



# MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ANNUAL REPORT

2023







## CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FULFILLMENT OF TASKS STIPULATED BY LAW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SECURITY SITUATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEAR ABROAD AND ENSURING THE DEFENCE CAPABILITIES OF SVK.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Military campaign of the Russian Federation in Ukraine.....	8
Russian Federation.....	8
Ukraine.....	9
Slovak Republic.....	9
<b>ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Russian Federation.....	10
China.....	11
<b>TERRORISM, FINANCING AND SUPPORT OF TERRORISM.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Threat of Islamic terrorism in SVK .....	11
Threat of politically motivated terrorism in SVK .....	12
Terrorism threat in the external security environment of SVK.....	12
<b>POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Ukraine.....	14
Western Balkans .....	14
<b>HARMFUL SECTARIAN GROUPS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>ILLICIT TRADE IN DEFENCE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Control of handling and trade in defence industry products.....	15
DIP trade in relation to Ukraine .....	15
Circumvention of international sanctions on exports to Russia .....	15
<b>MALICIOUS ACTIVITIES AND THREATS IN CYBERSPACE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Cybersecurity incidents.....	16
Fulfilling tasks in the area of cybersecurity and defence .....	16
MI activity in the IT security department.....	16
<b>IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND ITS ORGANISATION.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Migration Situation in SVK.....	17
<b>HYBRID THREATS.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>GATHERING INTELLIGENCE FROM FOREIGN SOURCES AND INTELLIGENCE NECESSARY FOR ADVANCING SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>RADICALISATION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO AF SVK TASKS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>LEAKS OR THREATS TO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>INTELLIGENCE-TECHNICAL SUPPORT .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>IMINT AND GEOINT CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE.....</b>	<b>23</b>



---

<b>HUMAN RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>BUDGET .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## FOREWORD BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

*Dear Readers,*

*Allow me to introduce the Military Intelligence Annual Report for the year 2023. In a democratic state, the activities and control of intelligence services are under constant scrutiny of professionals and the general public. The growing phenomenon of false information and manipulation of truth increases the demand for objective information and deeper understanding of global and internal events.*

*The dynamic changes in the internal and external security environment of the Slovak Republic, the increasing number of conflicts, societal crises, the interconnectedness and complexity of threats, as well as the characteristics of cyberspace require constant attention of intelligence services and the adoption of appropriate measures to ensure the defence and security of the state.*

*During 2023, the Military Intelligence provided decision makers with hundreds of reports and analyses necessary for making important government decisions. As stipulated in Act No. 500/2022 on Military Intelligence, the Military Intelligence efficiently and responsibly carried out its mission in ensuring the defence, security, and defence capabilities of the Slovak Republic, as well as ensuring the defence of the Slovak Republic in cyberspace. It constantly carried out its mission in the areas of cybersecurity and signals intelligence. Simultaneously, it offered intelligence support to the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and cooperated with the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic in carrying out their mission.*

*The Military Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic is an esteemed intelligence service in the Slovak Republic and abroad. Transparency of the intelligence service predominantly lies in openness and communication. The cooperation between the Military Intelligence and public authorities, security forces and partner intelligence services was once again outstanding in 2023.*

*Efficient intelligence activity is based mostly on quality personnel and values, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Military Intelligence who carry out their tasks not only as a job, but as a life's mission, and thanks to whom the Military Intelligence can carry out its mission to the full extent.*



*Major General Ing. Juraj ŠTEFANKA  
Director of the Military Intelligence*



## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the Military Intelligence (MI) carried out the mission of ensuring the defence, defence capabilities and security under the authority of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic (MoD SVK) to the extent stipulated by Act No. 500/2022 on Military Intelligence and in accordance with the MI Intelligence Effort for 2023.

MI carried out its mission according to established priorities focused in particular on activities threatening the sovereignty and constitutional establishment of SVK, irregular migration, activities of foreign intelligence services, hybrid threats, terrorism, extremism, illegal trade in defence industry products, securing the military-economic interests of SVK, and providing intelligence support to the Armed Forces (AF) of SVK.

In addition to the Russian military campaign in Ukraine, which was the main security threat of 2023, other threats were identified which could negatively affect the combat potential and the development of capabilities of the AF SVK and the defence capabilities of SVK. When carrying out its mission, MI focused on a spectrum of identified security

threats, which act, or may act, against the protected values and security interests of SVK in the internal and external security environment.

In 2023, MI was able to monitor and consistently document activities of organised criminal groups, detect and identify spreaders of politically motivated extremism, and prevent serious damage caused by cyberattacks against SVK. MI closely collaborated with other security services and provided intelligence to eligible recipients and law enforcement authorities. MI also provided its insights during regular briefings and in interministerial working group meetings.

