INTERVIEW WITH PROF. VLADO AZINOVIC

WORKSHOP ON FOREIGN TERRORIST FIGHTERS

ANNUAL MEETING OF PARLIAMENTARIANS
On 04 October 2019 the representatives of the Gaminger Initiative, the Union of Reserve Officers Associations, led by Cdr. (R) Giuseppe Filippo Imbalzano, President, visited RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation.

The visit to RACVIAC was a part of GAMING II-2019, hosted by the Croatian Reserve Officers Association, and held in Zagreb and Samobor on 03-06 October 2019.

The guests were welcomed by RACVIAC Deputy Director, BG Gordana Garašić, and members of RACVIAC staff.

Following a presentation that covers the history, mission, annual Programme, and accomplishments of the Centre, RACVIAC Deputy Director provided additional explanations related to the development and evaluation of its Programme of activities emphasizing that over the years it has been changing and evolving in order to reflect the Members’ needs and requests. BG emphasized that the Centre has been serving as an excellent platform for networking and building of security and confidence among the countries in the SEE region for almost two decades.

During the discussion that followed questions related to the Programme of activities and future projects of the Centre were raised.

The Gaminger Initiative is a regional, middle European platform, focused on important issues of European Security Policy and military affairs. It is a mutual platform for Reserve Officers and Officers’ Associations of its member countries: Republic of Croatia, Czech Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Italian Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Republic of Slovenia and Switzerland.
RACVIAC takes part in RASR Workshop

RACVIAC Activity Manager Ms Beata Varga participated in the Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (RASR) Meeting and 11th RASR Workshop in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Hercegovina on 07-10 October 2019.

The event gathered about 40 physical and stockpile security management (PSSM) practitioners from South East Europe: representatives from the ministries of defence of AL, BA, MD, ME and MK, as well as representatives of the donor countries and International organizations involved in this area, such as EU, UNDP-SEESAC, UNDP BA, OSCE BA, COM EUFOR, SAS, NSPA, ITF, GICHD/AMAT.

The PSSM experts discussed and shared good practices on the progress and challenges related to conventional weapons and munitions stockpile reduction in South East Europe. Additionally, they had a chance to see a demonstration of the BA’s ammunition demilitarization capacities and in particular of the newly established capabilities at the Laboratory for Chemical and Thermal Analysis of Ammunition.

The RASR initiative was established in 2009 by the US State Department and is currently funded by the European Union. It aims for a coordinated, regional approach to address the threats posed by excess, unstable, loosely secured or otherwise at-risk stockpiles of conventional weapons and munitions in South East Europe. RASR draws upon regional stockpile management knowledge from partners in the region and the global expertise of International organizations and initiatives acting also as RASR Steering committee members such as ITF Enhancing Human Security, NATO Support and Procurement Agency, RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, Small Arms Survey and SEESAC.

MG (ret.) Bazo participates in the 2019 SEDM Ministerial Meeting

RACVIAC Director MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo took part in the South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) Meeting in Bucharest on 16 October 2019.

The Meeting, held under the Albanian Chairmanship and chaired by Mr Petro KOÇI, Deputy Minister of Defence of Albania, gathered ministers and representatives from SEDM Nations, the SEEBRIG Commander and observers from NATO HQ, UNDP and RACVIAC.

The Meeting focused on promoting enduring peace, stability and security in the region of South-Eastern Europe (SEE), as well the achievements obtained within the SEDM process.

The Meeting also marked the celebration of the 20th anniversary of SEEBRIG, which is a unique platform for cooperation, mutual training, exchanging of ideas and lessons learned.

In his statement MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo said: “The number of challenges and issues that our world is facing today are growing rapidly and they are becoming more and more complicated and interconnected with each other and I fear they will stay with us for some time. Our task is to effectively address them and to be prepared to deal with them. A regional approach to security issues is a crucial element of peace and stability serving as a tool for increasing cooperation, openness and transparency amongst our countries.”

At the end of the Meeting SEDM nations reaffirmed their commitment to intensify good neighborly relations and strengthen political and military cooperation.

On the margins of the SEDM Ministerial Meeting MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo had a meeting with the Minister of National Defence of Romania, H.E. Gabriel-Beniamin Leș.
RACVIAC MTT conducted the 1st GToT Course for the Portuguese Army

The RACVIAC Mobile Training Team (MTT) conducted the first “Gender Training of the Trainers Course” for the Portuguese Armed Forces in Lisbon on 17-31 October 2019.

The importance of the gender aspect in military operations had prompted NATO, as well as other national and multinational defence organisations to address, regulate and implement the integration of the gender perspective, both on the duty level and on the level of participation in Peace Support Operations (PSO). According to the Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-led Operations and Missions (2013) a very important recommendation to NATO and all current and future operational partner nations is to “train trainers on UNSCR 1325 and gender mainstreaming, with the objective of supporting on-the-job training”.

In line with the abovementioned NATO recommendation and realizing that the integration of the gender perspective is a valuable tool in order to increase operational effectiveness at home or abroad, the Portuguese Armed Forces General Staff requested from RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation to prepare and organize the “Gender Training of the Trainers Course” for their armed forces officers.

The purpose of the Course was to provide participants with the knowledge about international frameworks and guidelines in regulating gender in military operations and missions as well as skills and competencies required to effectively plan, conduct and evaluate the training of military personnel in both the national and international context.

This event was an indirect result of a series of activities launched in 2013 aimed at promotion of gender equality policies and equal opportunities in the security sector that RACVIAC is organizing in partnership with the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM) and the Croatian Armed Forces. This series of annual activities yielded the gender trainers’ pool of forces in the SEE region.

For the purpose of this specific Course RACVIAC MTT consisted of trainers coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Col Fahir Žilić), Croatia (LtC Dalibor Mesić, Cpt Robert Karaman), North Macedonia (LtC Strašo Stojčevski) and the Centre itself (Maj Marija Ćičak). The MTT was led by Col Boženko Đevoić, Dean of the Croatian Military Academy.

As far as the Portuguese counterparts go their team consisted of Maj Diana Morais, Gender Advisor at the Army...
General Staff and Chair-elect of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, who was in charge of the overall Course direction. The Portuguese Military Academy through its Erasmus office and Centre for Research, Development and Innovation (CINAMIL) provided invaluable logistical and administrative support that ensured the smooth management of the event.

This two-week event was held on the Military Academy premises and was opened by MajGen João Vieria Borges, Commandant of the Military Academy. The Course gathered 21 participants from all three branches of the Portuguese Armed Forces, the Army, Air force and Navy. Prior to their arrival the students were obliged to complete the NATO "ADL 169" online Course, "Improving Operational Effectiveness by Integrating the Gender Perspective". Hence they arrived with a common level of knowledge about the subject matter.

