opportunity to rediscover our rich traditions.

NATO Days in Ostrava is also an important social event bringing together private and public sector representatives, including members of the central and local government, top managers from participating companies and partners of the event, and important guests from the fields of politics, business, academia, culture, society and sports.



002



003



004

- 001 - American B-52H Stratofortress strategic bomber in 2012
- 002 - The Falcons, a British military parachute display team, in 2016
- 003 - General Zdeněk Škarvada, a WWII fighter pilot in RAF service, welcomes the legendary British aerobatics display team The Red Arrows at Mošnov Airfield in 2006. The Royal Airforce sent 21 aircraft of different types to the event that year. Legend has it that the following question was asked at RAF headquarters in Whitehall, London: “Where on foreign soil are our planes this week?” The answer: “In Afghanistan, Iraq and Ostrava”.
- 004 - Premiere of the American B-1B Lancer bomber in 2016







# History: Once Just a Small City-Centre Event

001

NATO Days in Ostrava has just celebrated its eighteenth anniversary. What started as a small city-centre event visited by people on their way home from work is now one of the biggest military security shows in Europe – a phenomenon and no longer just a show.

On a Friday afternoon in 2001, paratroopers jumped out of helicopters and descended on Černá louka fair grounds in the centre of Ostrava. On and around the lawns, spectators who just “got off shift” were able to see police equipment and special military and rescue technology, and equipment and gear used by special forces and reconnaissance units. They saw firefighters tackle a car fire, a counter-terrorist squad in action, and a drug search operation. More than 10,000 people came. A year later, a richer programme attracted an additional 5,000 spectators. The event began at 3 o’clock in the afternoon and ended at 6 o’clock in the evening.

In 2003, NATO Days moved to the Ostrava Airport in Mošnov and continued to build up its programme of exciting ground and air displays with international participation. Today, the event called NATO Days in Ostrava and Czech Airforce Days is the biggest of its kind in Europe, with over 200,000 visitors. According to specialised magazines it “can compete with classic air shows”, even with Air Tattoo in Fairford, UK, the world No. 1.

Every year, the event attracts hundreds of special guests – diplomats, NATO representatives and representatives of national armies, security experts, politicians as well as producers and traders. Ostrava is becoming a forum for the defence industry and related industries. A number of companies have chosen this weekend event in Ostrava to stage the world premieres of their products and sign new contracts.



002



003



004

- 001 - Firefighting demonstration at the very first NATO Day in the centre of Ostrava in 2001
- 002 - First year at Mošnov Airfield in 2003 – the move made it possible to show heavy equipment in action
- 003 - Aerial view of NATO Day in 2005
- 004 - The very first NATO Day in Ostrava at the Černá Louka fair grounds in the city centre





# Show in the Sky

001

Each year, over a hundred planes of different types are brought to the event. Together they would constitute a well-armed air force anywhere in the world. Visitors are able to see bombers, fighters, ground attack aircraft, reconnaissance aircraft, training aircraft, electronic warfare aircraft, transport aircraft and flying tankers. Some of the flight displays, such as those by the Israeli air force or the Saudi Hawks aerobatic team, are seldom seen at European air shows.

Flight displays are always the main attraction. It may be interesting to know that NATO Days takes place at a civilian airport, unlike the rest of the four comparable Central European events which are held at military air bases. The organizers must not disrupt the airport's normal traffic, which is an extra challenge. In September, the tourist season is coming to an end and the airport handles a number of charter flights to and from holiday destinations in countries such as Egypt and Bulgaria. The event must not affect these flights in any way.



- 001 - Return of the legendary British Red Arrows in 2012
- 002 - Performance by the Turkish Stars team in 2011
- 003 - Flypast by Swedish aircraft in 2015
- 004 - The Netherlands F-16 aircraft display had been one of the highlights for many years, this photo is from 2013
- 005 - European premiere of the CV-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft in 2014
- 006 - Unique participation by F-15D Baz aircraft of the Israeli air force in 2011







# Events on the Ground

001

NATO Days builds its success on several enduring principles. The first principle is to show the broadest spectrum of military, security and rescue forces. No other event presents state-of-the-art military technology, including aircraft, together with the most advanced equipment used by the police, counter-terrorist units, firefighters, rescue teams, customs officers, prison service and other forces.



002



003

It is this broad spectrum what makes NATO Days so unique. In recent years, traditional air shows have begun to draw inspiration from NATO days and include displays by ground and non-military forces in their programmes.



004

The second principle is free admission. The organizers believe that visitors should not be asked to pay for what has been bought with their own taxes. People have the right to see the things our soldiers and allies, as well as rescue personnel, policemen and firefighters can do and the equipment they use.



005

- 001 - The huge An-124 Ruslan cargo aircraft surrounded by spectators in 2013
- 002 - Special anti-terrorist Female Company for Special Security Tasks of the Jordan Armed Forces (FCSST JAF) in 2015
- 003 - Czech and Polish police teams tackling bus hijackers in 2009
- 004 - T-72M4CZ tanks firing in front of spectators (2009)
- 005 - German Customs Administration assault team fighting armed smugglers in 2013





# The Special “Anniversary Year Ending in Eight”

001

The 18th NATO Days was centred around commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the founding of Czechoslovakia. Large segments of the programme were devoted to displays of historical military technology. The record-breaking participation by the

United States as a special partner country brought into focus our long-standing cooperation.

A formation of 16 different types of historical and contemporary aircraft flying past to the sound of Bedřich Smetana’s The Moldau symphonic poem took spectators on an imaginary journey through the hundred years since the birth of Czechoslovakia and its air force. Two hundred thousand poppies dropped from a Bronco aircraft were a tribute to all victims of armed conflicts over the past century.

Today, NATO Days in Ostrava annually receives around two hundred thousand visitors. This would not be possible without the support of the Czech Republic’s Integrated Rescue System, including transport and accommodation services for the hundreds-strong organizing team. The main organizers are Jagello 2000, the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic, the Moravian-Silesian Region, the Medical Emergency Service of the Moravian-Silesian Region, and Leoš Janáček Airport Ostrava.



002



003



004



005



006

- 001 - The anniversary edition of NATO Days in Ostrava was visited by 220,000 spectators, this C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft was part of the equipment shown by the special partner country – the United States
- 002 - Paratroopers from the 102nd reconnaissance battalion
- 003 - An-124 Ruslan surrounded by spectators
- 004 - OV-10 Bronco aircraft dropping hundreds of thousands of symbolic poppies
- 005 - American M2 Bradley armoured aircraft
- 006 - Elite pilot Ivo Kardoš, winner of the award for the best flight display (in the cockpit of a JAS-39 Gripen)





- Exhibition: The Czech Republic's Twenty Years in NATO
- Authors: Security Policy Department and Public Diplomacy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Permanent Delegation of the Czech Republic to NATO in cooperation with Jagello 2000
- Photographs: Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, NATO, and the Czech Social Democratic Party, Lubomír Světnička
- Graphic design: Services Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
of the Czech Republic