A detailed description of MI activities during 2023 is contained in the classified “Military Intelligence Annual Report 2023”, which was submitted to the Military Intelligence Oversight Committee (hereafter “Committee”) of the National Council of SVK according to Act No. 500/2022, and which Committee members took note of on 18 April 2024. The National Council of SVK deliberated on the “Military Intelligence Annual Report 2023” on 6 December 2024.



## FULFILLMENT OF TASKS STIPULATED BY LAW

### SECURITY SITUATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEAR ABROAD AND ENSURING THE DEFENCE CAPABILITIES OF SVK

#### Military campaign of the Russian Federation in Ukraine

The most significant determinant affecting the security of SVK in 2023 was the armed conflict in Ukraine. In addition to posing an immediate threat, the long-term instability in Ukraine caused secondary challenges and threats with direct effects for SVK. The characteristics of the conflict affected the entire territory of Ukraine and spilled over to the near abroad, which mostly consists of NATO member states (MS). MI provided development assessments and expert forecasts to eligible recipients on a weekly basis.

In the defence sector, MI organised, or participated in information briefings about the Russian military campaign in Ukraine. MI regularly informed the National Council Committee and the Security Council of SVK about the development assessments. MI focused mainly on analysing development trends and assessing the possible effects of developments in crisis areas on SVK.

MI continued the close cooperation and consultations with the General Staff (GS)

of the AF SVK in monitoring and assessing the situational development in Ukraine.

The unwanted impact of failed or shot down Russian or Ukrainian ammunition on Slovak territory represents an immediate threat stemming from the conflict in Ukraine. The ongoing armed conflict increases the risk of weapons used in combat in Ukraine possibly spreading to third countries in the future.



A secondary effect of the conflict is the gradually growing community of people with combat experience in Ukraine. Their combat experience, combined with extremist expressions, may pose an increased threat associated with crime for Europe after the conflict.

#### Russian Federation

Russia maintained a high level of combat potential during the assessed period. Mobilisation and force generation activities carried out because of the conflict in Ukraine were one of the factors driving the development of the Russian AF combat potential at the operational-strategic level.

Despite the vast deployment of combat power, the Russian AF were unable to achieve their declared strategic<sup>1)</sup> or operational goals

<sup>1)</sup> Demilitarisation of Ukraine (attrition of its military capacity); denazification of Ukraine (regime change); neutrality (prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and EU); moratorium on further NATO expansion

and the ban on NATO weapon and unit deployment near Russian borders (return of NATO forces to pre-1997 positions).



of the campaign in Ukraine (seizing control over the administrative territories of the Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts).

Due to the ongoing economic sanctions and international isolation, Russia focused on expanding economic and military-industrial cooperation, mainly with China, North Korea and Iran. The main goal was to secure the availability of necessary components, the import of select weapon technology, as well as direct deliveries of armament and materiel from the aforementioned countries.

The Russian Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) increased its production of most of the main weapon components.

### Ukraine

The scope and characteristics of the Russian campaign had a direct negative effect on Ukrainian defence capabilities, economy, energy sector and society.

The Ukrainian Ground Forces were able to generate new manoeuvre brigades thanks to military aid and training provided by western states. Their combat potential was lowered by losses of trained personnel and armament. No problems with replenishing losses with new personnel were observed, however, their level of quality and training decreased.

In 2023, the Ukrainian AF did not have sufficient capacities which would allow them to demobilise experienced troops deployed on the line of contact (LOC). Ukraine did not completely exhaust its mobilisation

potential in 2023. Most of the Ukrainian population is still determined to defend against Russian aggression. However, with the conflict dragging on, the willingness of the population to join the Ukrainian AF gradually weakened.



MI did not observe any activities which would indicate the willingness of either party to begin peace negotiations.

### Slovak Republic

MI provided intelligence protection to NATO forces deployed on Slovak territory as part of the Multinational Battle Group in Slovakia (MN BG SVK). In order to ensure the intelligence protection of the MN BG SVK, MI provided its own findings and assessments of security threats and intensively cooperated with foreign partner services in preventing these threats from materialising.

## ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

### Russian Federation

Russian intelligence services continued their efforts to replace the capabilities they lost after EU and NATO MS adopted measures aimed at curbing Russian intelligence activities. The most significant of these measures still in place involve a stricter visa regime, limited activities of several Russian subjects used for intelligence cover, and the mass expulsions of Russian intelligence officers working under diplomatic cover.

The Russian government reacted to this situation with increased reliance on cyberespionage and cyberattacks against EU and NATO MS. Cross border activities of Russian intelligence officers continued in several EU MS. A new *modus operandi* was observed in some EU MS – using people of non-Russian nationality from the criminal environment.