The Course Schedule was based on the RACVIAC resident GToT Course as a 10-day training event designed as a combination of lectures, corresponding individual and syndicate work, followed by a practical outdoor exercise and the final exam.

At the end all participants successfully completed the Course thus confirming their skills and competencies as gender instructors and trainers.

This particular training activity was an excellent example of high level of cooperation and support achieved between RACVIAC and its Members in utilizing mutual resources, capacities and knowledge in order to train, coach and mentor other institutions or organizations.

63. Meeting of the Sub-Regional Consultative Commission

Colonel Servet Aya, Programme Manager for CSE Pillar, as RACVIAC representative, attended the '63. Meeting of the Sub-Regional Consultative Commission of the Agreement on Sub-Regional Armament Control' held in Vienna, Hofburg Palace, on 29-30 October 2019.

Besides the delegates of the signatory countries the representatives of the contact group countries from Germany, France, Italy, Russia, and USA as well as RACVIAC attended the Meeting.

RACVIAC has been making a valuable contribution to the Agreement since 2001 by organizing the "Dayton Article IV - Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control Orientation Course". Col Servet Aya took the opportunity to present the Dayton Article IV Orientation Course conducted in 2019 and provided detailed information regarding the upcoming 2020 Course in order to identify and detect the new requirements that could be addressed within RACVIAC Arms Control activities’ framework.

The Meeting focused on the implementation of the Agreement and its results. According to the Meeting Agenda information on the inspections carried out in 2019, the quotas realized and number of guest inspectors, were presented. Allocation of inspection quotas for 2020 was also agreed on by the signatory countries.
Regional PSI Workshop held in Montenegro

The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) Workshop, organized by the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, was held in Podgorica, Montenegro on 5-7 November 2019.

The aim of the Workshop was to enhance awareness of the PSI and to foster regional cooperation in the domain of countering weapons of mass destruction.

The Workshop explored authorities and capabilities to interdict suspected transfers of conventional or weapons of mass destruction-related commodities and materials to entities of proliferation concern. It comprised informative briefings, facilitated discussions and a scenario-based table top exercise.

The Workshop gathered around 60 participants, middle- and senior-level civilian and military security managers with expertise in counter-proliferation, border security policy and implementation, from 17 countries.

RACVIAC closely follows and supports regional PSI workshops, based on the already developed synergy with DTRA and PSI within its C-WMD Network project. The PSI announced a thematic approach to events and table top exercises in the future, as well as their willingness to maintain a strategic link with RACVIAC.

Regional SALW Roadmap Coordination Meeting held in Tirana

The “2nd Regional Coordination Meeting for a Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024” took place in Tirana, Albania on 19-22 November 2019.

The purpose of the Meeting was to take stock of the national progress, challenges and needs as per specific goals of the Roadmap, to discuss contributions from the International organizations engaged in Arms Control in the SEE region and donor support in countering the proliferation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons within the Roadmap framework. The main findings from the reports based on the Roadmap Key Performance Indicators and Roadmap Goals were presented at the Meeting.

There were more than 100 participants, representatives of SALW Commissions in the Western Balkans which are beneficiaries of the Roadmap, and representatives of International organizations engaged in Arms Control in the region, as well as key donors and stakeholders. Ms Beata Varga, Activity Manager in CSE Pillar, represented RACVIAC at the Meeting.
10th Meeting of the UNODC Programme’s Steering Committee for SEE

RACVIAC Planning and Liaison Officer Col Josef Pulko participated in the “10th Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee” regarding the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe in Vienna, Austria on 29 November 2019.

At the Meeting the UNODC Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe 2020-2023 was launched.

UNODC’s overall objectives in the region are to reduce transnational organized crime and related threats, increase safety and expand coverage of treatment and prevention of drug use and dependence. It also aims to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies in line with the broader EU accession priorities as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The UNODC Regional Programme for South-Eastern Europe (2020-2023) was developed together with the governments of the region to ensure national ownership and maximum impact. It aims to deliver outcomes through targeted, integrated work in three sub-programmes: (1) Support to law enforcement, enhanced border security and related topics; (2) Strengthening the fight against organized crime and countering illicit financial flows; (3) Drug use prevention and treatment of drug use disorders. This also includes a cross-cutting pillar on strengthening research capacity, policy and monitoring, with respect for human rights and a gender perspective as well as cooperation with the civil society and other emerging thematic areas.

More than 60 participants attended the Meeting: members of the Steering Committee, ambassadors and senior representatives from the countries of the SEE region, partner countries and the donor community, International and regional organizations such as EU DG NEAR, FRONTEX, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, OSCE, INTERPOL, the Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Secretariat, and many others that support UNODC’s work in the region.

RACVIAC Director takes part in the 4th Regional Security Coordination Conference

RACVIAC Director MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo took part in the 4th Regional Security Coordination Conference in South East Europe (SEE) titled “Regional Response to Security Challenges in SEE” that was organized in Trieste, Italy on 5 December 2019.

The Conference was co-organized by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Italy, in cooperation with four leading partners: the Integrative Internal Security Governance Initiative (IISG), the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) and the SEE Check - Regional Network against Disinformation and Media Manipulation.
Unlike previous years when CT and P/CVE efforts were at the centre of the debate, this year the Conference put a focus on a broader range of key issues in regional security cooperation such as youth radicalization, disinformation, SALW control and illegal migration.

High level representatives of the relevant actors and stakeholders in the realm of regional security of SEE participated in the panel sessions. They included the EU institutions and bodies, international and regional organizations and initiatives, as well as the representatives of the donor community.

Christmas Donation to the Special Hospital for Chronic Diseases of Children

On the occasion of the upcoming Christmas and New Year holidays Director of RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation Major General (ret.) Jeronim Bazo, on behalf of RACVIAC, made a donation to the Special Hospital for Chronic Diseases of Children in Gornja Bistra on 16 December 2019.

By submitting a donation RACVIAC Director General Bazo said that it represents a symbolic act of making the daily life of the little patients more humane. He added that RACVIAC, since its establishment in 2000, always tries to be affiliated to the local community and to support those in need.

The donation was received by the hospital principal Dr Renato Mittermayer who expressed gratitude for receiving it saying that the hospital takes care about 107 children at the moment, and that 70 of them lack parental care. He added all types of donations to the hospital, whether be it food, medical or hygienic material, or volunteer work, are more than welcome.
The foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) phenomenon has been a growing threat to many countries, especially in the last couple of years. What is the current projection, how many FTFs are there nowadays in Syria and Iraq? How many of them that come from the region have been detained there?

