

CZECH REPUBLIC



Czech Republic The Czech Republic, with its membership in NATO and the European Union and increasing activism in international affairs, has proven an important and reliable ally in promoting democracy, market reforms, antiterrorism, missile defense, and non-proliferation. Despite the increasing political, material, and human cost of supporting and participating in Coalition military operations, the Czech Republic stands resolute among our strongest security partners. It has deployed, on average, four percent of its total forces overseas in support of U.S. and Allied security objectives. Continuing U.S. security assistance provides an opportunity to secure the benefits of peace and stability for the region and to further support participation of the armed forces of the Czech Republic in Coalition operations alongside the United States in pursuit of mutual security interests and goals.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

From 1948 until 1989, the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia followed that of the Soviet Union. Since independence, the Czechs have made integration into Western institutions their chief foreign policy objective.

The Czech Republic became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), along with Poland and Hungary, on March 12, 1999. Public support for NATO remains high. The Czech Republic became a full member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. Both events are milestones in the country's foreign policy and security orientation. The Czech Republic successfully completed its first-ever EU Presidency during the first half of 2009.

The Czech Republic is a member of the United Nations and participates in its specialized agencies. It is a member of the World Trade Organization. It maintains resident embassies in 93 countries. Furthermore, 82 countries have permanent representation in Prague.

U.S.-CZECH RELATIONS

Millions of Americans have their roots in Bohemia and Moravia, and a large community in the United States has strong cultural and familial ties with the Czech Republic. President Woodrow Wilson and the United States played a major role in the establishment of the original Czechoslovak state on October 28, 1918. President Wilson's 14 Points, including the right of ethnic groups to form their own states, were the basis for the union of the Czechs and Slovaks. Tomas Masaryk, the father of the state and its first President, visited the United States during World War I and worked with U.S. officials in developing the basis of the new country. Masaryk used the U.S. Constitution as a model for the first Czechoslovak constitution.

After World War II, and the return of the Czechoslovak Government in exile, normal relations continued until 1948, when the communists seized power. Relations cooled rapidly. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 further complicated U.S.-Czechoslovak relations. The United States referred the matter to the UN Security Council as a violation of the UN Charter, but no action was taken against the Soviets.

Since the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989, bilateral relations have improved immensely. Dissidents once sustained by U.S. encouragement and human rights policies reached high levels in the government. President Havel, in his first official visit as head of Czechoslovakia, addressed the U.S. Congress and was

interrupted 21 times by standing ovations. In 1990, on the first anniversary of the revolution, President George H.W. Bush, in front of an enthusiastic crowd on Prague's Wenceslas Square, pledged U.S. support in building a democratic Czechoslovakia. Toward this end, the U.S. Government has actively encouraged political and economic transformation.

The U.S. Government was originally opposed to the idea of Czechoslovakia forming two separate states, due to concerns that a split might aggravate existing regional political tensions. However, the U.S. recognized both the Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993. Since then, U.S.-Czech relations have remained strong economically, politically, and culturally.

Relations between the U.S. and the Czech Republic are excellent and reflect the common approach both have to the many challenges facing the world at present. The U.S. looks to the Czech Republic as a partner in issues ranging from Afghanistan to the Balkans, and seeks opportunities to continue to deepen this relationship.

Peace and Security: The Czech Republic is making important strides in modernizing its military to provide better-equipped and -trained forces to participate in international security operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan. U.S. assistance helps increase the Czech Republic's capability to enhance regional stability and contribute to Coalition operations around the globe. It demonstrates the importance to the United States of Czech participation in these operations and fosters a political base in the Czech Republic that is receptive to such missions. Funding will provide a range of training and equipment to fulfill NATO niche requirements as well as support English language training and professional military education, which will improve the interoperability of the Czech military with NATO and U.S. forces. These programs will be implemented through the U.S. Department of Defense.

Focus on Performance: The Government of the Czech Republic, including the small but effective Czech Army, has proven to be a stalwart partner in NATO and U.S.-led coalition operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo. In recent years, the Czechs have maintained an average monthly deployment level of close to 1,000 troops in support of these missions. However, a major handicap for the Czechs has been a lack of transport aircraft that would allow their troops to independently deploy to Afghanistan and Kosovo. The U.S. has provided strategic airlift for these deployments. To fill this void, the U.S. has offered to provide 4 EDA KC-130s as part of the increased funding that would also be used to provide training, logistical, and other support to the Czech Air Force. With the required training and assistance, the Czechs would be able to utilize the EDA C-130s to independently deploy their troops. Once the Czechs have this capacity, the U.S. would be able to use its own military transport aircraft to support U.S. or other coalition missions.