Ongoing Russian efforts to establish intelligence officers in international institutions were observed. The increased presence of deported diplomats was recorded in friendly and neutral states.

MI obtained information about the activities of Russian intelligence officers by monitoring and assessing foreign intelligence service activities in regions, where a change in the security environment could negatively impact the security and interests of SVK, NATO, and the EU.

The activities of Russian intelligence services focus on enforcing the dominant influence of Russia and using the energy sector to further destabilise the economic and social situation.

### Activities of Russian intelligence services in SVK

In 2023, activities of the Russian intelligence services in SVK were affected by the ongoing Russian military campaign in Ukraine and the subsequent development in the Slovak security environment. The revelation and medialisation of the two cases of Slovak citizens cooperating with Russian intelligence services in 2022, and the subsequent significant reduction in the number of the Russian Embassy staff in BRATISLAVA led to the suppression of Russian intelligence activities in SVK.



The prosecution of the two cases of the collaborators apprehended in March 2022 continued into 2023. The cases have shown that the low penalties stipulated in Slovak legislation do not sufficiently cover the area of willing collaboration with a foreign power.

Insufficient regulation in SVK also led to the establishment of a high number of companies operating in the area of cryptocurrencies. There are currently 550 companies operating in this area in SVK, the most in the entire EU. They are often

purposely established with foreign financial backing.

The current regulation regarding Virtual Asset Service Providers (VSAP) in SVK was very simple. A VSAP company only had to be listed in the trade registry, however, it obtained a license to provide cryptocurrency services in the entire EU. A new regulatory framework should come into effect in January 2025, with a transition period to achieve compliance until 2027. The current regulatory framework allowed for the misuse of cryptocurrencies for hidden financing by foreign intelligence services and elements of the criminal environment.

### China

Chinese intelligence services continued their efforts to gather information about the western military aid provided to Ukraine,

as well as information about the military capabilities of NATO MS. In the V4 region, Chinese intelligence services tried to recruit security analysts from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through planted intermediaries. Simultaneously, the trend of Chinese intelligence activities targeting the MoD SVK continued to grow.

During the assessed period, China adopted an anti-espionage law which is meant to tighten the internal security policy by targeting subjects from the so-called West doing business in China. It is likely that the amendment of the anti-espionage act will negatively affect foreign entities and persons in China. Chinese employees of foreign companies have to cooperate with intelligence services which could lead to leaks of sensitive information and damage the business interests of foreign companies.

## **TERRORISM, FINANCING AND SUPPORT OF TERRORISM**

### **Threat of Islamic terrorism in SVK**

No direct threat of Islamist terrorism was observed in SVK in 2023. Based on available information, SVK did not represent an objective target for Islamist terrorist groups during the assessed period.

Possible activities of radicalised or self-radicalised individuals, or isolated autonomous terrorist cells continue to pose a latent security threat. This includes potential terrorist attacks using simple available means without thorough preparation.

Despite the fact that no direct threats from supporters of the ISLAMIC STATE (IS) and AL-QAEDA (AQ) were observed in SVK, the ongoing negative trend in the development of the migration situation in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Ukraine poses a threat of infiltration by individuals or groups with

a possible terrorist background and ties to foreign terrorist groups.

In this regard, MI continuously gathered and assessed information about irregular migrants detained in SVK.

### **Slovak Muslim community**

The conduct of the Slovak Muslim community has long been moderate with established self-regulating mechanisms which prevent potential radical Muslims from finding significant support and refuge.

However, certain negative phenomena and radical expressions were observed in connection to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **Threat of financing and supporting terrorism with ties to SVK**

Informal financial flows were identified in connection with financing terrorism.

They were mainly realised through a non-bank system, in which transactions are not subject to regulation to combat the financing of terrorism and money laundering.

### Threat of politically motivated terrorism in SVK

The accelerationism phenomenon persisted in SVK during the assessed period. It is an extremist ideology which believes that society is in decline and that a collapse is inevitable. Accelerationists want to hasten this supposed societal decline and seize control in the power vacuum following a societal collapse.

Their focus on violence, and potentially terrorism, as tools of societal change makes accelerationists an immediate security threat. As opposed to accelerationists, “traditional” political extremists usually focus on joining politics and getting elected in order to reshape society in their image. However, accelerationist efforts to change the political system are direct threats to the lives and health of the citizens.

Several Slovak citizens were identified as sympathisers of accelerationism. These persons were active online, communicating the need for violence and terror as catalysts for societal change. They disseminated manuals for the creation of explosives and weapons, and celebrated perpetrators of terrorist acts inspired by the ideology of accelerationism. The mutual cooperation with law enforcement authorities resulted in the apprehension, and in some cases conviction of several persons for crimes related to terrorism and extremism.