The emergence of foreign fighters is not a new phenomenon, and we can observe it throughout history of human conflicts in many parts of the world. The context and motivation were typically different, but the essence was always the same – individuals and groups had been traveling outside their countries or territories of origin, to fight alongside a warring faction, or in pursuit of their own interests and goals, in conflicts that had been fought elsewhere. Such outside involvement had also produced a number of similar consequences for many conflicts as they had typically (a) lasted longer, (b) were more brutal as foreigners had little or no compassion toward their local enemies and innocent civilians alike, and, finally, (3) the presence of foreign elements in an internal conflict had always hampered efforts aimed at establishing or implementing peace agreements. With the benefit of hindsight, we can now estimate that up to 50,000 individuals from almost 120 countries and territories (out of the current 193 UN member states) had traveled to Syria and Iraq from 2011 until 2018. After the military defeat of ISIS (Daesh) in March 2019 a few thousand FTFs and their families remained in the conflict zone, mostly in prisons or refugee camps. Among them are a few hundred persons from South-Eastern Europe or diasporas from the region in the West. The bulk of these individuals are women and children. In addition, as is often quite forgotten, there are also a few dozen individuals from the region associated with ISIS's main rival group in Syria - Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), previously known as al-Nusra Front. They are still at large, in and around the town and province of Idlib in North-western Syria, close to the border with Turkey.

RACVIAC, in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized “Workshop on Developing Strategies on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Foreign Terrorist Fighters” in November 2019. One of the speakers was Professor Vlado Azinović and we used the opportunity to speak with him about FTF phenomenon, and challenges related to their rehabilitation and reintegration.

Some reports identify South-Eastern Europe (SEE) as one of the main sources of FTFs, along with Western Europe and the Middle East. What are the motivational factors for these individuals to join a terrorist group?

The foreign fighter phenomenon has been researched extensively over the last few years, and dozens of relevant studies and research projects on the issue have been published. These efforts typically recognize at least two types of motives, associated with the so-called push and pull factors (terms borrowed from the theory of migrations) but others as well. Notwithstanding these efforts, and immense body of expertise behind them, it is only when you get to
meet former foreign fighters, when you talk to them, when you meet their families, look into their personal police files, their school and medical records, that an understanding of their personal circumstances and motives really begins to emerge. And what you get in the end, and in real life, typically doesn't match the usual academic or theoretical interpretations. Every single case is specific and different from others. There are, of course, a number of commonalities, but for us to assume that we can understand individual motivation for and drivers of radicalization and recruitment for terrorist groups, from hundreds of miles afar and solely based on our readings of what other people had written about it, is as ill-advised as it is presumptuous.

It is common knowledge that the current generation of terrorists is technologically savvy and active on social media. Terrorist groups are leveraging the internet and social media for recruitment and creating a global security threat. How can we control or suppress this? Can we use it to monitor and trace their activities?

It is obviously a challenge we are still trying to cope with. Regrettfully, the unparalleled benefits of the Internet and social media sometimes seem overshadowed by the level of abuse they suffer from. Until recently the unregulated nature of these platforms has enabled many individuals and groups to use them extensively for racially, ethnically and religiously motivated hate speech, as well as dissemination of and recruitment for extremist ideologies and groups. There are a number of ongoing efforts aimed at curbing the trend globally, and I can only hope that they will be successful.

‘Most of EU member states are rather reluctant to accept their citizens detained or imprisoned in Syria and Iraq. In rare instances of such deportations, these countries opted to accept just orphaned children, and in some cases, a few women’

Violent extremists have suffered defeats in Syria and Iraq earlier this year and there are many who are returning or have to be returned home or travelling to the region. They pose a great security risk. Some of them are using fraudulent identity documents to reach their destinations undetected. On the other hand there is no consensus among the countries of origin to receive them back. How can we respond to this challenge?

Different countries are responding in different ways. Typically, most of EU member states are rather reluctant to accept their citizens detained or imprisoned in Syria and Iraq. In rare instances of such deportations, these countries opted to accept just orphaned children, and in some cases, a few women. More often Western governments went on to cancel citizenships of their FTFs or supported the establishment of international courts that would try their nationals for involvement in foreign fighting in other countries. Iraq has already tried a number of EU citizens some of whom have been sentenced to death. However, these trials have been criticized for a lack of a due process and violation of human rights. The US administration has repeatedly asked Western allies to take their citizens back to their respective countries, but only a few have responded favorably. In the region Kosovo accepted 32 women, 74 children and 4 men in the spring of 2019. Also, in late December 6 women, 12 children and 7 men were repatriated to Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, for both countries, this is just a beginning of a long and uncertain process aimed at prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of these individuals.

‘Last few workshops on FTFs held in RACVIAC focused on rehabilitation and reintegration. What does this mean in practice? What does this process include? Where are the main gaps?’

This is obviously a new challenge for all countries that have accepted their returnees, and we will have to adapt to it. Very personalized, tailor-made approaches, adjusted to local contexts would be needed to address these challenges successfully, and prevent them from evolving into risks or threats.

Among those returning there are many women and children who might or might not have been involved in violent activities. Children are an especially vulnerable group. What about them? Can you elaborate more on this?

Most of the children are actually victims of their parents’ bad decisions in life, or were simply born in Syria. Therefore, they should be primarily treated as victims, regardless of the fact that we now know that some children have received military trainings at the age of six, while some have allegedly taken part in atrocities and war crimes. The treatment of these children should be thoughtfully considered and carried out delicately with full respect of their rights and existing national legislations that treat juvenile delinquency.
‘Evidence gathering, and identifying and bringing witnesses to testify in trials, are oftentimes the greatest challenges for many prosecutors’

You are serving as an expert witness for prosecution in terrorism related cases before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. What are the main challenges in the process of evidence gathering and investigation of offences related to FTFs?

Typically, judges and juries appreciate an abundance of evidence that can help them decide, beyond reasonable doubt, that the indicted individuals had indeed joined some of the terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq and participated in conflict there. To secure a conviction, prosecutors should therefore present a witness or witnesses who could corroborate such claims. This is not always easy. In order to secure convictions, prosecutors sometimes opt to strike plea bargains in exchange for lesser sentencing. Such deals are not only welcomed by the general public but legal experts as well, as it is believed that such rulings undermine the deterring impact they are supposed to make. So, evidence gathering, and identifying and bringing witnesses to testify in trials, are oftentimes the greatest challenges for many prosecutors.

National legislation in the SEE region varies from one country to another. What are the most common offences that FTFs can be prosecuted for?

Many countries have over the last few years criminalized foreign fighting as such, so some of the FTFs could be indicted for actual participation in an international armed conflict or joining terrorist groups there. Also, and depending on circumstances in each particular case, individuals could be prosecuted for a variety of FTF-related criminal offences such as financing, recruiting, facilitating, training, providing material support, inciting terrorist or foreign fighting activities.

