**Ability to fight in largescale conflict must be Czech Army’s priority, says chief of staff**

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[https://english.radio.cz/ability-fight-largescale-conflict-must-be-czech-armys-priority-says-chief-staff-8767816?\_gl=1\*owbrli\*\_up\*MQ..\*\_ga\*NjI0NDMwNzkxLjE2ODU5MDc0MzQ.\*\_ga\_NHXTP7RWNV\*MTY4NTkwNzQzMy4xLjAuMTY4NTkwNzQ4MS4wLjAuMA](https://english.radio.cz/ability-fight-largescale-conflict-must-be-czech-armys-priority-says-chief-staff-8767816?_gl=1*owbrli*_up*MQ..*_ga*NjI0NDMwNzkxLjE2ODU5MDc0MzQ.*_ga_NHXTP7RWNV*MTY4NTkwNzQzMy4xLjAuMTY4NTkwNzQ4MS4wLjAuMA)..

The Czech Army must prioritise being able to fight in a largescale war against a sophisticated opponent, the Chief of the Czech Army’s General Staff Karel Řehka said on Tuesday at the armed forces’ annual meeting of commanders. Despite next year’s budget being nearly double that what it was five years ago, General Řehka said that the army’s capabilities will still be lacking in the near future and called therefore for “brutal effectiveness”.

General Řehka said that Czechia would be immediately affected if a conflict were to arise between NATO and Russia, with the Czech Army being an active participant from the first minute.

*“Czechia’s territory, our infrastructure and our citizens would be a target for enemy activity across all domains. It is also good to keep in mind that many of the weapons systems that are destroying Ukraine today have a sufficient range to hit our territory as well. The situation is serious and we need to react.”*

Stressing that he was not trying to create a panic, the general told Czech Television later on Tuesday that he does not believe a war between NATO and Russia is likely. However, the threat cannot be dismissed and it is therefore necessary to be prepared, according to Řehka, who replaced General Aleš Opata as army chief of staff in July of this year.

Abilities to counter asymmetric threats, such as terrorist attacks, need to be maintained. However, the general stated that combat capability is the chief priority of the Czech Army. To achieve this goal, a state of readiness will be needed across all domains, not just in specific fields of specialisation, the chief of staff said, listing five priorities for the armed forces.

*“We have to take a look at our scenarios and defence plans, at how realistic they are and how much they correspond to the current situation and to our resources. We have to create a vision of how the Czech Army will be able to wage warfare in the future. It is necessary to speed up the modernisation process. Our armed forces are also not fully manned. The army is ageing and this needs to be changed systematically. Furthermore, I want to contribute to the cultivation of a strategic discussion about the defence of Czechia.”*

The Czech Army a largescale modernisation process. While still behind the NATO threshold of 2 percent of GDP, the budget of the Ministry of Defence has been steadily increasing over the past several years and is set to lie at CZK 111.8 billion in 2023 with the government aiming to reach the 2 percent target by 2024. Although some analysts have said that this goal is overly optimistic.

Much of this money is being spent on new equipment, such as Ceasar howitzers or TITUS armoured vehicles. Securing new infantry fighting vehicles remains the army’s chief procurement priority, the general said, but he added that new equipment is needed by all of the branches of the armed forces in order to fulfil their basic functions. He also stressed that, despite the budget increase, the army will still not have enough resources to tackle all potential problems in an ideal manner and that it will therefore also have to *“strictly prioritise and be brutally effective”*.

It is not the first time that a high ranking NATO member state general has expressed the need for readiness in a prospective future conventional conflict. Britain’s chief of staff, Sir Patrick Sanders, said in June that it was *“dangerous to assume that Ukraine is a limited conflict”* and stressed the need to accelerate army modernisation plans.

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