### Terrorism threat in the external security environment of SVK

Compared to 2022, the number of threats and terrorist attacks in EU MS increased in 2023. Attacks were carried out in France, Germany, Belgium, and Spain.

Most terrorist attacks were carried out with easily accessible edged and bladed weapons. An automatic assault rifle was used in one case (shooting of Swedish football fans in BRUSSELS in October 2023). No sophisticated or high-profile attacks with a large number of victims took place in 2023. MI did not record any real threats of a terrorist attack in SVK in 2023.

The capabilities of Islamist terrorist groups to carry out external operations outside of conflict zones remained limited during the assessed period. However, ties to Islamist terrorist groups, especially to the Afghan branch of IS, ISLAMIC STATE KHORASAN PROVINCE (ISKP) were identified among apprehended persons involved in planning attacks in EU MS.

In 2023, the threat of terrorism was directly influenced by the number of persons released from prison, who were sentenced for terrorism, or persons who became radicalised in the prison environment. Several hundreds of such persons were released from prisons in EU MS in the past five years. The release of further hundreds of radicalised persons and persons sentenced for terrorism is expected in the mid-term horizon. The threat that these persons will carry out a terrorist attack is high.



The process of repatriating former IS fighters and their family members





## POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

In general, established political extremist organisations were in decline, because they were unable to attract new members. The so-called hybridisation of different extremist groups, or the intersection of individual ideologies and the increased presence of scientifically unbacked theories was detected in the ideology of extremist groups. An increased anti-government character of individual subjects, who in some cases strived to topple the democratic establishment and seize power in the state, was also observed.

Successor organisations of the disbanded militia Slovak Conscripts (Slovenskí branci) continued to organise paramilitary trainings for their members in 2023, collaborating in this effort with foreign paramilitary groups as well. These organisations also took steps to get officially registered as civic associations according to the Act on Citizen's Association.

Paramilitary groups trying to operate in a clandestine manner also were active in Slovak territory. Members of these groups generally disagreed with the political direction of SVK, and declared their distrust towards Slovak security forces.

Calls for armed coup d'états or violent acts against state representatives were observed in some cases. When conducting their activities

in public, members of these groups presented themselves in a manner that could lead people to falsely believe they were members of official Slovak security forces.



### Ukraine

An unspecified number of persons from third countries inclined towards extremism were accepted into the International Legion of the Territorial Defence Forces of Ukraine, including Slovak citizens. However, their number is insignificant compared to the total number of foreign volunteers fighting in these units.

Their inclination towards extremism did not affect the situation or esprit de corps of the fighting units.

### Western Balkans

The threat of a violent conflict erupting in the region is mostly connected to clashes between Serbian extremist subjects and members of the Salafi community, but also to the tense situation between Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs.

Most of the extremist subjects in the Western Balkans have strong ties to Russia and pro-Russian sentiments. Migration, support for Russia and the Kosovo question remained the most prominent factors shaping extremism in 2023.

## HARMFUL SECTARIAN GROUPS

The activity of harmful sectarian groups did not constitute a security threat for the defence sector in 2023.

However, the activity of a foreign religious movement, whose leader received a tolerated residence permit in SVK, was observed in 2023. The message of the movement is initially communicated to its sympathisers in a positive manner, focusing on community and creativity. However, after some time, it becomes strongly negative, exclusive, and apocalyptic. The messaging focuses on the end of civilisation, the speed and radicalism of actions, or even

the dehumanisation of persons who disagree with the movement's teachings.

The religious movement currently has a low number of supporters in SVK, who did not display any significant radicalisation tendencies so far. Slovak members display behaviours typical of cult members. They donated their wealth to the movement at values reaching tens of thousands of EUR, they take part in community activities, isolate from family and friends outside of the movement, and publicly share movement propaganda on social media. Generally, members of this movement are currently more of a danger to themselves rather than to society.

## ILLICIT TRADE IN DEFENCE INDUSTRY PRODUCTS

### Control of handling and trade in defence industry products

Within the framework of the Permanent Expert Group of the Ministry of Economy of SVK, MI assisted in examining the license applications of entities registered in SVK for the import, export, foreign trade and brokerage of defence industry products (DIP), including weapons and ammunition, dual-use items (DU) and other specified products (SP).

MI examined and assessed approximately 1,500 applications of eligible Slovak companies in 2023. This represents an increase by approximately one third compared to 2022.

### DIP trade in relation to Ukraine

Slovak companies submitted almost 100 license applications for exporting DIP to Ukraine and almost 70 license applications for importing DIP to SVK in 2023. The total value of DIP export applications from SVK to Ukraine was almost 1.8 billion EUR in 2023.

MI did not observe any illegal proliferation of DIP from Ukraine back to the European Economic Area or to third countries in 2023.