In recent times there were many discussions and talks held on the possible new wave of illegal migrations that might include a significant number of FTFs coming to the EU. One of your books recently published is titled “Waiting Game - the Western Balkans and Returning Foreign Fighters”. What do you think, is South-East Europe again (now) in a “waiting game” phase?

We probably are, as we are at the receiving end of a process that we cannot influence in any significant way, but can only try to mitigate and cushion the blow of such migrations.
The goal of the crisis management system is to provide protection from all hazards for the citizens, property and national governments. Effective crisis management includes a functional approach to all emergencies, cooperative planning, appropriate use of resources, and shared responsibilities among three levels: national, regional, and local.

The “Crisis and Disaster Management Workshop” was conducted by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation in collaboration with the Division of Risk Management and Societal Safety of Lund University, Sweden and the Faculty of Political Science Zagreb, Croatia on 29-30 October 2019.

The purpose of this Workshop was to contribute to the improvements of crisis/disaster command and control systems of RACVIAC Members by providing the platform for interaction among national crisis/disaster management and civil protection experts responsible for responding to natural and man-made disasters and catastrophes, enabling them to present and analyse their national crisis and disaster management models.

The two-day Workshop focused on crisis/disaster management command and control (C2) concepts, related inter-agency cooperation, best practices, challenges and lessons learned.

The event gathered more than 30 national crisis/disaster/emergency management and civil protection experts from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey and Kosovo*.

The Workshop was designed as a peer-to-peer event aimed at examining various C2 systems by presenting and analyzing national C2 concepts of participating states.

The Workshop was opened with a Welcome address by RACVIAC Director, MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo, who emphasized: “In today’s world we are facing a high level of uncertainty, complexity and changeability of crises and disasters. In order to be able to successfully deal with those complex challenges, the national crisis response systems must be managed by efficient command and control functions and structures.

Understanding the importance of determining the most appropriate level of centralization of decision making, ensuring the smooth communication flow of information and orders among the stakeholders involved, overcoming the inter-agency rivalries and defining an adequate degree of their integration are the crucial prerequisites for timely and effective crisis responses”, he underlined.

The first Introductory speech was given by Mr Filip Dragović, PhD (UNDP Regional Advisor and President of the Board at Institute for Security Policies), who spoke about the importance of active contingency planning, cooperation and coordination among all actors involved at the local and national level. He emphasized that good crisis management

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might not prevent a crisis but can help to reduce the damage and loss of human lives.

The next speaker was Mr Vlatko Jovanovski, Head of Secretariat of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South-Eastern Europe, who provided an explanation on the history, mission, goals and main activities of the Initiative aimed at fostering regional cooperation and coordination in disaster preparedness and prevention for natural and man-made disasters in South-Eastern Europe.

Professor Mo Hamza, PhD, Professor at the Division of Risk Management and Societal Safety at Lund University, Sweden, stressed the importance of proper command, collaboration, direction and coordination function and effects. He also expanded on operational leadership by describing 3 approaches: exceptional individual, structured and shared leadership. He concluded that there is no need to aim for a perfect or ideal leadership model as it does not exist and that the most effective approach will vary with each context.

The gathering of information, proper assessment and situation analysis, objectives and task determination, cooperative planning and implementation of the necessary actions for prevention, appropriate use of resources, and shared responsibilities at all levels were underlined as critical for effective crisis management.

The Second day continued with the national presentations of C2 challenges, best practices and lessons learned.

The challenges that were emphasized are: low ability to manage large-scale disaster risks (earthquake), lack of expertise at some levels, ownership of the process, different terminology in different sectors, inadequate communication systems, and low involvement of the public in disaster and emergency management processes.

All national representatives agreed that better interagency cooperation and communication, interoperability of the SOPs for national and international response and, in essence, any activity conducted in a pre-disaster phase that builds trust, friendship and professional working relationships between key disaster personnel will facilitate an improved disaster response.

It was also underlined that regional cooperation can be strengthened through inter-agency meetings, joint planning and training exercises as well as routine sharing of information and reports.
Fifth NSDA Workshop conducted

02-06 December 2019, RACVIAC, Croatia

As the world’s centre for cooperation in the nuclear field that seeks to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies the organization has adopted a comprehensive approach to nuclear security.

In one of its Nuclear Security Series Implementing Guides IAEA says that this approach recognizes that an effective national nuclear security regime builds on: the implementation of relevant international legal instruments; information protection; physical protection; material accounting and control; detection of and response to trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive material; national response plans; and contingency measures.

The Nuclear Security Detection Architecture Awareness (NSDA) Workshop, titled »Regional Pilot Workshop on Evaluation of Nuclear Security Detection Architecture«, organized together with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Republic of Croatia, was conducted on 02-06 December 2019.

This Workshop was the fifth one in the NSDA series launched in 2016 as a part of RACVIAC C-WMD Network project activities aimed at promoting nuclear security detection architecture principles and concepts.

The purpose of this NSDA workshop was to enable the participants to evaluate the effectiveness of nuclear security detection architecture using performance management tools. The main objective of the event was to familiarize participants with the following topics:

(a) Identification of evaluation objectives for NSDA,
(b) Metrics, data, and analysis methodologies for evaluation,
(c) Preparation, conduct and evaluation of exercises for materials out of regulatory control (MORC) detection, and
(d) Initial evaluation conduct and improvement plans development.

Addressing the participants at the Opening session of the Workshop RACVIAC Director, MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo, said: “During this series of workshops you have been learning, revising and practicing foundational NSDA concepts on how to identify nuclear security risks, develop strategic goals and objectives to address nuclear security risks, identify and prioritize systems and measures to mitigate risks, develop plans for implementing nuclear detection measures, and, evaluate nuclear security systems. Having reached the end of this cycle I am confident that, together with our partners, we have assisted you in gaining the tools for developing, implementing and sustaining your own national detection capabilities. RACVIAC is an organization whose mission is to promote enhanced regional security and dialogue on the basis of regional ownership so, when reaching the end of this series, we remain open and are looking forward to further projects in this dynamic area of nuclear security”, concluded MG (ret.) Bazo. He also took the opportunity to express gratitude to IAEA experts and lecturers for their support and dedication in this project.
Speaking on behalf of the IAEA, Mr David Smith underlined the importance of the evaluation of nuclear security detection systems and measures for the detection of nuclear and other radioactive material out of regulatory control and introduced participants with the Workshop overview.

The Workshop gathered participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Kosovo*.

The Workshop lecturers were: Mr David Smith, Nuclear Security Officer from IAEA, Mr David Makharadze from the State Security Service of Georgia and Mr Kevin L. Fannin from the Homeland Security Associates Inc, USA.

