

Slovakia Defence and Security Report Q1 2011

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Abstracts

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Slovakia is a secure and increasingly affluent country almost entirely surrounded by fellow NATO members. While organised crime, ethnic tensions and protests against government fiscal cuts have all been features of the political scene in recent years, internally and externally Militarily, Slovakia is concentrating its international forces in the battle to stabilise Afghanistan, a priority for its NATO allies. The number of Slovak soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan will increase from around 300 to more than 520, though no timeframe has been laid out, the Deutsche Presse Agentur reported.

In October 2010, meanwhile, the Slovak parliament unanimously approved a government plan to withdraw all 140 Slovak troops from Kosovo by the end of the year. While Slovakia has in the past identified Balkan stability as a major plank of its foreign policy, it does not see the need to maintain a force in Kosovo, despite remaining tensions in some areas (albeit those where other foreign troops are present). Notably, Slovakia, wary of its own restive Hungarian population, has not recognised Kosovo's independence, and thus its troops would not be deployed to defend the region's sovereignty in the event of a conflict.

Recent years have seen defence spending decline, a trend that will continue in 2011, before a respectable recovery. In 2009, spending was slashed 9.71% in dollar terms to US\$1.327bn as the government looked to rein in expenditure. In 2010, BMI estimates that a further 1.27% reduction was made, taking spending to US\$1.310bn, or US\$241.10 per capita. In constant price terms, spending fell by 7% in 2009 and 3% in 2010. However, defence flatlined at 3.9% of public expenditure, suggesting that the government neither prioritised defence spending, nor saw it as an area of spending that could be reduced more easily than others. Similarly, defence spend has remained at 1.5% of GDP.

For 2011, BMI forecasts a further, but very slight, decline of 0.31% to US\$1.306bn; in constant price terms, this is another 4% cut. Defence spending will remain at 1.5% of GDP and 3.9% of government outlay.

Over the next decade, we expect dollar terms growth to pick up considerably to 9.48% in 2012, moderating to 5.29% in 2013, before stabilising in the 6.45-7.17% band until 2019. In constant price terms, this sees growth of 7% in 2012 and 3% in 2013 and unspectacular but steady growth of between 2.97% and 4.07% from then until the end of the decade. As a proportion of GDP, defence expenditure will remain 25% below NATO's recommended level, at 1.5%, throughout the forecast period, though as a proportion of government spending, it will rise steadily to 4.3% – still below 2008 levels. By 2019, BMI expects defence expenditure to total US\$2.220bn, or US\$406.90 per capita."

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