### Circumvention of international sanctions on exports to Russia

Sanctions on trading DIP, DU and SP to / from Russia are in place since 2014, and they are expanded every year. Three sanction packages were adopted in 2023. MI applied these packages to control mechanisms of sanctioned entities.

## MALICIOUS ACTIVITIES AND THREATS IN CYBERSPACE

Activities and threats in the national cyberspace were substantially influenced by the ongoing Russian military campaign in Ukraine in 2023. Several pro-Russian hacker and hacktivist groups carried out cyberoperations against targets in SVK, primarily with the declared reasoning of their assistance for Ukraine.

Most of these attacks were meant to limit the operation of state institution websites.

Compared to the previous year, cyberattacks in 2023 demonstrated efforts to remain undetected at a higher rate. Attackers utilised many domains, content mutations of malicious code and advanced mechanisms for obfuscating digital footprints during their cyberoperations.

### Cybersecurity incidents

Increased interest of Russian APT groups in critical transportation infrastructure in SVK was observed during the assessed period. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFA) SVK represents a long-term target of different APT groups. MI designed further measures necessary to increase the resistance of the MFA SVK internal infrastructure in 2023 as well.

The defence sector saw a growing trend of so-called phishing attacks realised through e-mails and text messages in 2023. In some cases, the attacker posed as a Slovak state institution, or used a compromised account of the target, from which they sent malicious messages in their name. Other cases included the well-known narratives of package deliveries, packages being held up by the delivery company, or a blocked transaction.

As part of the trend of gathering and publishing information through so-called

hack and leaks, pro-Russian cyber groups published several lists in 2023, some of which included members of the Slovak defence sector.

MI detected several DDoS attacks during the assessed period. The most numerous DDoS attacks targeted central state authorities. Pro-Russian hacktivist groups claimed responsibility for the attacks in most cases.

### Fulfilling tasks in the area of cybersecurity and defence

As part of warning activities, MI provided recommendations for adopting necessary measures regarding newly detected software and hardware vulnerabilities to other ministerial departments and partner entities. Simultaneously, MI identified 28 warnings and 30 lists of IP addresses to be blocked in order to prevent malicious hacker activities in the Slovak cyberspace.

281 computer security incidents were processed in the monitored IT and communication infrastructure of the defence sector and the MFA SVK in 2023. This represents an increase of over 40% compared to 2022.

### MI activity in the IT security department

MI fulfilled tasks of the specific IT and information encryption security department, as stipulated in the Act on the Protection of Classified Information. Simultaneously, it fulfilled tasks of the ministerial encryption authority.

In 2023, MI and the defence sector in general operated 3 main and 2 supplementary systems for the exchange of classified information within the framework of international cooperation with NATO and the EU.





The project of a new generation of cutting-edge IP encryptors continued in the area of the development of new national means of information encryption security. MI approved 14 new means of information encryption security to be used in the defence sector. MI operated almost 1,800 national means of information encryption security and more than 800 means of EU and NATO classified information security.

## IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND ITS ORGANISATION

The main security threat for SVK and the EU stems from migration from risk countries. Almost 300,000 migrants entered Europe through the main migration routes in 2023.

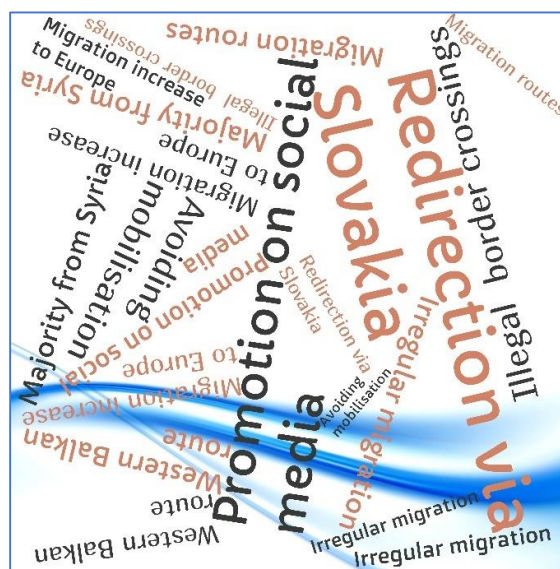
2023 saw an increase in the number of migrant arrivals on all of the three main migration routes to Europe. The number of migrant arrivals increased by 54.5% compared to 2022. The ongoing trend of a high number of migrant arrivals to Europe was in most cases caused by the worsening situation in their countries of origin, or the regions and states where they lived before leaving for Europe.

The highest number of migrants entered Europe through the so-called Central Mediterranean Route (to Italy). This route saw an increase in the number of migrants by 49.6% compared to 2022.