Proper establishment of a nuclear security detection architecture should include defined roles and responsibilities for its management, operation and maintenance and the concept of operations that describes the procedures, functions and capabilities necessary to implement nuclear security detection architecture.

The Workshop lasted five working days and consisted of concepts, methodologies and tools to facilitate participants' understanding of the Workshop objectives and their ability to evaluate nuclear security detection architecture elements.

It was divided into several modules and activities that focused on Evaluation process, methodology and planning, Evaluation strategy, Evaluation of legal framework, roles and responsibilities of competent authorities, Threat and risk assessment evaluation, Evaluation of detection operations (CONOPS), and Detection equipment evaluation thus giving a possibility to participants to exercise it through different case studies.

During the lectures it was emphasized that evaluation of detection technologies should address a defined set of common performance characteristics. Evaluations were supposed to include laboratory testing of technology as well as consider whether new technologies are compatible with existing operations. It was also underlined that the proper establishment of a nuclear security detection architecture should include defined roles and responsibilities for its management, operation and maintenance and the concept of operations that describes the procedures, functions and capabilities necessary to implement nuclear security detection architecture.

This Workshop was the fifth one in the NSDA series launched with IAEA in 2016 as a part of RACVIAC C-WMD Network project activities aimed at promoting nuclear security detection architecture principles and concepts.

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The increased number of returning foreign terrorist fighters represents a challenge for international and national security. Returning foreign terrorist fighters may have been exposed to all aspects of a violent extremist ideology and lifestyle, many may have acquired combat experience and may have seen - or even participated in - atrocities. Some may have joined groups and networks that plan future attacks in their home countries or other countries while others may be traumatized and require medical attention. Almost all, however, will be significantly alienated and, whether convicted of a crime or not, will require comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration in order to return to society without presenting a potentially enduring significant threat. (Source: UNICRI)

The main aim of this Workshop was to assess the existing policies, programs and actors on the national, regional and international level as well as to discuss the challenges in relation to the role of civil society organizations, religious community, youth, and education system in the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees and their family members into their community during and after judicial proceedings, while respecting international human rights law that guarantees the right to privacy.

‘Successful strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs require new efforts for inter-agency and multi-sectoral co-operation. These initiatives should be sustainable and inclusive, and so they will need to utilize the valuable expertise of the education, healthcare and social protection sectors, as well as civil society, religious communities and youth.’

The Workshop also aimed to promote coherence and the identification of synergies between International and regional organizations, to explore the countries’ specific needs in developing appropriate policies and programs, to
further encourage the confidence between governmental and civil society organizations and to discuss and get proposals for drawing up an action plan with concrete ideas and activities that need to be implemented in the future.

Opening the Workshop RACVIAC Deputy Director, BG Gordana Garašić, said: “RACVIAC has continued to focus on this issue within the framework of our overall counter-terrorism efforts, together with our partners, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the RCC. In accordance with RACVIAC mission to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in SEE we see this Workshop as an excellent opportunity to further coordinate efforts in this field and to promote this issue through the exchange of experiences and sharing of information.” She continued by saying: “The purpose of this event is to further encourage confidence between governments and civil society organizations in establishing an active and two-way dialogue. This will help build trust and understanding. Also, the idea is to debate perspectives in violent extremism and ensure the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs and their family members,” concluded BG Garašić.

Speaking on behalf of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Susan E. Penksa, Head of the Department for Security Co-operation, said: “Successful strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs will require new efforts for inter-agency and multi-sectoral co-operation. These initiatives should be sustainable and inclusive, and so they will need to utilize the valuable expertise of the education, healthcare and social protection sectors, as well as civil society, religious communities and youth. And, in order to be effective and cause no harm, the measures contained in such strategies need to be both age and gender-sensitive, and consistent with international and domestic laws”.

Ms Jorida Shytaj, Political Advisor in the Regional Cooperation Council, said: “Developing policies to counter the challenges faced in the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs requires resilient national institutions capable of anticipating the future developments, backed by strong regional coordination and cooperation mechanisms. A regional approach can be highly beneficial in assisting the plans of rehabilitation and reintegration into the local communities especially of the returning family members, children included, who are most vulnerable to radicalization and discrimination. The Regional Cooperation Council is committed to working with all relevant regional and international partners and to support any regional initiative that aims to develop regional multi-sectoral approaches and sustainable holistic strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration of FTF and their family members”, Ms Shytaj underlined.

Speaking on behalf of the German Embassy to Croatia LTC (GS) Dirk Bocklet, Defence Attaché to the Republic of Croatia, provided some statistics and talked about the challenges concerning FTF and returnees in Germany underlining that this topic requires a comprehensive approach not only on the national but regional level too, adequate strategy as well as cooperation, coordination and attention of all of us.

The Workshop gathered 35 government representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro,
North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo*, as well as civil society, International organizations, academia, media and the religious community representatives such as OSCE Mission to BA, Regional Cooperation Council, UNODC, EUROPOL, Cyber Security, Corporate Security and Crisis Management Initiative from North Macedonia, University College Beder from Albania, University of Political Science from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Safety House, Netherlands.

This one-day Workshop consisted of four sessions that addressed specific areas related to the topic.

The first Panel topic, titled “Trends, Exchange of Information and Experiences of Returning FTFs”, was moderated by Mr Samir Basic (OSCE Mission to BA). Mr Agron Sojati, Director of the Coordination Centre for Countering Violent Extremism, AL, and first Keynote speaker, shared his country’s experience and the approach to that phenomenon. Ms Solongo Dolgor, Programme Officer at the Implementation Support section I (Asia and Europe), Terrorism Prevention Branch, UNODC, introduced UNODC’s mandate and role in countering terrorism that extends to assisting Member States in the struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism through legal technical assistance and criminal justice capacity-building activities.

The last speaker of the first Panel was Mr Agron Metolli from the Kosovo* Counter-Terrorism Department.

The second Panel, “Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Returning FTFs in SEE”, was moderated by Ms Jorida Shytaj. Mr Ivica Simonovski, PhD, MK, focused on explaining the scope of the term FTF and he talked about the challenges and what countries and NGOs should do during the process of successful return of FTFs and their families. Mr Hysni Skura from the Beder University College, AL, provided insights into the role of religious education in the rehabilitation and reintegration process of FTF in SEE. Mr Blaž Mamuza, EUROPOL, presented Europol’s perspective on FTFs explaining that his organization is an information hub.