### Migration Situation in SVK

The number of migrants on the Eastern Mediterranean Route who then transited through the Balkan Migration Route increased in 2023. This had a negative effect

on the migration situation in SVK, with an increased number of apprehended irregular migrants (by 340% compared to 2022).



This increase was directly connected to the migration situation on the Balkan Migration Route (especially in Serbia) and the rerouting of one of its branches through Slovakia. Organised smuggling groups exploited the legislative situation in SVK<sup>2)</sup> in 2023,

<sup>2)</sup> The competent authority of the Slovak Police Force is required by law to issue a Certificate of stay in SVK to

irregular migrants, who then cannot be deported according to legislation in effect.

and the migration flow through SVK was the highest in modern history.

Most of the irregular migrants declared a Syrian origin (97%). Syria has been the main state of origin for first-time asylum seekers in EU MS since 2013.

Since Syria is not considered a safe state, persons who illegally enter SVK (or the territory of other EU MS) cannot be administratively deported and repatriated to their state of origin.

According to EU legislation, the right to asylum shall be guaranteed with due respect for the rules of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Article 19 of the EU Charter stipulates that no one may be removed, expelled or extradited to a state where there is serious risk that he or she would be subjected to the death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

MI considers smugglers using social media allowing for a certain degree of anonymity to promote their services and get new clients a new trend in irregular migration. They posted videos recorded by the migrants themselves on these social media platforms, which showed

successful arrivals to SVK. These videos served as positive advertisement for smugglers and the services they offer.

SVK continued to mostly serve as a transition state for the migrants heading to different destinations, especially Germany. Most migrants in SVK hailed from Syria. Turkey and Afghanistan were also represented among the migrants in SVK to a lesser extent.

The ongoing military conflict in Ukraine continued to influence the migration situation in SVK in 2023. Since the start of the conflict, almost 2.1 mil. people entered SVK from Ukraine, mostly Ukrainian citizens. Almost 135,000 Ukrainian citizens requested temporary protection in SVK.

The number of illegal border crossing between SVK and Ukraine outside of official border crossings connected to the ongoing conflict increased in 2023. Most of the persons were Ukrainian citizens aged 18 – 60 trying to avoid mobilisation. The number of illegal Schengen border crossings by third country migrants originating outside of Ukraine decreased due to the ongoing conflict.

## HYBRID THREATS

The trend of antagonistic information-psychological activities by foreign powers persisted in SVK in 2023. The presence of foreign power strategic propaganda containing narratives, which the Slovak population did not morally or culturally identify with, constituted a vulnerability and acted as a polarising factor in Slovak society. This situation was then exploited by Russian propaganda to spread its own narratives in SVK, which are more acceptable for Slovak society due to cultural characteristics.

Russian propaganda utilised entities and groups, as well as pro-Russian organisations and associations in SVK to promote its own strategic narratives.

Information about supposed mobilisation in SVK connected to the conflict in Ukraine resonated in different extremist groups at the start of the year. This alarming message about the mobilisation of Slovak citizens was first posted to a Facebook page.

The page purposely misinterpreted the aim of the AF SVK FATRA 2022

mobilisation exercise, which focused on the activities of select territorial entities, military units and the Slovak Post in the event of a declaration of martial law and partial mobilisation. The exercise was presented as a precursor to an upcoming conflict for which the Slovak citizenry would be mobilised. The uncontrolled spread of the alert message led to 50,000 Slovak citizens submitting declarations of refusal to perform extraordinary service to district offices.



The spread of negative propaganda against the presence of NATO units in SVK continued. The content originated in pro-Russian media, as well as internal subjects.

Some subjects activated and focused their attention to the transfers of allied units deployed in SVK, their activities while off duty, as well as on projects planned in SVK, such as monitoring and documenting military facilities. They especially focused on military facilities with NATO units present, used for repairing Ukrainian armament, training Ukrainian troops, and as transshipment points for military aid. These activities were meant to deepen the distrust towards NATO, reinforce the disapproval of Allied presence in SVK among the Slovak population, and suggest that SVK might be dragged into the military conflict in Ukraine.

While no leaks of classified information from MoD SVK were identified, sensitive AF SVK information leaked to social media. This type of information is an efficient source for foreign intelligence services.

### **GATHERING INTELLIGENCE FROM FOREIGN SOURCES AND INTELLIGENCE NECESSARY FOR ADVANCING SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS**

In the past year, MI actively took steps to obtain intelligence from domestic and foreign sources, in order to identify and eliminate risks and threats in the area of defence and security of SVK. MI actively approached the mutual development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation at the national and international level. This way, MI was able to obtain information helpful to decision makers for advancing the foreign policy interests of SVK.

MI had direct representation in some international operations in 2023. The objective of MI officers in these operations was to provide

intelligence protection and support to members of AF SVK and to identify security threats, especially in the areas of terrorism, espionage, sabotage, subversion, and organised crime and to adopt measures for their effective elimination.

MI also actively operated abroad, gathering and exchanging intelligence and professional practical capabilities with partner intelligence and security services in order to improve the professional and educational levels of MI officers and improve the quality of MI production.

MI conducted dozens of professional negotiations with foreign partners, which resulted in several successful joint intelligence operations.

The armed conflict between Israel and members of the Palestinian militant movement HAMAS negatively affected the area of operations of AF SVK members

in the UNTSO and NMI missions. The UNTSO and NMI missions were not targeted by either actor, however, they were subjected to a permanent threat of collateral damage from combat activity. No significant changes to the security environment of other international crisis management (ICM) mission and operations were observed in 2023.

## RADICALISATION OF GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS

In the area of possible radicalisation of individuals, MI obtained information about juvenile persons displaying signs of possible self-radicalisation and antisocial behaviour. One case involved a person described as a militant non-conformist, who had great influence over a mentally unstable person with self-harm tendencies.

Both persons supposedly threatened their environment with shootings, and a photo of both of them with a firearm was published on social media. This information was provided to law enforcement authorities for further examination and adoption of measures.

## INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT TO AF SVK TASKS

MI actively developed mutual cooperation, not only on the national, but mostly the international level. MI reinforced its reputation as a credible and reliable partner by supplying NATO and EU intelligence structures, as well as other international security structures and agencies with experts.

MI identified and updated security threats affecting the deployment and activities of AF SVK troops and foreign partners in SVK and abroad. MI provided intelligence support and counterintelligence protection to members of the Slovak contingent (SLOVCON) during their preparation and deployment abroad. Similarly, MI provided intelligence support to GS AF SVK and to the AF SVK Joint Operations Command. MI also provided focused intelligence training to select members of the AF SVK deployed to areas of intelligence interest

and responsibility. MI then organised debriefings meant to gather, collect and assess information from crisis regions and AF SVK areas of operational deployment.







MI provided eligible recipients with updated assessments of the security situation and security threats affecting the AF SVK deployments in ICM missions and operations. MI also developed recommendations for further AF SVK activities and involvement in ICM missions and operations, with regard to the adequacy,

trustworthiness, and credibility of the AF SVK and SVK in the areas of defence and security.

MI closely cooperated with select AF SVK intelligence and reconnaissance units and continuously provided expert and technical assistance to the AF SVK throughout the entire training cycle.

## **LEAKS OR THREATS TO CLASSIFIED INFORMATION**

MI ensured the protection of classified MoD SVK information in 2023. No suspicions of unlawful handling of classified information were identified under the responsibility of a MoD SVK specific department. MI inspected the administrative, personnel, physical, and facility security and the performance of those responsible for the protection of classified information (hereafter "PCI").

MI conducted 19 inspections related to PCI in 2023. Simultaneously, 3 inspections started in 2022 were concluded in 2023. 13 of the inspected entities showed no signs of violating PCI regulations. PCI inspection found shortcomings in the areas of personnel security, administrative security,

and performance of those responsible for PCI. Supporting inspection documents were forwarded to relevant administrative authorities for further proceedings.

11 internal MI inspections were conducted in 2023, 1 of which will continue in 2024. The inspections focused on the compliance with service and work discipline, the control of storage and integrity of non-electronic classified registry records, including international exchange and cooperation, the control of MI members' service badges, the audit of procurement within MI and follow-up controls of the implementation of corrective measures.

## **INTELLIGENCE-TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

MI actively participated in building classified AF SVK information technology, the certification and accreditation of technical means of processing national classified information and the classified information of foreign powers, and within the scope of its responsibilities facilitated access to the information systems of other Slovak ministries.

MI continued the implementation of the anti-drone protection project in 2023.

Anti-drone sensors were installed in select locations in SVK, which recorded 227,000 incidents. 65,000 unauthorised UAV flights at altitudes above 120 metres were recorded.

Some of the most significant incidents are the 9,000 UAV flights near the Milan Rastislav Štefánik airport in BRATISLAVA, which is 8,000 more flights than in 2022.



These flights may constitute a threat to its operation and security. No security threats

were observed in the vast majority of UAV flights in other locations in SVK.

MI members actively participated in the legislative processes regarding the operation of drones, in AF SVK development projects in this area, and in expert interministerial groups.

MI conducted over 170 technical-safety inspections and deployments of radiofrequency jammers for MFA SVK, Slovak Embassies abroad, and in MI and MoD SVK facilities.

## **IMINT AND GEOINT CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT**

MI continued to develop its IMINT<sup>3)</sup> and GEOINT<sup>4)</sup> capabilities in 2023.