The afternoon was devoted to the third session moderated once again by Mr Samir Basic of the OSCE Mission to BA. The Session focused on “The Perspective in an Effective Process of Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Family Members of Returning FTFs, Legal Gaps and Engaging with the Civil Society”. Mr Vlado Azinović, PhD, University of Sarajevo, BA, depicted the current situation regarding FTF returnees in BA. The next speaker was Maartje Buter, Process Director at Safety House, NL, followed by Ms Selma Zekovic of the OSCE Mission to BA. Ms Zekovic gave an overview of OSCE’s engagement in BA on rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs and their families. She also presented a Series of Technical Guidebooks in P/CVERLT that OSCE published and outlined the Mission’s most important activities.

The last part was devoted to national views, moderated by Ms Ana Zhovva Krzhaloska, MK, where RACVIAC Members presented their countries National Strategies and policies regarding FTFs and their families’ returns thus providing valuable information on the process of measures taken for their reintegration and rehabilitation.

In the Closing remarks RACVIAC IRC Programme Manager Ms Ana Zhovva Krzhaloska stressed that the phenomenon of FTFs needs to be high on the agenda in order to exchange experiences and best practices in view of the current challenges and the ways of finding solutions and establishing the proper legal frameworks. In 2020 RACVIAC has foreseen to organize another activity on this issue.

* This Designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence (In accordance with Arrangements regarding regional representation and cooperation.)

On the margins of the Workshop a meeting was held with Dr Susan E. Penksa, Head of the Department for Security Cooperation of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to share and discuss more detailed aspects of deepening future cooperation between the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and RACVIAC thus contributing to safety and security in the South East European region and beyond.
Members of parliaments play a vital role in developing legislative and institutional cyber security frameworks, as well as in guaranteeing that principles of good governance apply in cybersecurity. Together with the responsibility of passing new legislation, they also have the power to convene different stakeholders for policy discussions, ensuring comprehensive and multi-stakeholder governance models - something that is especially important in cybersecurity. Finally, members of parliaments also fulfill a role of a watchdog, overseeing the implementation of laws and policies on cybersecurity.

The "Annual Meeting of the Representatives of Defence and Security Committees from SEE Parliaments", organized in partnership with the National Security Committee of the Assembly of Albania and DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, was held in Tirana, Albania on 4-6 November 2019, at the premises of the Albanian Parliamentary Assembly.

The purpose of the Meeting was to continue supporting cooperation among the Defence and Security Committees from SEE Parliaments by providing the platform for interaction of parliamentarians, security and defence policy experts and state officials and discussing parliamentary procedures, challenges and oversight mechanisms in the field of defence and security. A special focus of the 2019 Meeting was put on the cyber security challenges in South East Europe, the cyber security governance within the EU framework, and the role of Parliaments in cyber security by examining the oversight and legislative aspects of this increasingly important and challenging security area.

The Meeting gathered more than 60 parliamentarians, members of defence and security committees, expert staff dealing with telecommunications and European integration, representatives of relevant state institutions who deal with cybersecurity issues, academia, EU Commission and DCAF.

The Meeting was opened by Mr Gramoz Ruçi, Speaker of the Assembly of Albania, who underlined that transnational security threats such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, human trafficking, organized crime and cyber-crimes are also common threats that the SEE region is facing.

Addressing the participants Mr Talant Balla, Head of the Socialist Parliamentary Group of the Albanian Parliament said that cyber-crimes need to be treated seriously because they have a great impact on the sovereignty of our countries and that this Meeting represents a great opportunity to discuss and exchange best practices in dealing with this security phenomenon.

In his Opening speech RACVIAC Director, MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo, said: “The current security situation in South East Europe is characterized by complex developments – transition processes in the region, global geo-strategic interests, spill-over effects of the crisis in the European neighbourhood, and rapid development of new technologies, especially in the cyber domain, where we are
increasingly facing the threats and challenges coming from the state and non-state actors. The nature of current security trends also imposes shifts in the traditional role of our security institutions which consequently affects the role, mechanisms and practices of parliamentary Defence and Security Committees” MG (ret.) Bazo concluded.

On behalf of the co-organizers Ms Ermonela Felaj Valikaj, Chairperson of the National Security Committee of the Assembly of Albania, and Ms Hine-Wai Loose, Head of Cybersecurity Programme, Europe and Central Asia Division at DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, also welcomed the participants.

The meeting was divided into four Sessions. The First Session started with a DCAF presentation on a DCAF tool for members of Parliament for parliamentary oversight of cybersecurity, presented by Ms Irina Rizmal from the DCAF Project Office, and it was related to the Directive on Security of Network and Information Systems (NIS) as a tool to govern cybersecurity and ensure cyber resilience by putting a special focus on the digital agenda for the Western Balkans and Cybersecurity capacity-building.

The next session, "Cybersecurity Governance and the EU’s NIS Directive", was devoted to the principles of the NIS Directive and its application/implementation in the national law and policy of Western Balkan economies. National strategies and action plans, their objectives, critical infrastructure/information, role of national CIRTs, regional cooperation, etc., were discussed.

Session three, “Challenges in Cybersecurity Oversight”, focused on legislative requirements and human rights safeguards in relation to surveillance of electronic communications in the field of national defence and security. Participants addressed various challenges in cybersecurity oversight, legislation and measures on cybersecurity, the role of parliament to effectively oversee cybersecurity matters, etc.

In the fourth session, "Joint Responses to Cybersecurity Threats", parliamentarians and cyber experts agreed that the Western Balkan countries are actively formalizing their cyber security legislation and harmonizing it with EU's framework. Legislation pertaining to cyber security is present in all of the countries and some of them have also national cyber security strategies plus a range of other legislation applicable to the field of cyber security. But, still, most of the countries face several challenges: lack of financial investments in this specific domain, lack of sufficient staffing in terms of both staff numbers and expertise, insufficient technological capacity and related training programs, technological support appears to be in direct conflict with the NIS.

Cybersecurity is one of the latest aspects of national security policies that has become increasingly important throughout the security sectors of European countries. The pace of technological developments requires new legal and policy frameworks to be developed quickly and comprehensively.

Members of parliaments play a vital role in developing legislative and institutional frameworks, as well as in guaranteeing that principles of good governance apply in cybersecurity. As it comes with the responsibility of passing new legislation, they also have the power to convene different stakeholders for policy discussions, ensuring comprehensive, multistakeholder governance models - something that is especially important in cybersecurity. Finally, members of parliament also fulfill a watchdog role, overseeing the implementation of laws and policies on (or related to) cybersecurity.