The development mainly focused on the areas of personnel (staffing and training), data (expanding and improving access to sources of data, especially satellite imagery), and analysis production (improving the informational value by implementing new processes and increasing the number of intelligence reports).

In addition to being used to monitor military activities, conduct battle damage assessment, and identify irregular migration, MI IMINT reports were also used as objective evidence to verify facts due to the amount of published unverified information. Partners in the NATO intelligence community were also provided with select IMINT and GEOINT analyses.



<sup>3)</sup> IMINT (Imagery Intelligence) provides intelligence from vast, often inaccessible areas through exploiting imagery data in order to obtain a source able to provide relevant information about the area/object of interest.

<sup>4)</sup> GEOINT (Geospatial Intelligence) provides intelligence derived from the combination of geospatial data containing imagery with other intelligence in order to describe, assess and visually depict geographically localised activities on Earth.

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

MI international cooperation primarily focused on the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine in 2023. In addition to the Slovak security environment, the proximity and global effects of the ongoing conflict affected the security environments of other EU and NATO MS as well.

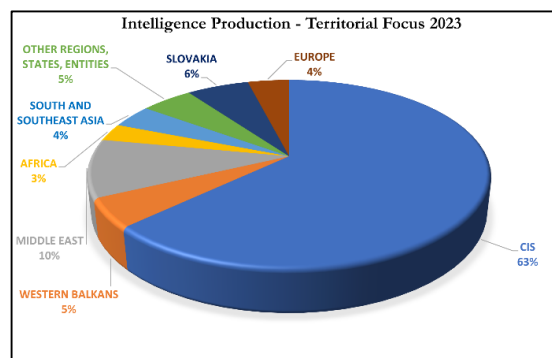
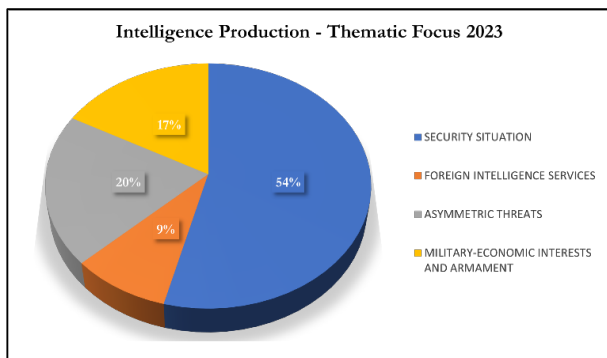
International cooperation was mostly conducted through personal meetings on a bilateral or multilateral level. Cooperation was conducted at the director level, as well as the expert level with long-term stable partners.

Equally important was the active participation of MI on NATO and EU activities and initiatives, as well as the development and improvement of cooperation with other foreign partners in areas of mutual interest. In 2023, MI also organised a meeting between the directors and experts of military intelligence

and security services of V4 states, which took place as part of the Slovak presidency in the Visegrad Group.

The geographic proximity of the conflict in Ukraine, and especially the ability of MI to provide relevant intelligence to partners in a timely manner manifested in the increased quantity and quality of exchanged and shared intelligence between partners. MI reaffirmed its position as a reliable and valuable partner in the international environment in 2023.

In 2023, special attention was dedicated to assessing the Russian military campaign in Ukraine, the effects of the HAMAS attacks on Israel, the activities of Russian intelligence services, open expressions of extremism and terrorism, as well as the migration waves moving through Slovak territory.



## HUMAN RESOURCES

The staffing level of MI personnel stood at 70.42% of the planned staff an increase of 0.07% compared to 2022.

76.65% of MI personnel are professional soldiers, 23.25% are civilian public service employees. 75.7% of MI personnel is male, 24.3% female.

The average age of MI personnel is 44 years, and 73% achieved higher education.

5% of the soldiers serving in MI were dismissed from service. 7,6% public service employees terminated their employment in MI.



The number of applications for admission into state service in MI increased in 2023 compared to 2022 as a result of publishing job vacancies on the MI web

domain. 18.6% of applicants successfully completed the onboarding process, 41.9% were rejected, and 39.5% did not yet finish their onboarding process in 2023.

## **BUDGET**

The budget administrator of the MoD chapter set the binding MI income indicators at 88,200.00 EUR and binding MI expenditure indicators at 123,790,957.00 EUR.

The binding budgetary indicator – expenditure – was increased by 9,057,278.00 EUR in 2023, or by 7.31% to a total amount of 132,848,265.00 EUR.

The budgetary limits were increased to replenish funding for mandatory personnel expenditures and unplanned investment projects.

As of 31 December 2024, the MI expenditure budget consumption in the main budget category 600 – Current Expenditure stood at 112,112,087.32 EUR, and in the main budget category 700 – Capital Expenditure it stood at 20,715,099.94 EUR.