(DCAF Handbook: Introduction to Cybersecurity Governance – A Tool for Members of Parliament)

At the end of the Meeting participants concluded that Cybersecurity is one of the latest aspects of national security policies that has become increasingly important throughout the security sectors of SEE countries. The pace of technological developments requires new legal and policy frameworks to be developed quickly and comprehensively. Apart from ensuring national security, safe and secure networks are also important for boosting the national economy and modernising public sector governance in SEE countries. A safe cyberspace is also necessary to ensure that citizens can exercise their rights, such as access to information and freedom of expression.
When looking at the breadth of security challenges, many of which are extremely serious, complex and interconnected, and present a mixed picture of NATO and EU enlargement processes as well as internal relations within SEE, the seventh annual “Conference on Security Challenges for Europe” strove to highlight the importance of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes for security and stability of South-Eastern Europe, the dedication of the aspiring countries to continue on their path to full membership in NATO and the EU as well as the necessity of permanent adaptation of security systems and responses.

A two-day “Conference on Security Challenges for Europe” was held in Zagreb on 10th-11th December 2019. The Conference was a continuation of an established series of activities aimed towards enabling open and comprehensive discussions on emerging security challenges for Europe and South-East European countries in particular.

It was the seventh annual activity conducted as a result of fruitful cooperation between RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Office in Croatia. In order to increase the quality of this event by strengthening its academic dimension this year’s Conference was supported by the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies (Balkans 360 Initiative) as the principal academic partner.

The purpose of the event was to enable open and comprehensive security policy and expert discussions on the contemporary security challenges in the context of ongoing security sector reforms and integration processes of the EU and NATO aspiring countries.

The Conference gathered more than 110 participants, senior level national security policy makers and subject matter experts from the ministries of foreign affairs, interior, ministry of defence, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and members of the academic community involved in addressing the contemporary security challenges and policy development processes.
The Conference was opened with a Welcome address by RACVIAC Director, MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo, who pointed out the following: "This year, the first Conference Panel will be focused on the dynamics of Euro-Atlantic integration, its roles and implications for South-Eastern Europe. Currently, these processes are twofold in nature. While we can see progress in Montenegro’s and North Macedonia’s NATO accession, there were some discouraging signs stemming from the disagreement of the European Union leaders to open the EU accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia at the last EU summit."

He continued by saying: "It seems that the area of South-Eastern Europe is still quite an attractive playground where global and regional actors exercise their influence and interests. In combination with internal weaknesses, such as unresolved issues from the recent past, incomplete transition processes, underdevelopment, corruption and negative demographic trends, the influence of external actors poses significant challenges to the countries of this region. Another occurrence that additionally challenges the security and stability of this part of Europe is the spill-over effects of the Middle-Eastern turmoil", said Director Bazo.

In his Welcome address on behalf of the co-organizer the Head of KAS Office in the Republic of Croatia, Mr Holger H. Haibach, said that SEE is perhaps an area where spheres of interest collide the most, being sometimes a bazaar of international interests, regional and international actors, all of them with different expectations. He continued by saying that the decision of the EU Council not to open negotiation talks with North Macedonia and Albania was a wrong one, especially in case of North Macedonia who did everything that the EU asked it to do. "I think this speaks a lot about the role of the EU in the region. If someone (EU) isn’t engaged, there is a void, and this void will always be filled with other actors", Mr Haibach concluded.

Dr Matthew Rhodes, Area Studies Chair at the George C. Marshall Center (GCMC), greeted all the participants and said that the three organisations that have organised this Conference share similar values and missions. He added that the event gathered excellent security experts from Croatia, the SEE region and all around the world thus serving as a platform to generate new ideas, possibilities and solutions for stronger cooperation against a range of security challenges we are faced with nowadays.

Recalling that the discussions on security challenges for Europe could not be timelier H.E. Robert Kohorst, the Ambassador of the United States of America to the Republic...
of Croatia, said: “This is a period of dramatic, even historic developments within Europe, to include Croatia and other countries of Central and South East Europe and the Western Balkans. Just last month a new European Commission began its mandate, and earlier this month, NATO leaders met in London both to conclude commemorations of the alliance’s 70th anniversary and to discuss a range of pressing security issues. Also on the horizon this month; British voters will go to the polls in an election that will determine their country’s next steps on Brexit. In addition, on New Year’s day Croatia will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the very first time.”

H.E. Dr Robert Richard Klinke, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Croatia, in his Opening speech said that this Conference is one of RACVIAC continued efforts aimed at fostering peace, security, and confidence in the SEE region. He continued by saying that this event has in its 7th year evolved into an integral part of the security calendar of South East Europe by addressing a number of burning challenges that influence our lives and foster regional dialogue.

The Conference Keynote speech was delivered by Ms Zdravka Bušić, the State Secretary for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, who said: “Europe is facing an unprecedented set of challenges – the existing international rules-based system as we know it is being questioned, and great power competition is coming back into play with China on the rise. Other security challenges are also on the rise - from terrorism to illegal migration.” In light of the upcoming Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU Ms Bušić said that Croatia “will put South East Europe high on its agenda, including through the organisation of the EU-Western Balkans Summit in May 2020. This Summit should lay out new dynamics of the relations with South East Europe for the next ten years and give a new impetus for enlargement. We all must make good use of this opportunity to revitalize the Euro-Atlantic integration process. We must hammer out a clear path for the Western Balkans which will have a positive impact on strengthening of the democratic values, economic growth and regional cooperation, as a basis for stability and security of Croatia’s immediate neighbourhood. This will also make Western Balkan countries more resilient to other threats and challenges posed by outside actors; said Ms Bušić.

The first day of the Conference consisted of three Panels: “Dynamics in Euro-Atlantic Integration: Roles and Implications for SEE”, “21st Century Geopolitics” and “21st Century ‘Soft’ Challenges and Changes”.

In the first Panel senior level national security policy makers, Mr Mato Škrabalo, Director for Multilateral and Global Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Amb Stanislav Raščan, Head of Department for Strategic Studies and Analysis at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, security analysts from the George C. Marshall Centre Dr Sebastian von Münchow and Col Günther Rozenits and Dr Monika Begović of the Atlantic Council Croatia, presented the different aspects, initiatives, and considerations of the dynamics of Euro-Atlantic integration and enlargement processes and their impact on security and stability of SEE. The key highlights of the panellists were put on the upcoming Croatia’s EU presidency and its priorities. They mentioned...
that the Western Balkans (WB) is of strategic importance for the EU and belongs to Europe by nature of its history, culture, and geography. Closer ties with the EU are the only way for WB countries to build or consolidate states based on the rule of law and open and pluralistic societies, pursue their economic and social development, and give their youth a future perspective. It was emphasized that a strong EU is needed like never before, and that the EU plays a major role as a global security provider, not only in a geographical sense, but also in a wide array of policies and instruments such as military capabilities and anti-terrorism, human rights, inclusive societies, job opportunities, etc.

The second Panel was moderated by Mr Nikola Brzica of Strategic Risks, Croatia. The panellists, Amb Iztok Mirošič, Special Envoy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, Mr Korhan Küngerü, Head of Department at the Directorate General for Foreign Policy, Analysis and Coordination at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and Major General Reinhard Trischak, Commander of EUFOR, discussed Russia’s and China’s influence in Southeast Europe, Security Dynamics in the Middle East, and its spillover to the SEE region and the role of EU as a Security Actor in the Western Balkans.

The first day of the Conference ended with the Panel dedicated to 21st century ‘soft’ challenges and changes. The panellists were Mr Ivica Bošnjak, State Secretary of the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy of Croatia, Mr Stevan Vujasinović, Southeast Europe Communications Manager at the Climate Action Network Europe and Dr Todor Tagarev of the Institute of Information and Communication Technologies, Bulgaria, who spoke about demography, climate changes, and emerging technologies.

The second day started with the Panel " Perspectives on Future Challenges and Regional Cooperation" where senior national representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Greece, Mr Josip Brikic, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr Ilir Melo, Director for Regional Issues at the Ministry for

Europe and Foreign Affairs, Albania, H.E. Stavros Tsiepas, Greek Ambassador to Croatia, and Dr Dragan Lozančić, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Interior, Croatia, shared their national views and considerations on several aspects of regional cooperation in view of Euro-Atlantic integrations processes of EU aspiring countries, irregular migrations, and other contemporary security challenges.

The last Conference Panel was dedicated to future challenges and resilience. Its panellist, Dr Robert Mikac of the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, gave a presentation titled “Building Resilience for an Uncertain Future”.

At the end Ms Kirsty Hogan, Deputy Head for Euro-Atlantic Security Policy at the Ministry of Defense, UK, shortly presented NATO’s London Leaders Meeting.

The main Conference conclusion was that in spite of the range, complexity and interdependence of security challenges, and our limitations, we cannot be just passive observers, or objects but active subjects who have to react address these challenges, and shape our security environment by building capacities and resilience, and foster cooperation at the regional and European level, particularly within the framework of Euro-Atlantic associations.
The 42nd semi-annual Meeting of the Multinational Advisory Group (MAG), RACVIAC steering body, organized under the chairmanship of the Hellenic Republic, took place in Rakitje on 21 October 2019.

The Meeting, which gathers MAG Members, Associate Members, Observers, participants and partners, was chaired by Ad Hoc MAG Chairperson H.E. Mr Stavros Tsiepas, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the Republic of Croatia.

The Meeting Agenda consisted of a brief presentation on the Director’s Interim Report by the Director of RACVIAC, MG (ret.) Jeronim Bazo, who highlighted the most significant achievements of RACVIAC work in the first eight months of 2019.

MG (ret.) Bazo pointed out that RACVIAC continued to support its Members in achieving full membership in European and Euro-Atlantic integrations. He added: “Hosting the activities in the areas of security has been one of the main priorities in order to respond to the needs and address the challenges that all of our countries are facing”. Furthermore, he provided information regarding the visits and the meetings that took place in order to establish new partnerships or revitalize existing ones. In that regard he drew attention to the fact that RACVIAC has become an Associated Network Partner of the European Security and Defence College in July of this year thus increasing its capacity to better support and enhance European and Euro-Atlantic processes of SEE aspiring countries.

Furthermore, Director took the opportunity to thank all Members, Associate Members, Observers, and partners for their continuous support to the Centre.

Pursuant to the Agenda Brigadier General Gordana Garašić, RACVIAC Deputy Director, and RACVIAC Programme Managers Col Servet Aya, Ms Ana Ezhova Krzhaloska, and Mr Bosko Rotim, gave presentations with regard to the respective Programme activities conducted in 2019 and plans for 2020.

Afterwards, BG Garašić informed the MAG representatives about the current personnel situation in the Centre. Deputy Director took the opportunity to sensitize Members about the unsatisfactory personnel situation and renew the call to send qualified personnel, especially those Members that are not represented in RACVIAC.

In addition, Maj Jasminka Šoić, Chief of Admin and Finance Cell, briefed MAG participants on the RACVIAC Budget for 2019 and financial projections for the future.

The last briefing was related to the Concept Paper for the new RACVIAC Strategy 2021-2026. Col Josef Pulko, Planning and Liaison Officer, provided detailed information about the current status of Strategy development and the way ahead, which was adopted by all Members present.

At the end of the Meeting MAG elected Mr Ivica Ivanović, PhD, Director General for Defence Policy of the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro, as the new MAG Chairperson. Pursuant to the Montenegrin MAG Chairmanship for next year the 43rd MAG will take place in Montenegro from 6 to 9 April 2020.

Taking into account that consensus of Members was reached for all activities in the Draft Programme 2020 with the exception of the Open Skies Treaty Aerial Observation Course, MAG delayed its decision for a month. The final decision and approval of RACVIAC 2020 Programme was made by reaching consensus after the Extraordinary MAG Meeting which took place in RACVIAC on November 25.
Mr Berat Jashari became an Activity Manager in RACVIAC - International and Regional Cooperation Pillar in October 2019 and has been seconded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kosovo* where he held the position of Senior Officer for Security Policies within the Department for NATO and Security Policies. Previously he served as Chief of Cabinet of the First Foreign Minister of Kosovo*. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science and International Relations from the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) and a Master’s Degree from Bologna University. He is a father of two sons, a devotee of sports and a passionate collector of car models.

SGT Iva Varga joined RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation on 01 August 2019 as a Driver/Administrator. She began her military carrier in 2009 and was assigned to different NCO duties in Guard Brigades Gromovi and Pume and in the General Staff Support Unit of the Croatian Armed Forces. She was also deployed to a NATO-led mission in Afghanistan (RSM) in 2016. Currently she is studying at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology to earn a Professional Bachelor of Coaching Profession degree. In her free time she enjoys sports.

Mr Sergej Dedić re-joined the RACVIAC team as an intern in International and Regional Cooperation (IRC) Pillar in October 2019. Currently he is a last year student of the Master program in Security Risk Management at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. After graduation he would like to continue working in the area of security-related issues, both in terms of further education as well as his professional career plans.
## C-WMD Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic / Title</th>
<th>Host / Venue</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>C-WMD Project tier 1 – Nuclear Material and Security</td>
<td>RACVIAC</td>
<td>03-07 February 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Cooperative Security Environment with a focus on Arms Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic / Title</th>
<th>Host / Venue</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control (Dayton Article IV) – Orientation Course</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>16-21 March 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Open Skies Treaty (OST) Aerial Observation Course</td>
<td>RACVIAC</td>
<td>29-31 March 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>01-04 April 2020</td>
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## Security Sector Reform

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Topic / Title</th>
<th>Host / Venue</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Crisis and Disaster Management - the Role of Risk Communication and Information in Civil Protection Emergencies</td>
<td>RACVIAC</td>
<td>17-19 February 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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